EMIC SOCIAL WORK: A STORY OF PRACTICE

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1994

Urbana, Illinois

EMIC SOCIAL WORK: A STORY OF PRACTICE

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This autoethnographical study reflects on the lived experience of a social worker with a public welfare agency in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia during the seventies and early eighties. Framed by a philosophical consideration of the tensions between postmodernism and modernism, the study utilized the research methods of feminist critical ethnography and interpretive interactionism. Reflection on the practitioner's seven years of immersion in participant observation, interviewing and document analysis was organized around key epiphanic moments of cultural insight.

In this setting, it was found that Aboriginal people were excluded from the *demos* in the consciousness of most Western Australians, including social workers. This actuality was traced by working from the practitioner's bodily placement in the region and the relationships this entailed. The processes by which this ideological exclusion was abstracted and generalized into standard knowledge for social workers to apply across a diversity of local situations are described. This practitioner case-study identified the workings of structural power bases in local and particular situations, and the strong links between power and knowledge. With regard to social work, conceptual links were made to the pre-modernist critical autoethnography of Jane Addams. The research found that to hold to a professional commitment to values it is necessary for social workers to resist seduction by and subjugation to the relations of ruling. The cultivation of a range of research philosophies rather than only the bureaucratic procedures of positivism, would allow more movement from "what is" to "what should be" in the practice profession of social work.

This research argues that social work education must convey an understanding that the social can only be known by interpretation and that closure of knowledge as to the human condition is not possible. Preparing students to be able to act out of situated, reflexive home-made models of practice is named as a competency aim for social work education requiring a focus on the social construction of self, a diversity of faculty and students in open dialogue with each other, and exposure to the interpretive disciplines of anthropology/sociology, feminism, philosophy and history.

ABSTRACT

This autoethnographical study reflects on the lived experience of a social worker with a public welfare agency in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia during the seventies and early eighties. Framed by a philosophical consideration of the tensions between postmodernism and modernism, the study utilized the research methods of feminist critical ethnography and interpretive interactionism. Reflection on the practitioner's seven years of immersion in participant observation, interviewing and document analysis was organized around key epiphanic moments of cultural insight.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Committee Certificate of Approval--Insert here

We are all natives now.

Clifford Geertz (1973)

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N.B. The maps are not included in this copy of the thesis

PREAMBLE

Stories From Another Place, Another Time

<u>Exploring That Line Between "Us" and "Them"</u>

This introductory section contains a collection of cameos on issues at the heart of my experience of becoming a social worker. In offering them I hope to set the scene for the research project that follows. The stories are grounded in some ten years (1973-1982) of employment in a Western Australian welfare department. Here I had dual responsibility for the statutory protection of children and meeting the general welfare needs of the population as defined in the Community Welfare Act of 1972. My practice was mainly in the coastal pearling town of Broome in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia where Aboriginal people were the majority of clients. The Kimberley region (see Map 1: The Kimberley Region.) (Map not reproduced in this version.) occupies the north west corner of Australia, bounded by the Timor Sea to the north, the Great Sandy Desert to the the south, the Indian Ocean to the west and the Northern Territory border to the east. One of the last places in the continent to be developed by Europeans, it remains sparsely populated though there are materially-founded hopes that its rugged terrain and climatic extremes can be further harnessed to profit from multinational capitalism, in particular mining, agriculture and tourism.

Broome, now a key tourist town of some 10,000 residents, was becoming a boom town at the time I lived there. There were less than 3,000 residents recorded in the 1976 census, the year of my starting work in Broome. The black-top highway came through from the South at the end of the seventies replacing the dirt road that had to suffice until then. People intent on profitting from the business opportunities offering with this development had little patience with the increasingly confident expression by Aboriginal people of their interests. Broome then became a site for a late frontier clash between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests. The town was also connected by communication technology to a national public culture that had recently recognized Aboriginal interests as an integral part of the mosaic of a multi-cultural Australia. I practiced social work there in the context of a local and national political struggle to define and control the cultural truths of everyday life for Aboriginal people.

While working in this setting that heightened my consciousness as to issues of race, ethnicity, and the everyday play of power in constructing the nature of people's lives I met and married my husband, gave birth to my first child, and acquired a consciousness about gender.

<u>Milly Read</u>

This story belongs to one of the district officers[1] I met in the Kimberley. In 1964 he was just eighteen and newly accepted into the Public Service. Assigned to the Native Welfare Department Head Office in Perth one of his first tasks was to respond to a letter from a blind woman in an old

people's home. She requested the release of savings from her Trust Fund[2] so that she might buy a transistor radio. He was to visit her to establish the facts of the claim. Going out anxious, he came back pleased.

Bright, light, clean, well-spoken if Aboriginal, Milly Read had been raised in a northern mission and then spent her life as a domestic servant in a river suburb of Perth. Now in retirement, she found her eyesight fading and the pleasures of daily newspapers lost. Perhaps a transistor radio could substitute. The young public servant agreed and said there would be no difficulty in processing her claim. On return to Head Office the boss was kind but clear, "You shouldn't have told her that. If you look in the Manual you will see that Trust monies are only for essential items."

A Disruptive Voice

A Broome story--I have heard this story told many times with much humor by locals. From a time when they lived by the blue, blue waters of Roebuck Bay connected by a long strip of dirt road to the rest of white Australia. Then Broome residents, more than fifty percent non-European, knew who was who and what was what. An "out-of-towner" who the police wanted to move on was charged under the law against miscegenation.[3]

Molly was called to give evidence. Presiding in the Court House was a Justice of the Peace who asked her if she'd had sexual intercourse with the accused. She looked puzzled: the sergeant explained kindly in kriol[4] -- "You know jigga jig."

"I know what it is. Why you pick on this man?" She appealed to the Justice, a local businessman, "You fuck me, sergeant here, he fuck me. You all fuck me. Why you pick on this man for that?" The story has it that Molly was discharged and the court papers were stricken from the record.

Gadeyas and Ruling

I became aware of my whiteness while staying at the Aboriginal community of Looma in 1975 researching for my masters thesis in social work. I confess to annoyance that people couldn't see it was me, Fran, but insisted on calling out "Gadeya,[5] gadeya coming!" wherever I walked. I remember with some shame the pleasure I felt when one of the Looma elders connected us together by noting we were both fullbloods[6] and not half-castes[7]. I "knew" but seemed to have forgotten the Aborigines Act of 1905[8]. This is what I wrote on the issue in 1976:

> Half-castes do not form a significant group at Looma. Generally speaking they are actively disliked because, as Killer described it, "they have never done good for our people." This can be at least partially traced back to the fact that they were often given positions of authority on station properties and better conditions. Their interests were served by maintaining a social distance between themselves and the full-bloods. The few half-castes are in the main children. Though they seem well cared for, they are usually described as "that half-caste." A feeling of superiority over those of mixed race was expressed by one of the leaders in speaking of the urban Aborigines he had met at an Aboriginal Arts Conference in Darwin. While he felt sorry for them, he felt they should have no say at such meetings. "They were

neither one thing nor the other. Whites and Aborigines were fullbloods but they were just nothing." (Crawford, 1976, p. 67)

The Western Australian Aboriginal Act of 1905

In Broome an old lady rang the "Welfare" and asked me to call on a matter of importance. Tilly Ryan was waiting on the verandah of her State Housing duplex. Laden with red bougainvillea it was a shady spot but she had an even cooler space to offer, "Come in quick out of the heat."

Tilly had heard I could fix up problems. She needed someone to come and clean her place once a week. Such duties had become too much for her now. I listed the names of several women who might be interested. Tilly shook her head. She couldn't have a "native"[9]--she needed someone who could clean properly. She belonged to that sector of the Broome community that still called themselves "colored."[10] She told how lucky she was to have been raised and civilized by the nuns. She felt sorry for the women named who had missed that chance but they wouldn't be able to do the work properly.

Then she recalled childhood stories of the police coming into Aboriginal camps to collect half-caste children to take them to Beagle Bay Mission. It was the law of the land. Lots of mothers tried to hide their children but the police weren't easily fooled. They squeezed the breasts of all the women and if any milk came out they wouldn't go until they'd checked the child.

Sex Abuse

It was my first case and I didn't know what to do. It seemed urgent to respond to the children's complaint. I rang long distance. We had a unit in head office offering advice to field practitioners. One of the first questions the expert social worker asked was "Tell me, are these children Aboriginal?" I had to think about that one. The mother looked white but everyone knew she was "really" Aboriginal and there were three fathers--Japanese, white, and Aboriginal. I was enough of a public servant to presume a binary bent in my answer and simply said, "Yes, they are." "Well that makes it more difficult," she said but promised to send some information in the mail and gave me a general reassurance to go ahead and do what I could to comfort the children.

The information, when it came, had a cover sheet of a mythic shepherdess: blonde ringlets tumbling out of her bonnet and a clumped plump childish fist rubbing at the tears in her eyes. It might have been lifted from a picture book on Little Bo Peep but it captured the image of "innocence." I connected this choice of image to the local sergeant's statement that he couldn't worry about sex abuse cases on the local reserves.[11] To him loss of innocence was inevitable in those conditions.

Keeping Them in Their Place

He was a young man back home on holiday. At a loose end he was "pussy footin" round town when he passed the Broome Civic Center where a "Ball"[12] was in full swing. He wandered over for a closer look and hoisted himself on the open brick lattice work for a clearer view. He was spotted

by some of the revelers who'd paid their money and a group of men decided to make short shrift of this intruder on their fun. Six of them put him in hospital. One of these met his Japanese father at work the next day and said sincerely, "Jeez I'm sorry mate! I didn't know it was your kid. We thought it was just a coon."[13]

Community leaders expended much energy and moral authority persuading the boy and his parents not to press criminal charges over this bashing. Such action would divide the community: some of the men might lose their jobs if they were convicted in a criminal court; perhaps those that worked for the government could be transferred and innocent children would have their lives disrupted if their families had to leave town.

They Can't Help It

It was a long-standing family dispute but now a specialist Perth-based social work agency was deciding the best interests of the children. The father was a young white man with Perth parents to argue on his behalf. The mother was a young woman of the colored Broome elite but that category did not exist in the consciousness of the Perth social worker who consulted me by telephone about the case.

> I understand it's not her fault. A poor Aboriginal mother! What hope has she of giving the children what they need. I see so many Aboriginal people coming through here. I feel so sorry for them. They have just nothing. I know I shouldn't but I often give them a TV or something from our charity stocks. It must be dreadful to be so poor and it's not a matter of money. It's that they don't know how to manage. Peter's parents have explained how they can't trust her to do the right thing with any money they send for the kids. (My memories of a 1977 phone call.)

How was I to begin to do justice to Mary's story in the face of this understanding? The complexity that was Mary seemed to defy description over a long distance phone call while I could picture Peter's grin at the success of his strategy of banking on the power of prejudice to win this case.

The Hairy-legged Brigade

The seventies and early eighties in Western Australia were a time of political battles for Aboriginal people. The key issues were accessing their right to vote and establishing Aboriginal land rights. In the years between the disputed election results[14] and the Noonkanbah dispute[15] in the Kimberleys, many committed whites, both men and women, came to the region to be part of the push for Aboriginal rights. My husband and I, both Broome welfares, were often involved with these newcomers. I was then one of relatively few white women working locally in the Aboriginal affairs industry.

Gradually it dawned on me that the new men, many of whom were lawyers and academics, talked about and treated women differently. They would speak derogatively of the latest actions of what they were pleased to call "the hairy-legged brigade." These were mostly non-Aboriginal women who were independent workers and not someone's wife. As someone's wife I probably would have

continued to think of the new women as "them" had it not been for the number of times I was assured, "Don't worry Fran, we don't think of you as one of the hairy-legged brigade."

Initially I was likely to stick my bare leg out to show it was cleanly shaven. Then I realized that the power my husband and I had because of our local knowledge was a strong factor in why people were so keen to ingratiate themselves with me. That aside, young white men were clearly uncomfortable with a woman involved in what they were pleased to consider "men's business."[16] I began to note how often white men congratulated Aboriginal men on never letting women interfere with their lives.

In 1980 a firming of my feminist consciousness came at a meeting in the lead up to a key court case on Aboriginal rights. I was on maternity leave with my first child but still involved in community affairs. A Broome white woman, with years of experience in local affairs, was unable to attend and sent a message to the meeting. She was keen for us to include an issue she saw as crucial to the project. On hearing this request, an intense young white woman, indisputably one of the "new brigade" demanded of the group at large: "What would she know about anything? She's nothing but a fat housewife."

With a chill I realized she could equally talk about me.

<u>Notes</u>

CHAPTER ONE

Setting the Scene

Who was that research I saw you with last night That was no
research that was my life
(English feminist turn on music hall ditty)

My intention is to write a research thesis reflecting on the nature of everyday issues occupying my time and energies as a social work practitioner and the nature of the many selves I bring to this task, which are in turn shaped by practice experience. Rather than focus on a particular and delimited research topic, I struggle to hold a holistic understanding of what it is that I as a practitioner address in the course of "doing" social work. Using ethnographic methods, I search for the cultural patternings of my lived experiences. This text is an autoethnography of practice. Centering myself as the interpreter of the social worlds with which I connect, I write of myself and those cultural scenes in which I live. My priority in this aim is to equip myself as a more highly reflexive social work educator, and my hope is that such an exercise will provide the textual means through which I can connect with other social workers in talking about and exploring what it is we do as social workers.

This research is modelled on the narrative reflective style of Jane Addams' early autoethnography, Twenty Years at Hull House (1990/1910) Using two major personal experiences or epiphanies as pivotal points of reflection and reflexivity, my text locates my biography in its historical and social setting, with reference to the key research question of what it is to be a social worker. In the first chapters of this thesis, I set the context within which this research task is undertaken and document some of the conceptual influences on my thinking before presenting my research methodology of reflexivity, narrativity, and writing. These are the methods through which I propose to interpret and understand my lived experiences of social work.

After establishing my biographical location on coming into social work, the body of the thesis will focus on a reflection of practice over some seven years in a small north Australian country town. A comparative reading of these experiences will be made against two contemporaneous texts, addressing in different ways the question of the wellbeing of the people of this town. One of these texts was written by a fellow social worker and the other by a fellow resident.

Through such a close reading of knowledges of my own experience, I hope to search for themes that may serve to guide me in my continuing commitment to prepare others to become social workers. As Addams' text was about Chicago of some hundred years ago, this text is about Broome of more than ten years ago. It is my hope that as Addams' text continues to speak to social workers across time and place, so can my narrative autoethnography. It is my belief that many social workers practice in ways that have communicability across time and place yet few of us have the opportunity to produce written, reflective records of what it is to become a social worker. The practitioner's version of social work such as Addams wrote is often negated in the dominant academic understanding that scientific methods are the way to social work knowledge. I suggest that in practice social workers persist in

knowing by means other than the scientific method, but when we creatively and successfully apply this knowledge too often the result is a text that leaves no trace or a text that is read as challenging the status quo. In this situation of social workers being held not to count, or of being held to be disruptive in practice, social work educators are seduced into claiming to be able to teach an objective, generalized and abstract set of knowledge and skills which practitioners may apply regardless of context. This thesis explores how each practitioner must make use of generalized and abstract knowledge and skills from within a particular site in the world, from a particular value system, and from a particular set of human relationships, all of which will be cultural creations. The way they do this will reflect the tensions always operating for each practitioner, between supporting the status quo or acting for change in the lived experience of the clients we say we serve as social workers.

<u>Reflecting on Becoming an Australian Social Worker</u>

<u>Purpose, Space, Base, and Place</u>

This interpretive study explores my experiences in becoming a social worker. The aim to learn from reflected experience how I can best continue to become and prepare others to become social workers emerges from my commitment to the profession of social work and to my employment as a social work academic at the School of Social Work at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Western Australia. These commitments involve long-standing concerns attached to my struggle to "do" social work. Such research into meaning making is not a new activity for me; what is new is the chance to write my thinking into text.

Here in Urbana, Illinois for the first time I have the space for scholarly and focused reflection on the process of becoming a social worker. I have the time to explore the interplay between ideas and actions that my praxising social work has been about. The opportunity to examine and articulate my understandings as a social work practitioner is a valued commodity for me at the age of forty-five. It comes with the subsidized study leave I receive as a tenured Australian academic and family commitment to the project. The motivation for doing this project comes from a strong desire to understand myself, my actions and my life. In this there are elements of what Nietzche (Hayman, 1980) calls "the will to power" and Foucault (1972) identifies as the power/knowledge connection.[17] Dorothy Smith's (1987) critical ethnography project and Norman Denzin's (1989b) interpretive biography are the key methodological approaches through which I propose to write a narrative autoethnography addressing my research questions.

The choice of Urbana, Illinois as the site for this project in reflexivity is a story of relationships and grounded knots of relevance. Working in the Kimberley region of Western Australia I came to know and work with Ernie Stringer and Tony McMahon. Both are Australian graduates of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. When I was organizing a course in qualitative research in Australia they connected me to the work of Norman Denzin and interpretive interactionism.

Their involvement in my subsequent decision to move more than half-way around the globe to study is indicative of the importance of knowing by relationship in my life.

Knowing women academics in Australia were being encouraged and supported to gain doctoral degrees, and having limited access to such education in Perth, I thought about where I could study. To study full-time and not on top of other tasks seemed preferable. There would be little attraction for the family in moving to another Australian state, where Michael, my husband, would feel obliged to work when we became poor, and the children want to return home when they became bored. I had lived in England for more than a year and felt relatively knowledgeable about the meanings of English culture informing British social work texts. Knowing America had Disneyland to entice children, thinking rural America less scary than urban, thinking Canada was necessarily colder than the United States, realizing we would be near the University of Chicago and the sites of the Chicago School of Sociology--such considerations and more find us in Urbana, a place not otherwise known to me. Having made the choice, the site itself has continued to shape the enterprise in ways that highlight how difficult it is to be a decontextualized abstract reflector.

A thirteen hour time difference between Urbana and Perth, indicates the distance between the two sites. With ease I speak and write the necessary language to complete study requirements. Using de Saussure's terms I was familiar with the abstract rules and constraints of *langue* but disconcerted by the actual utterances of *parole* (Lodge, 1990, p. 57). I need to remind myself that analyzing this discomfort is a prime reason for coming to America to study. To immerse myself in the American context and culture to be in a better position to "read" the hegemonic American texts that mark out much of the Australian social work discourse. To experience how meanings and readings vary according to the patterns of life by which they are informed (Geertz, 1973). The relative distances of the two sites from Greenwich in England (the zero center from which degrees of longitude are drawn) gives some indication of the relative time the two sites have had to develop ways of life in response to the European impulse and ability to settle anew around the globe. (see Map 2: Urbana and Perth Located Globally.) (Map not reproduced in this version.)

Professional Social Work Education Begins in 1965

In my home state of Western Australia professional social work education became available in 1965, the same year I finished high school. It was offered as a postgraduate degree at a time when fewer than five percent of the population started an undergraduate degree. Following the pattern in the rest of Australia[18] the course drew heavily on the British and American experience of social work with the import of both academics and textbooks.

These two traditions spoke different languages. While British social work focused on the "social" and the structural, American tastes ran to the "personal" and casework models. There were aspects of Australian culture[19] that resonated well with both voices. We saw ourselves, like Americans, as not structured by class. The vaunted ideology in both America and Australia is that each individual ought have an equal chance of becoming whatever they choose. At the same time in

Australia, there was a strong expectation, dating from convict days that the government was responsible to provide a basic platform to meet the needs of the collective population. Denzin (1993) has characterized American society as secular, democratic and competitive. Australia would seem to differ in being more secular and less competitive with a much paler version of the ethos of self-responsibility that permeates American culture.

Before formal education for social workers in Western Australia there was an established welfare system. In the Australian democratic system this reflected fairly egalitarian concerns except for those excluded from the *polis* --in this setting at this time meaning in particular Aboriginal people. Federal services were likely to be institutional, with state and non-government services of a subsidiary, complementary, and residual nature. Because the federal government controls tax and funding in Australia it has the strongest hand in shaping the nature of the overall system. This means a fairly uniform level of benefits across states, in contrast to the American situation. The relatively uniform and institutional nature of much of the welfare system meant that it it did not attach the same stigma to users as more residual systems might.

A Strong Social Security System

In 1909 Australia was one of the first countries in the world to introduce old age pensions for all citizens (Aboriginal people mainly "became" citizens after a federal referendum which resulted in the Constitution Alteration [Aborigines] Act of 1967). Pensions were paid out of consolidated revenue as a citizen right not as a return on payments to a scheme. This encouraged people to take risks in developing the country, understanding they were guaranteed a means of survival in old age. The perception of the need for such encouragement compared with the lack of such perception in America becomes evident driving across the two countries. There are more than fifteen Americans for each Australian and they occupy much the same total land area. The Australian patterning is of population clusters in the capital cities on the seaboard. The heartland is empty in contrast to the cultural strength symbolized by the Americans living in the geographic middle of the United States. Driving to Urbana from Los Angeles, only the section through and around Navajo land reminded me of similar long drives through Australia. This history of a drive to "populate or perish" in making Australia a country for "real white men"[20] has shaped a populace that accepts that there should be a national health scheme, free education for all, government housing, and a minimum income available to all who need it.

As anywhere, such dominant expectations coexist with differing ideas and material pressures for alternatives. There has been retraction of the welfare state with the discourse of economic rationalism prevailing in the eighties. So university education became free for all Australians during the seventies. By the end of the eighties, student grant levels relative to the cost of living fell and fees were introduced. Paying these fees can be set aside until the students' income on graduation reaches a certain level but there is no avoiding them as they are linked to the taxation system. Australia was feeling the pinch of the economic downturn of the eighties and associated competition from highly

educated Asian labor forces. Imposing fees served the double purpose of raising money and selling Australians on the idea of education as a valued and necessary commodity.

A Constructivist not Essentialist National Sensibility

Yet we were not Britain and we were not America. We did not have a Thatcher or a Reagan. Despite our constant checking with the "realities" unfolding in these places, there was a growing awareness of needing to think for ourselves at the local and national level. In particular we needed to develop meaningful communication with neighboring countries and trade partners that did not speak English and were not sites of Western traditions of thought and culture. Frow and Morris (1993) refer to the:

> policy debates about the social and cultural dimensions of Australia's increasing economic integration with Japan (our major trading partner) and other east Asian countries: the wide circulation in the media of competing narratives--whether dreams or nightmares, fantasies or fears--about "becoming part of 'Asia'". (p. xi)

In the context of these debates emerging so integrally with the demise of the "White Australia" policy of Social Darwinism, these authors conclude that such economic pressures have shaped an official discourse that:

> promotes a constructive, not an organic, concept of Australian culture and a pragmatic, even enterprising, approach to the uses of historical representation; for this discourse both "culture" and "history" can be valued more as practices responsible for shaping a prosperous national future than as ways of conserving a "heritage" from the past. (Frow & Morris, 1993, p. xi-xii)

These concerns about identity and culture were constantly articulated within the Australian media and dialogued among segments of the population. As remnants of white British colonies, Australia with New Zealand and Canada shared a need to operate within changed conceptions of economics and Sovereign ties. All these nations debated identity in ways that resonated strongly with current western discourse as to the constructed nature of race, class, and gender issues.

These post-colonial countries had to reconcile their *ressentiment*[21] at continuing subservience to extra-national forces with the *ressentiment* increasingly expressed by dominated "others" within national borders. Praxising such tensions has been central to the political economy of all these places since colonization and continues as a key aspect of everyday action. Such praxis is also a core meaning to the creation story of American democracy. The mythological story of the necessity of valuing the dignity and worth of each individual was a motivating force to organize into collectivities to change the social in all these sites. Those who benefitted from the change achieved by such collectivities at any particular time were in turn likely to find the same story used by the still excluded to challenge the new set of privileged.

Valuing Both the Individual and the Collectivity

Perhaps it is the fate of the dominant, whether by virtue of race, class, gender or international power, to be unaware of the fact that there are multiple realities while the dominated can't avoid living this knowledge. In America after the dominance of the British was successfully challenged a culture evolved in which public expression of *ressentiment* was minimal. Instead a belief evolved that each citizen could look after his own needs with minimal assistance from government. A study of the American culture of individualism, quotes de Tocqueville's sensibility in coining this term early last century:

> Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself . . . There are more and more people who, though neither rich nor powerful enough to have much hold over others, have gained or kept enough wealth and enough understanding to look after their own needs. Such folk owe no man anything and hardly expect anything from anybody. They form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands. (quoted in Bellah, et al., 1986, p. 37)

The emergence of such calm and considered feelings was perhaps tied to the richness of American soil. Both Bellah et al (1986) and Parenti (1988) have argued that with the later development of American capitalism this feeling of autonomy from the social became a cultural motif of what they call "utilitarian individualism." This they style as an inordinate focus on "economic man," a discounting of contributions outside the money economy and a devaluing of all those marginal to it. Christopher Lasch (1984) concludes that this boosting of what he calls "ersatz individualism" came at the expense of notions of community, interdependence, collective will, political knowledge, and action. Over time this atrophying of conceptual links between the personal and the social meant that individual need for change required a focus on the individual not the social. As America achieved world dominance with its economic and military strength there was little public consciousness of the connectedness between the social and the personal lives of American individuals. The social was taken-for-granted as an obdurate and objective reality. Fischer (1978) captures this ideology well with regard to American social work:

> Consider what is noblest about social casework: a philosophy and value system centered on the worth and dignity of the individual . . . A recognition that without primary attention to and concern with *individuals* the entire *society* suffers . . . casework may be viewed as a process to subvert society . . . and to stand as a bulwark against the myriad pressures against individuals achieving their full potential. (p. 10)

In contrast, calm and considered feelings of autonomy from the social have never dominated the discourse in Australia. Democratic ideas of caring about the equal worth of all individuals have not presumed an ideology of utilitarian individualism, though the current language of economic rationalism suggests we should move in this direction. To date, however, the ideology has been that everyone, from babies to the aged should be entitled to care as they need it. The chief limitation to this

ideology of care has been the ethnocentric and to some degree phallocentric terms in which who needs what care has been decided.

A key catalyst in broadening the debate over how the diverse collectivity can be best served by the nation came for Australia and other white post-colonial countries from American countercultural ideas of the sixties. The identification of Anglo-celtic ethnocentrism and male privilege have become central to public dialogue in Australia around personal troubles. Democratic ways of addressing these issues are widely reflected in public policy since 1972. While both ethnocentrism and male privilege remain, they are a transmuted and challenged part of Australian culture.

Living in Illinois for almost two years, I have observed and experienced very different outcomes to these sixties countercultural ideas here in the United States. Clearly the utilitarian individualism of American culture and perhaps the blindness of power Rosaldo (1993a) describes have meant very different readings of counterculture ideas in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand than in the United States. Multiculturalism, in all these less internationally dominant countries, has a meaning and strength in public policy decisions very diferent from the identity politics prevailing in the United States (Frow & Morris, 1993; Hughes, 1993; West, 1993a).

In Australia, Canada, and New Zealand there is a strengthening consciousness at a public level of the potentially oppressive nature of empiricism, which flows through to an open discussion as to whose definition of reality is to prevail in any particular issue. Power, conflict, and organizing collectivities to change the social would seem more public activities than they have come to be in American society.

<u>Emergence of Australian Cultural Studies</u>

Since the seventies, an awareness of difference being about more than binary logic has become part of the public discourse in Australia. As Frow and Morris (1993) detail, in Australian public culture there is an open and public dialogue about Australian culture, in an anthropological sense of the term. There is a belief that this culture is a plastic and dynamic medium that we can attempt to make over in the image of politically decided "good." With the use of culture as an organizing concept, questions of meaning and interpretation become central.

The base for such public discourse has been developing for more than twenty years. With the end of the Menzies[22] era there was much debate about how Australia could address Australian issues in Australian terms. Since then policy reforms argued for by feminists, Aboriginals, migrants, the disabled, the aged, and the wide constituency seeking national health have proliferated. In the most recent general election in 1993, the Liberal party[23] was led by Dr. John Hewson. He promised to use his Harvard economics knowledge to help Australia "get real" about dismantling the welfare state and encouraging individual initiative. The post-electoral analysis of the Liberal loss indicated that this offer misread the Australian ethos.

The work of Thomas Keneally, an Irish Australian Catholic,[24] is representative of a changing Australian consciousness on the politics of inclusion/exclusion. His writing career spans the post-Menzies era in Australia. An early novel, <u>The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith</u> told the "true" story of a part-Aboriginal raised by his white father to be culturally a "real white man." On becoming a worker, Jimmie found he was constantly left out of the mateship round of fairness because he was black (Keneally, 1983). Eventually , in frustration, he annihilates as many white settlers as he can. Keneally's message was clear: We must love one another or die.

I read it to be the same message in <u>Schindler's List,</u>[25] another of Keneally's (1982) works now filmed by Americans. It is the story of a non-Jew who takes risks in acting to save Jews during the Nazi regime. I am struck by the number of times American film reviewers have identified Schindler's motivation as a gaping hole in the plot (See Kaufman, 1993). For Keneally and so many other Australian thinkers, communication about the Nazi holocaust helped engender a consciousness of our own genocidal activities towards Aboriginal people. Keneally's works overall[26] can be read as affirming the Australian mateship myth of egalitarian solidarity yet stressing from the perspective of a white, anglo-celtic male that it must apply to everyone if it is to work for anyone. Such ideas are important in my own belief that the prime value of social work is in actualizing the equal worth of all people. This leads into my discussion of the development of social work knowledge in Australia.

Australian Social Work and the Australian Studies Movement

Australia has a population base of some 17-18 million individuals. The social work academic population is small compared to America. With the emergence to power of Australian trained academics by the eighties there came an articulation of discomfort with imported social work knowledge. In reaction to the patent inapplicability of some of this wisdom came an exploration of the Australian studies movement, questioning the taken-for-granted notion that human sciences knowledge is technical and can be ahistorical and acultural (Healy, Rimmer, & Ife, 1986).

The outcome has been a stress on the importance of local knowledge. Integrated with this are theoretical developments in interpretive and feminist social thought that see social realities as ongoing dynamic social constructions that can only be apprehended through interpretation (Bernstein, 1983; Denzin, 1986a ,1989b; Stanley, 1990c). Two North American sociological/anthropological influences have been particularly important in the development of a cultural dimension to Australian social work. These are the work of Geertz (1973, 1983) highlighting the ways in which we are all natives in the postmodern era and of Smith (1975, 1987) describing ways to identify structural factors in any particular situation by starting with the personal.

The Concept of Culture in Social Work

My years of direct practice experience were with those defined as different from the "normality" of social work clients. I worked with rural more than urban residents, Aboriginal more

than non-Aboriginal, and migrant more than Australian-born (among the non-Aboriginal). With all of these people "starting where the client is at" entailed more than a psychologizing empathy.

Educated as an anthropologist before becoming a social worker, I took it for granted that people's behavior could generally be made sense of if you attempted to "culturally" imagine the world through their eyes. Though Vidich (1992) has recently connected the origins of participant observation, ethnography and anthropology to the early work of social workers in American settlement houses, it was quite striking that in my social work course, clients were conceptualized through the ahistorical, acultural lens of theory. Anthropology was about "them" and they had culture but social work was about "us" and we behaved spontaneously like normal people. During this social work course, coming after a year's field experience mainly with Aboriginal people in Perth, I was constantly frustrated when asking how certain theoretical content would apply to Aboriginal people. The answer was invariably, "Oh well, they're different." The implication seemed to be they were deviant and of only marginal interest.

This frustration motivated a personal practice struggle to actualize the value-based social work notion of all people being of equal worth. Using my anthropological knowledge it seemed we could communicate across cultures in ways that honored the difference rather than seeking to get clients back "on track" in the dominant traditions of structural functionalism. Or, in an Australia still accepting a taken-for-granted positivism of both the order and conflict kind, without expecting clients to wait for a radical Marxist structural revolution to address their here-and-now issues (Howe, 1987).

In 1984 this engagement with making meaning of culture in the context of social work practice led to employment for me. The Curtin School of Social Work, offering a four year undergraduate degree, was now one of two schools of social work in Perth. Becoming a part-time untenured tutor there, I was charged with introducing the anthropological concept of "culture" into the curriculum. The creation of this position reflected that the school was moving in harmony with interdisciplinary moves to develop local knowledge and address the needs of minority groups such as migrants, Aboriginals, women, and rural residents. There were government-funded incentives available to universities and schools demonstrating inclusionary action in both admission and curriculum areas with regard to minority groups.

In Search of Meanings Around "Culture" in Social Work

At Curtin, the British connection and our particular history means we emphasize teaching social theory and the notion that there are alternative paradigms, alternative epistemologies of knowledge. Burrell and Morgan's (1979) ordering of social theories around the dimensions of order and conflict, and subjectivity and objectivity has been standard fare for longer than I have been at Curtin.

I have tutored[27] in the class Social Work 321 or Critical Theory for so long I can replicate Burrell and Morgan's mapping of social theories at will. Each year in this third year core curriculum unit, students respond in essay form to a quote from Raymond Williams (1958) which questions how

we choose between various options as to the nature of knowledge in taking action. In the final year of the course students are required to complete a personal philosophy essay on their own intended practice frameworks of knowledge.

For a long time this material was taught with the suggestion that, in the end, each student would have to choose and commit themself to one particular site in the possibilities. Following Howe (1987) the roles of social workers were glossed as seekers (interpretivists), fixers (structural functionalists), revolutionaries (positivist Marxists) and consciousness raisers (existentialists, feminists, and critical theorists). The more I thought about my own practice and what I have done and been seen to have done, the more it seemed that I ranged about these possibilities. I did not have an autonomous, bounded self in my orientation to taking action in the world but rather this depended on the reading I made of the practice situation in which I found myself. It seemed that while this paradigmatic framing was a useful way of ordering thought about practice, any one stance did not capture with finality the possibilities of thinking and theorizing in practice.

Along with my personal struggles with this social theory material, there was tension within the course as a whole: between the personal counselors, who dominated the first two years of the course content and the social theorists whose time came in the final two years. Their differences mirrored the differences in American and British styles of thinking for social work. The core of the casework course was Biestek's (1957) seven principles of practice and the importance of social work judgment in resolving ethical dilemmas. The social theory and community practice courses in contrast highlighted the intractability/imperviousness of social structures to personal judgment and action. In the first two years the strongest image of social work clients conveyed was as "creators" of their destiny and then in the final part of the course, they transformed to "helpless puppets" of the social structure (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Feminist Perspectives as a way Forward

Feminist theories became an important factor in some resolution of this tension. Facilitated by the good practice skills of some of the educators at keeping the dialogue going, feminist ideas articulated by various faculty offered a way to "personalize the structural and politicize the personal" (Morrell, 1987, p. 147).

In this context, my task in collaboration with colleagues was to weave the concept of "culture" into the three semesters of Behavioral Science that all beginning students took with the aim of understanding human development. Our objectives developed out of long conversations with each other, practicing social workers, students, the Curtin Center for Aboriginal Studies, and migrant welfare groups.

We decided to begin with, but not foreclose on issues of gender, class, ethnicity and race and strive to provide a forum in which students felt safe to explore the humanity of both themselves and others. Jennifer Gardiner, another Australian anthropologist cum social worker, and I joined forces to design a locally relevant curriculum of human development (Crawford & Gardiner, 1989). One of the

key tasks we identified was to facilitate students tuning into their own realities in ways that left them open to connecting with others living in different realities--making meaningful the social work dictum of "starting where the client was at" by becoming aware of their own "positionality."[28]

Anne Wearne, an Australian-trained, English-born virtuoso of personal practice, shared processes of running tutorials to "catalyze" student self-learning and reflection. This was a valuable lesson for Jennifer and me. Structurally-oriented rather than person-focused, we had slipped over the key communication issue of message sent not always being the message received. A survey at the end of a first course on understanding difference was a salutary reminder of the need for engagement by all parties in pedagogy as in social work(see Fuss, 1989; Lather, 1991). On the issue of race, we found that one in four students completing the first course did not see that social work students needed to know about Aboriginal people. Most had not met an Aboriginal person and without contact with the public welfare system did not realize that Aboriginal people formed the majority of clients in many government agencies.[29]

It was Anne Wearne who reminded us of the mediating logic of social work practice. If we wanted to dialogue with students about the importance of knowing race, gender and class we needed to do it in ways that recognized students would make their own meaning of the process (Wearne, 1989). The principle of self-determination in Biestek's practice principles applies equally to social work students, to clients and to all of us (Biestek, 1957). This understanding is at the heart of the phenomenological and existential interpretive social theories with which I resonate so strongly. The art of putting this understanding into practice remains difficult for even the best of my intentions.

Contact With Earlier Autoethnographies

So Anne focused on the process of these weekly two-hour tutorials while Jenny and I with others collaborated on the content. We used novels and readings from across disciplines, especially anthropology. In terms of my present project, I note that some of the most powerful of these readings were what I would now term autoethnographies. There was Laura Bohannan's (1977) "Shakespeare in the Bush," a personal narrative by an anthropologist, reflecting on the very different meanings made by African tribespeople of this classic European tale.[30]

From Western Australia there were two autobiographies released in the eighties whose great strength was they addressed from an insider or emic perspective important aspects of the nature of local society and history. Both were voices from groups usually ignored or relatively powerless in officially endorsed and academic histories.

The first published, Albert Facey's (1981) A Fortunate Life, was the reflections of a retired "battler"[31] pronouncing himself well satisfied with his life in this "worker's paradise."[32] Not at all the autobiography of an autonomous, self-made and successful self, this low key and gentle book traced Facey's fostered out at a tender age into horrendous circumstances. With no means of transportation nor communication his family could not check on his wellbeing. Surviving to adulthood, he subsequently served in World War I, married and made a failed attempt at wheat farming

before embarking on a lifetime of work as a bus driver in Perth. Reprint after reprint of this most unpretentious text, demonstrated how his remembered self captured a sense of the state's history and development that resonated strongly with the memories, values, and knowledge of his interpretive community.

The second local text, Sally Morgan's My Place, (1987) worked to raise consciousness as to the continuing presence of Aboriginal people within the community and their continuing everyday oppression through economic, social, and political means. Morgan, a university graduate, married, and mothering in suburbia when she wrote, shared her story of not knowing she was Aboriginal until she was fifteen. Her mother, the unacknowledged daughter of a powerful cattle station owner, thought it would be safer for the family if they were believed to be of Asian Indian heritage. Morgan's text from within a highly personal and particular narrative conveyed and clarified the constructed sense of self all of us share.

A student in class questioned Morgan's memoirs. He had lived in the same suburb as the family and reported that they really didn't look Aboriginal and would have nothing to complain about in terms of "fitting in." This pronouncement provoked a lively discussion among the class as to what it means to "fit in" and what it means to "look" Aboriginal--what does it mean to the sense of self to pretend to be Indian.

A third text I read at this time but did not use in class was Teacher (Ashton-Warner, 1963) . This textualizes a New Zealand woman's lived experience of the practice of class-room teaching in rural schools with an ethnic diversity of students. Smith (1994) writing on the value of biographical texts cites this work as one of the few in professional education writing that "present powerful life-writing statements. Non-mainstream voices entered into the dialogue about schooling" (p. 301). Smith suggests that such texts served to "speak back" to the academic disciplinary specialists developing "teacher-proof" curricula in the sixties, which "placed the classroom teacher as one technocratic spot in the conveyor belt of school change" (p. 301). Only now as I struggle to articulate my project do I realize that the genre of practitioner autoethnography to which I aspire has been developed over time by women practitioners from a diversity of professions.

In introducing the concept of culture into the behavioral science course, such texts were used to convey a sense of the ways in which each of us live in our own unique, but culturally constructed worlds of lived experience. Each of us has a socially constructed sense of self and the key task for each practitioner is to struggle for awareness as to the nature of these influences in shaping our sense of ourselves. In addition to readings, all students completed an ethnographic interview with a stranger, using James Spradley's classic texts as a guide (1979, 1980). The mantra I used in thinking about what we were doing in this course was Geertz's dictum (1973), "We are all natives now." Becoming aware of and exploring the meanings attached to our being connected creatures and creators of culture was the task for all involved.

Culture as Process not Product

Constantly, the struggle was understanding culture as process over product. Both Bernstein (1983) and Imre (1991) note positivism as a style of thinking supported by the English language. Among educated English speakers we found it no easy task to relinquish pinning meaning down to facts and instead hold in mind Geertz's (1973) understanding that;

> We are suspended in webs of significance we ourselves have spun. The analysis of culture then is not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5)

There were tales from the field that served to illustrate the dangers of slipping from process to product without awareness. In one anecdote an agency kept a filing cabinet of information on the different migrant cultures of clients. When a Filipina came for assistance on the physical abuse she was receiving from her husband, the caseworker looked up the information on Philippine culture. She counseled the women that her Catholic culture required her to return home and seek comfort from the Church in her troubles. Guest lecturers from the migrant community were able to explore with students the inadequacy and oppressiveness of such a reading of the cultural.

At one particular tutorial discussion there were two guest student participants from the Curtin Center for Aboriginal Studies. The topic was Aboriginal culture and government policy. One guest was a young, very black man who told us that only now at Curtin was he beginning to learn about Aboriginal culture. He had been adopted and raised by a white family with no contact with other Aboriginal people. The other visitor was a young woman who did not look Aboriginal to many eyes. She told stories of her Aboriginal community and the particular ways in which her life had been affected by government control over Aboriginal people. At the end of two hours most students had some idea of the complexity of meanings attached to those binary categories: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

1990- A new Unit in Research

As the years passed and the teachers involved became increasingly comfortable with both the process and content of these behavioral science units, there was time to look around and consider the bigger picture. I became aware that much of the language of interpretivism contrasted strongly with other languages of logic taught in the course. Both this curriculum initiative and a rising general interest among the staff in feminism and social construction ideas brought a questioning of the role of the research units in preparing students for practice.

Faculty as a whole were justifiably proud of the School's successful record in skilling students to use traditional scientific methods for research. The issue became whether this was the only way to do research. Teaching research solely in this way directly contradicted much of the new curriculum stressing local knowledge and knowing in context. It negated the ideas developed in the Behavioral

Science units of the impossibility of knowers being without positionality. It insisted that there could be what Geertz (1973) called, "a God's eye view of knowledge".

Impassioned debates, dialogues and politics eventuated in a new unit called Research Inquiry. This we subtitled naturalistic/feminist research after prolonged dialogue around names like post-positivist (rejected because those teaching positivism did not like the implication that positivism was finished), and post-empirical (rejected because the "new paradigm" followers did not like the implication that they were not grounded in experience).[33]

Three of the prime texts were Lincoln (1985), Reason and Rowan (1981), and Reason (1988). This continued the tradition of drawing on both British and American sources. None of these were social work texts as such, but there were a number of social work articles addressing naturalistic inquiry and qualitative research incorporated into the reading lists (See Haworth, 1984; Karger, 1983; Rodwell, 1987; Scott, 1989). Here the American contribution outweighed the British, though in turn British feminists backed by Canadian writers were also an important source of related ideas (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Smith, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1983).

Social Work Developments in the Eastern States

The main Australian sources of influence at the time of developing the course were Melbourne educators. (see Map 3: Australia for the placement of Eastern States and cities relevant to Perth.) (Map not reproduced in this version.) Particularly known was work at the University of Melbourne, where participatory action research and the notion of practice wisdom were being developed both within social work and more generally across disciplines (see Kemmis, 1985; Scott, 1989; Wadsworth, 1992). Perhaps most personally powerful for me was the work of Queenslanders, Tony Kelly and Sandra Sewell (1988). Reflecting on my own practice and thinking about the purposes I hoped to serve in helping to mount the new research course, I met and dialogued with these author/activists. They worked in settings very similar to those I knew. Queensland and Western Australia share being the least industrialized of states, mining rich and reputedly most backward and conservative on social issues.

The term "Eastern States" is an important marker of the sense of isolation and exclusion Western Australians generally feel about the rest of Australia, cut off as we are by a thousand miles of desert. Though writings from the rest of Australia were important to our conversations, they were far less numerous than British and American texts. It was the "live" conversations among a shifting population of participants that were most important in shaping ongoing actions in our work of educating for social work.

Thinking of the Bigger Picture

Even with the new course in social work research we were constantly reminded of the unstable base on which we stood in arguing for interpretive value-based approaches. This instability

revolved around power and gender issues. The majority of the female faculty had practice experience in Western Australia, but none had a doctoral degree. For males almost the reverse was true. At this time doctoral degrees almost by definition came from somewhere else--the eastern states or overseas. Some of these credentialled males were key figures in pushing to make social work education more locally relevant but to some players in the bigger picture such actions only confirmed their negatively evaluated identification with a non-scientific, ideological version of human services.

With the politics of economic recession that prevailed through the eighties, social work was under pressure to provide a measured accounting of its effectiveness. The language of economic rationalism was a direct import from the Thatcherite and Reaganite regimes. Yolande Wadsworth's (1992) widely used text in evaluation can be read as an artful response to this push for effectiveness. Her use of a "critical reference group" in evaluating human services evokes Australian cultural myths of fairness and recognition of difference. She centered the question of effectiveness for what and for whom? Her attempt to draft new language to old value-based ends in human services was relatively successful. At the same time the use of American designed instruments and measures for the delivery of human services continued to expand.

Dorothy Scott, a social work educator from Melbourne, after a recent study trip to America has written of the phenomena of state policy changes in Australian child protection to implement American family preservation practices (1993). This has followed the impressive research outcomes of these programs reported in American social work journals. On coming to America she realized that Australia's child protection issues are of a different order to those current in the United States. Scott found that the power of American empiricism among some decision-makers in Australia is so strong that no-one had reflected on the differing contexts. State resources were committed to implementing a technology of problematic relevance and effectiveness. In particular the number of children entering foster care is much lower in Australia and there are already an extensive range of child support services available as an institutional part of the Australian welfare system. There is free medical care, a nation-wide network of infant health clinics, and a relatively generous supporting parents' benefit and family allowance. Scott concludes by urging more widespread consideration of the always contextual nature of knowledge in the human sciences.

At Curtin it seemed that, as a discipline, we needed to make a place for ourselves in the ongoing dialogue by building a broader power base and seeking higher academic credentials. The politics of research meant that psychology was quickly coming to have more community standing than social work in addressing human issues. This reflects what Scott (1993) identifies as the continuing cultural spread of American scientism even while the Australian studies movement burgeoned. Psychology trained counselors were praised by public service employers for staying with individual counseling issues and not involving themselves in social issues. For students "the white coat image" of the psychologist versus the "bleeding heart" or "revolutionary" image of the social worker seemed to be less personally demanding and more financially rewarding.

The inferior status of social work was demonstrated to me at a Women's Interests Conference in 1990 in Katanning, the town center of a wealthy farming area. "Glad to meet you," said a woman at morning tea. "If my daughter can't get enough marks to get into psychology, she'll have to do social work."

Psychology being overwhelmingly a positivist American import with relatively little concern with the social or the cultural, its dominance seemed to flag a possibility that an interpretive bent to social work could be of marginal, passing significance. These being some of my concerns, I came to America in search of a doctorate and more knowledge about the interpretive, post-positivist turn.

Being in America Studying Social Work

American Actualities

Coming to America clarified many of the confusions I had unwittingly gathered by reading American social work texts while living in an Australian context. There is a gulf of difference in our respective framings of knowledge. Dorothy Smith (1975) wrote in the first issue of the Canadian Journal of Sociology on what it might mean to "do" Canadian sociology. She pointed to the amount of tacit knowledge embedded in the supposedly abstract universal sociological knowledges which smaller nations like Canada import from dominant nations. On discovering the overall patterning of social work knowledge within America as compared to its nature and meaning in Australia I resonate with her insight.

In Australia my "areas of interests" are community work, community development, qualitative research, rural social work, ethnic, and migrant social work and working with Aboriginal people. Virtually all my field experience has been with the state child welfare statutory department and in that capacity I practiced casework, group work, and community work. Working in a small country town it was easy enough to choose method according to purpose. It is a different categorization of social work to be found in course work here at Illinois, where casework is taken-for-granted as the "normal" way to do social work and specializations come in professional training by potential employment areas, which are mental health, health care, school social work, and child welfare.

The professional mission of American academic social work has recently been stated as building foundational knowledge for social work (Austin, 1991). The prime means to that end are currently empiricism and the scientific method. In his survey of the American social work research literature Peile (1988a) found that though there has been an "Epistemological Debate" since the mid-seventies, quantitative measures of individual cases remain the hegemonic way to build social work knowledge. Community work exists, but barely. Group work is stronger than community work, but distinctly subsidiary to casework. The dates of entry of these methods of practice into the American national social work professional body were delayed until the thirties and forties respectively, signifying something of their standing vis-a-vis casework.

Joel Fischer's Quest for "What Works"

The writings on effectiveness and accountability that appeared in American social work during the seventies, through the eighties and continue now, are understood in the context of the American political climate through these years. Yet it was a sharp disruption to my project in coming here to be required to acquaint myself with the writings of Joel Fischer (1971, 1973, 1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1983). On reflection, however, this detour has become a vital part in shaping the project I now propose.

At first what struck me about Joel Fischer was wonder that anyone could live in Hawaii and be committed to a belief that the scientific method will deliver solutions to human problems that can be generalized and decontextualized across time and place. The second issue I did not understand was how he could seize control of defining the question with so very little answering-back from practitioners. To him the issue was "what works" and social workers were being unethical and unprofessional by not using the scientific knowledge available as to the best practice of social work. He saw it as a practitioner's ethical responsibility to keep abreast of the results of scientific experiments and to use only those practice methods proved to work (1978).

The image that came to my mind was Mills' (1959) abstracted empiricist quiltmakers, whose aim was to eventually make a rug of the truth by patching together all the results of their experiments. That Fischer (1981b) could publish a book advocating abstract empiricism almost twenty years after the Mills classic and claim it as a revolutionary step in research, brought home just how muted the sociological imagination had become in American social work.

Fischer did serve to stimulate much debate within social work as to the nature of knowledge and epistemology (See Austin, 1991; Gordon, 1983; Hartman, 1992; Haworth, 1984; Hudson, 1978; Imre, 1984, 1991; Karger, 1983; Pieper, 1989; Rodwell, 1987; Weick, 1987). Perhaps because it has been largely a debate and not dialogue, resolution and movement are not clearly marked in the trail of texts.

Remarkably few comments have been written from the emic perspective of social work practitioners. To paraphrase Geertz (1988), if you want to know what a practice is, you need to study what the practitioners do. In social work there is a strange silence from those who actually do social work while there seems a taken-for-granted freedom to impute incompetence, bad faith, and inefficiency to social work practitioners by academic researchers both within and outside the discipline itself (Fischer, 1981a; Tice, 1990).

There is a gender patterning to this debate. Mainly male academics trained in the logic of the scientific method and having no requirement to display credentials of practice experience and knowledge, judge the largely female population of practitioners as ignorant--ignorant on the proper method of knowledge building. Practitioners are figured as confused and needing guidance on how to become more effective and "scientific" (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). Looking at Fischer's (1981a) eighty

item list of criteria for evaluating research reports I tried to imagine how and whom this would help. Then it seemed surely feminist research in social work would have addressed these issues!

In Australia feminism has been a powerful force in social work circles in moving us into a post-positivist era. Frow and Morris (1993) report that generally in Australia a bureaucratization of feminism has been effected by the political action of feminists:[34]

> Many Australian feminists have always taken the slogan "the personal is the political" to mean the resources of the State must be captured and used in the interests of transforming women's lives by increasing their access to social equity and power. (p.33)

In short, using structural means to change culture and taking seriously the idea that addressing the personal can mean addressing the social. This means working to build the wide and inclusive network of relationships by which this power can be gained.

Dominance of "Adding Women In" Feminism

Sands and Nuccio (1992) note that while feminist writings have affected the social work profession in the last two decades, they have not been an integral part of the epistemology debate within social work. The dominant form of feminism followed by American social workers is liberal feminism. Sands and Nuccio define this as emphasizing "the attainment of political rights, opportunities, and equality within the existing political system" (p. 490). In the American context this has meant that feminist thinking remains close to mainstream rationalist social work.

Thinking this through, I identify not so much the greater radicalism of Australian feminist thinkers as the greater structuralism of Australian society in shaping different outcomes in Australia. In Australia, feminism is also closely tied to the political status quo. It just so happens that since 1983 and through much of the seventies, this has been a Labor government at the federal level. Feminism itself has been an important factor in shaping this actuality. Among the six states, Labor has also often been in power at the state level. With compulsory voting and women being over fifty per cent of the population, all parties attend to women's issues in their policy formulations.

Feminism in the Australian context has achieved initiatives and changes in government services that are not part of the American system. We have "feminization of poverty" in Australia but "welfare queen" is not a term used to evoke condemnatory public judgment. As is our habit, the federal government has taken on board American ideas and research on "working for welfare" and policy moves have been made in this direction. Still "populate or perish" ideas haven't disappeared and there is strong sentiment that reproducing is working to the national benefit. Here in Illinois I continue to be paid $A60 per fortnight family allowance for caring for three Australian children.

I received maternity leave for my actual acts of reproduction. It is recognized that my commitment to childbirth and subsequent loss of earning power deserved compensation. Feminists have achieved these outcomes through the political process in alliance with a strong and knowing union movement. This has been important at both local and national levels. In 1985 I took maternity leave to give birth to David, my third child. Being just a part-time tutor I was moved at a staff meeting

to apologetically say, "Well of course I'll understand if you find someone while I'm away and need to offer them a permanent job."

The Head nodding, perhaps might have taken me up on my offer. It was David Buchanan, no particular friend of feminists but our long-standing union representative, who told me not to be stupid. "We don't win improved conditions to have you women being 'nice.' That position is yours and don't you forget it!"

Having timed my reproductive activities fortuitously, I have personally benefited from a range of support services designed to recognize the integral nature of reproduction to Australian production efforts. Yet had I joined the public service just a short time before I did, I would have been compelled to resign on marriage. The facts were then understood to be that a married woman in the workforce deprived a man of the chance to earn enough to support a family. The meaning and interpretations to be made of the the act of giving birth are clearly socially constructed. I have no difficulty however in strongly resonating with the view expressed by Alison Jagger:

> Women, who spend their lives weaving webs of human relationships and defining themselves and others in terms of these relationships, are not likely to think that individuals are prior to the community in any meaningful sense of the term *prior*. Any woman who has experienced pregnancy knows that a child is related to others even before it is born. The baby does not-- indeed could not--exist as a lonely atom . . . human infants are born helpless and require great care for many years. Because this care cannot be adequately provided by a single adult, humans live in social groups wherein resources are shared. (quoted in Tong, 1992, p 117)

Leaving Children Out

The necessity of childbirth to the ongoing dynamics of any society seems self-evident. As Sidel (1986) states, "Society as a whole is profoundly affected by each new individual and has a real stake in the wellbeing of the newborn" (p. 198). Is this understanding central to our social theories? British feminist philosopher of science, Rose (1983) has argued that in conceptualizing social production, the reproduction part of the process has consistently been neglected in social theories of both the conflict and order varieties. Reproduction, beyond the physical act of giving birth, involves all the tasks of caring involved in producing people able to produce things. The work involved is nurturing, supporting, and being there as needed. The work of producing people is qualitatively different to the work of producing things. Success necessarily involves close, interpersonal relationships.

In line with Foucault's (1972) understanding of the connection between power and knowledge, Rose (1983) connects this neglect of reproduction to the fact that caring activities in Western societies are the work of women, who lack the power to have their experiential knowledge included in abstract hegemonic knowledge. Similar arguments are made by Smith (1987, 1990), Stanley (1990c) and Stanley and Wise (1983). In this neglect of the necessary conditions for successful reproductive labor, they argue that reproductive processes in affected societies are less successful than might be expected. The welfare of children in any particular society is a ready measure of the degree of such neglect.

Child Welfare: A Collapsed Metanarrative of Progress?

In the American setting, the Carnegie Corporation of New York in April, 1994 released the key findings of a national survey to measure the wellbeing of children:

> A wide-ranging, three year study of young American children . . . confirms some of society's worst fears: millions of infants and toddlers are so deprived of medical care, loving supervision and intellectual stimulation that their growth into healthy and responsible adults is threatened . . . The report prepared . . . by a panel of eminent politicians, doctors, educators and business executives, paints a bleak picture of disintegrating families, persistent poverty, high levels of child abuse, inadequate health care, and child care of such poor quality that it threatens youngsters' intellectual and emotional development.
> It is a picture of a United States that ranks near the bottom of the industrialized nations in providing such services as universal health care, subsidized child care . . . despite recent scientific evidence that these early years are critical in the development of the brain. (Chira, 1994, p. 1)

Kadushin (1987) has written the entry on "Child Welfare Services" in the Encyclopedia of Social Work. Acknowledging a broad sense to the term that would cover *all* related to the welfare of children, he defines "child welfare" as meaning the specialized field of social work practice. He explains why a continuing demand for social work services is assured despite an actual drop in the U.S. birth rate:

> There has been an increase in the percentage of children living in poverty, an increase in the percentage of children living in single parent families, an increase in the number of children born out of wedlock to teenage parents, and an increase in the percentage of mothers of young children in the workforce; moreover the minority group population birthrates are higher than the national average. (p. 56)

He authoritatively states that child welfare agencies find parents to be the locus of child welfare problems with economic issues being only rarely involved. Logically then child welfare services should be individualized and social workers deliver the appropriate casework. Kadushin writes from within a structural-functional theoretical framing of society that being taken-for-granted as "reality" limits the exploration of other possibilities of child welfare.

With society as a harmonious whole, deviant parents form the natural constituency of social workers, whose task is to get them back on track. Such psychologizing is a logical accompaniment to the unreflected use of a structural functional theory of society. Writers such as Gordon(1985), Pelton (1987), and Sidel (1986) document that this has not been the only theory of society available to social workers and policy-makers in the child welfare area. Yet it has become the dominant paradigm of understanding in the United States. At the same time child welfare practice has become one of the least popular and powerful career areas among practitioners (Rycraft, 1994).

The area in which a need for professional social work practice was earliest recognized--the protection of children--is now a low status area of practice. In the inner city areas of highest reported need, it is increasingly rare to find professional social workers performing the practice of child protection. Schorr and Schorr (1989) in recommending the policy changes required to improve the wellbeing of children specify a broad spectrum of services: a need to be flexible and to see the child in the context of their family and surroundings, the building of relationships and trust, and the power to adapt and circumvent bureaucratic limitations. Such processes of remaining responsive to clients are the very social work processes denied expression in the dominant American positivist ways of organizing protective services for children. The Carnegie report of 1994 highlighted the fact that societal supports for reproductive activities are not institutional aspects of American society and comparative statistics indicate that American children are suffering for it (Chira, 1994).

Visiting Hull House

Surely, I thought, social work started in this country largely to address issues of caring for children. Living here in Urbana, regularly watching the evening Chicago television news, it is hard to recapture the sense of shock I had on first hearing the nightly tales of children dead and devastated. What had happened? I went to Chicago and visited Hull House:

> The world shrine of social work. It draws pilgrims from all the continents to West Side Chicago. "They think of it as the place where their profession began," said director Mary Ann Johnson. (Newman, 1994, p. 5)

I had not heard of Hull House until I came to Urbana and lived next to Tony McMahon, a fellow Australian social worker, in the Orchard Downs International Student Housing complex. I was easily persuaded by him that this was a necessary trip. We talked at length, as he completed his thesis on the current lived experience of Chicago child welfare workers (McMahon, 1992). Many of the activities of Hull House a hundred years ago mirrored those we were both involved in as Kimberley welfare practitioners of the seventies and eighties, while the activities of today's Chicago practitioners sounded Kafkaesque in their bureaucratic delimitation.

Unfamiliar with Chicago and highly tense at all the stories of mayhem, we took a wrong turn on a family trip to Hull House. Soon we were desperate to turn back: we had driven south on Halstead Street instead of north. Through our window on this cold bleak day all we could see were grim people, poverty, fires in tires, and rubbish everywhere. Rubbish in the same street, the same area in which

Jane Addams had achieved such fame as the garbage inspector! This rubbish has come to symbolize for me the erasure of her style of social work even while the name of Jane Addams lives on as one of the great heroines of American history.

At the same time, the rubbish and the conditions in which children live that I saw in Chicago brought to mind Lyotard's (1991) report of the collapse of the metanarratives of modernism. Jane Addams' style of work was dismissed as prescientific, pre-theoretical moralism cum socialism (Davis, 1973; Franklin, 1986; Lasch, 1965; Turner, 1986). It was replaced by the modernist certainties of scientific method. Since the seventies this faith in science has been reinforced in social work by the work of the abstracted empiricists (Fischer, 1981b; Mills, 1959). The outcomes displayed in Halstead Street Chicago in the nineties did not seem to be progess but instead regression to the conditions Addams appeared to have successfully addressed.

Constantly on the American media another story of child death finishes with a promise that investigations will be made as to whether each of the child welfare officers involved was doing their work properly. As if with proper method there remains hope the problem will be resolved. Among whom, I wonder?

Slowly consciousness developed that my project to look at meaning, interpretation, and culture from within an American academic social work program was confounded by a relative absence of social theory and philosophy from the dominant American discourse of social work. The sociological imagination that is so evident in the Hull House Museum of social work is not so easily grasped in current writings on practice. How did such a shift happen? In the next chapter I trace the way in which my seeking an answer to this question served to shape my own research project.

Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter I have sought to convey the context of my coming to America to study social work. In concert with an interpretive turn in the social sciences, I sought as a social work academic to incorporate a cultural understanding of human behavior into the curricula of an Australian school of social work. I came to America to learn more about the interpretive turn, about the nature of American social work in the American context, and about myself in relation to these influences on my thinking. In the American setting I found a relative lack of focus on social theory in overtly stated conceptualizations of the social work task and a dominance of empiricist ways of knowing. At the same time connecting with the work of Jane Addams in Chicago at the turn of the century, I found many similarities in the practice she writes of in Twenty Years at Hull House and that I experienced in the Kimberley region of Western Australia in the seventies and eighties of this century. She wrote of the importance of a sociological imagination in the doing of social work and of working across methods according to purpose. Her text was a practitioner's text that spoke of the complexities and difficulties of praxising theoretical understanding in the dynamics of actual grounded situations. Reading Addams was like revisitng countless conversations I have have with other social workers on what it is to do social work. I believe her text captures a notion of what it is to do social work that has

been lost in the reading of this as a heroine's text that has little to do with social work knowledge and skills taught now in universities.

In the next chapter I want to acknowledge the diverse conceptual influences giving rise to my decision to write an autoethnography of social work practice in the style of Jane Addams. I will trace how the story of Addams' practice achievements and the subsequent failure to recognize any intellectual component to her actions, propelled my conceptualization of reflecting and telling my own story of becoming a social worker. In the third chapter I will explicate how I intend to follow the methodology of narrative autoethnography I see exemplified in Twenty Years at Hull House. In the body of the thesis I will apply these conceptualizations and methodologies to reflection on my practice experiences. In the final chapters I will turn to consider other texts written about the same places, issues and people my practice addressed before considering what conclusions I can draw from my reflected lived experiences in preparing others to become social workers.

Woven throughout the text will be the multiple voices in which I speak as a social worker. These evidence a self that embodies a multi-cultural, multi-positioned identity, striving for connection and mediation. I connect to Jane Addams' style of moral pragmatism in resistance to identifying with abstract empiricists. This is only a small part of my total sense of self but I find satisfaction in believing there is communicability about social work across such incommensurate fields of time and place as Chicago at the turn of last century and Western Australia in the last quarter of this century. Other selves that will emerge through the text are the Australian self socialized to a firm sense of working-class "mateship" and "fairplay" by parents and family who lived this ethos in much of their everyday lives. At the same time there is my childhood self who had to read across the image banks of the very different cultures of my parents's families and make my own sense of the way to live in this world. There is also the teenage self who felt unfairly excluded from all the rewards of being properly "female" but believed an alternative route to inclusion lay in the meritocratic education system. It was only after developing an anthropological self through my study at University that I became conscious that the meritocracy of education did not extend into working life. The text commingles my selves as wife and mother, bureaucrat and risk-taker, and white westerner reading academic texts from the geographic margins, while centering my actions in the local and particular site of my practice as a social worker.

The thesis bears witness to the many ways my identity as a native of my time and place was shaped in all its necessary uniqueness and singularity. At the same time it makes clear how this identity connects across many categorical groups of culture, race, class, gender, ethnicity, and education. In all the text my voice is not that of an autonomous, unitary self-made being but that of a social, connected, multiple, positioned and unfinished self. I have little sense of being a decontextualized and separate self able to control my actions in the world to any outcome I desire. Rather I have a sense of always needing to read and connect with the context to get to where I want to go. In seeking to challenge the idea of there being an objective, standard way of being a social worker, I write an autoethnography of my practice that centers my persona in all its diversity but not in terms

of taking autonomous, unitary action in the world. Rather, connecting with what Anzaldua (1987) claims as the role of homosexuals, I identify a role of social workers, and humans in general, as being

> to link people with each other . . . to transfer ideas and information from one culture to another. . . . We are a blending that proves that all blood is intricately woven together, and that we are spawned out of similar souls. (p. 84-85)

In this autoethnography I write of my personal struggle to practice social work in ways that reflect my belief in social democracy for myself and others. Writing from within my situatedness within Australian culture, I hope to portray what Anzaldua (1987) does from within the context of American-Mexican culture:

> The struggle is inner: Chicano, *indio*, American Indian, *mojado*, *mexicano*, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian--our psyches resemble the border-towns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads. (p. 87)

Notes

CHAPTER TWO

Conceptualizing the Research Project

Only connect - E.M. Forster Howards End

In this chapter, in conceptualizing my research project, I follow Bruner's (1993) suggestion to revisit "the originals of out-of-fashion texts" (p. 24). I return to <u>Twenty Years at Hull House</u>, and consider it through the lens of post-modernism rather than those of the positivism which has prevailed through much of this century in Western thought and social work:

> Such a return is necessary for two reasons: First we need to relearn these texts, to see if standard criticisms still hold today; second, we need to study the best works from these traditions, so as to understand how the masters (sic) in a given "passé" perspective in fact did their work. (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 577)

In the first sections of this thesis, as a prelude to revisiting the Addams' text, I recount the demise of the Addams' style of social work and the rise of positivist/modernist styles of practice. I then locate my thinking about the nature of social work practice within the current moment of widespread paradigm shifts as to the nature of social theory in Western thinking. The shift has various names such as post-modernism, post-positivism, and the interpretive turn. I address the nature of these changes within philosophy, anthropology, feminist thought, and sociology, and then focus on consequences flowing from a recognition of the relationship between the knower and the known in the ongoing social construction of knowledge. Specifically, I explore the critical ethnography project of Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990). In the final section I explore what a use of critical feminist post-modern logic might mean for social workers' reflecting on their practice and knowledge. In particular I connect back to the logic of social work established in the writing of Jane Addams.

<u>The Reign of Positivism in Social Work</u>

<u>The Demise of Value Driven Pragmatism and Rise of Method Driven Scientism</u>[35]

Making sense of a shift from pragmatism to scientism within social work was shaped by the reading I was doing for a sociology unit with interpretive interactionist, Norman Denzin. He proposes methods of pursuing the project of sociological understanding outlined by Mills (1959). The nature of this project seems close to social work in examining how private troubles connect to public issues and how public responses connect to private troubles. Denzin notes that it is in times of change, or epiphanic moments, that the underlying structures of meaning are most likely to be visible (1989c).

Reading the history of American social work it seems that 1915 was a such an epiphanic moment. This was the year that Abraham Flexner, a leading educator in the medical profession, accepted an invitation from social workers to pass judgment on whether they were making the grade as a profession. He delivered the keynote address at the aspiring profession's national conference, making

his measure by the criteria of the medical profession (Lowe, 1987). These were so taken-for-granted as a "true" measure that their problematic relevance to the activity of social work did not surface as a consideration among the key players at this time. Austin (1983) notes that this crucial judgment for social workers was endowed with all the weight and authority of scientific truth. The judgment was delivered at a high point of modernism in American society. Flexner himself had undergone a paradigm shift from a belief in practice wisdom to a certainty that science alone would lead to progress. Franklin (1986) reports that his success at conveying this certainty to those at the conference was such that the message reached and influenced members of the social work profession as a whole.

With Flexner's pronouncement that social work failed to meet professional standards, American social workers appear to have preoccupied themselves with developing "professional" methods of practice (Richmond, 1917). In this focus on professionalism as method there has been an erasure of focus on the value-based purpose of practice (Lowe, 1987). Flexner further found professionalism wanting in that many social work tasks were about mediating and connecting clients to other professionals (Austin, 1983). In the logic of modernist rationalism such non-autonomous, nurturing, and feminine activities by their nature could not count as professional behavior.

Jane Addams (1860-1935) and Mary Richmond (1861-1928).

The biographies of two women, Mary Richmond (1861-1928) and Jane Addams (1860-1935) are helpful in understanding what happened in the on-going formation of the social work profession in this country (Franklin, 1986). Jane Addams, founder of Hull House, spoke for those who saw social theories and social philosophies as an integral part of the social work enterprise. She spoke from the position of a college-educated, independently wealthy woman in a time of "new women," when gendered possibilities of action remained relatively open. She didn't have to marry to survive and could seek in her living answer to Tolstoy's question, "What shall we do and how shall we live?" (quoted in Bernstein, 1983).

In setting up Hull House she sought to humanistically address the actualities of people she encountered and used methods as they suited her moral purpose (Franklin, 1986). For her success at this task and the high profile she achieved in the media as a heroine with ways to help the poor and helpless, she became a national figure (Lasch, 1965).

Mary Richmond in contrast was without a base of independent wealth or a college education. Unmarried she had to make a career and space for herself in conditions that discouraged the indulgence of philosophy and reflections on how the world might be (Franklin, 1986). She learned early the lesson Collins (1990) describes as instilled in oppressed groups of framing ideas in the language of the dominant group. For Richmond it seemed the way forward for social work as a profession was clear if social workers followed the guidance of those in control of societal decision-making. What was wanted were carers who could fix problems without disturbing the natural order (Franklin, 1986).

These two women embodied in their leadership long-standing tensions in American thought about "helping." The American Social Science Association was established in 1865 to develop

knowledge about the operations of social order so that social conditions could be improved (Gitterman & Germain, 1980). By 1874 those engaged in actual care and control practices, impatient with what they saw as impractical, indulgent abstract theorizing withdrew and formed their own Conference of Charities, which in 1879 became the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. In the eighties however there was renewed interest in theory among practitioners as the promise of scientific progress grasped the imagination of the public.

<u>Auguste Comte and positivism.</u>

A key conceptual influence in evoking public engagement with the promise of scientific social theory was the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857). This French philosopher and inventor of the terms, sociology and positivism, argued that the natural order of society was to be a harmonious whole meeting the needs of its members. Industrialism had upset this natural order but it could be regained by careful study, employing the same scientific methods that had been so successful at bringing about the industrial revolution. Mills (1959) found the two most popular European social theorists in the United States up to the end of the progressive era were Comte and Herbert Spencer, articulator of Social Darwinism. Comte certainly had the more optimistic and relevant philosophy for those involved in "helping." Some of the basic tenets of his positivism were:

- there is a single objective world
- that which cannot be known scientifically cannot be known
- laws of historical development enable the past to be explained,   the present understood, and the future predicted
- moral and political choices should be established scientifically
- social order is a natural condition of society
- man's subjection to laws of nature and order precludes   evaluation   except as to conformity to these laws (Bryant, 1975, p. 410).

<u>Being scientific following Comte.</u>

For charity workers to reap the benefits of becoming scientific all that was required was a following of the steps of scientific method. Out of this realization "scientific philanthropy" developed with a strong following (Gitterman & Germain, 1980). Charity Organization Societies in both Britain and the United States focused on packaging the requisite procedures to be followed by all welfare workers in order to ensure that charitable aid was delivered to the needy after consistent and objective assessment (Gitterman & Germain, 1980). While this scientific approach of controlling and standardizing responses to poverty spread, an alternative philosophy emerged alongside it in practice.

The work of the settlement houses, modeled on English Christian efforts, came to be involved with the development of American pragmatism and the work of Mead and Dewey (Davis, 1973; Deegan, 1988a). Jane Addams started Hull House with Ellen Starr in 1889 and soon captured public attention and praise for her efforts to participate in making--not assuming--the equitable moral ordering of society (Brieland, 1990). She and fellow residents communicated to the general public

specific hardships suffered by Chicago poor and demonstrated that if someone could listen to the stories of the poor in the terms that they were told and strive to understand the world of the poor from an insider's perspective, it was often possible to assist in highly particular ways that moved the person/family in question out of poverty and powerlessness. Assistance might vary from a one-off cash payment to a thoroughgoing public campaign to change legislation governing factory working conditions (Addams, 1990/1910). The choice of assistance depended on workers' understanding created from listening to the client's story, which was always placed within the context of sharing an understanding of the lived environment. This open-ended approach to engaging with clients was in marked contrast to the rigid set of procedures for assessment of need to be followed by scientific philanthropists regardless of circumstance and environment. As Addams herself explains, through bitter experience:

> I learned that life cannot be administered by definite rules and regulations; that wisdom to deal with a man's difficulties comes only through some knowledge of his life and habits as a whole; and to treat an isolated episode is almost sure to invite blundering. (1990/1910, p. 97)

A public recognition and lauding of the achievements of Hull House residents made Jane Addams, as a spokeperson for social work, attractive to those practitioners seeking to identify with a strong profession. She articulated clearly through her writings, the ideas shaping and emerging from settlement house work (Addams, 1909, 1915, 1972, 1990/1910). Her interests were in the particular settings and lived experiences of those in poverty; in working with social scientists to research and understand these situations as part of practice; and, in a commitment to political and active social reform as an integral part of the task of "helping" (Lasch, 1965).

Addams, in writing of the subjective necessity of settlement house work, expressed her reflexive awareness of her own interest in finding a sense of self by involving herself in caring for others (1990/1910). This related to Christian beliefs that religious commitment was more effectively expressed in deeds than words but Addams also articulated her experience that as an educated, independent women in late nineteenth century American society, there were few alternative outlets through which to shape a sense of self in the public world. It took her many years to decide on how she would live in accord with her beliefs and once decided, she displayed a passionate involvement in her life choice.

Though she was interested in science she had no belief that science in its own right would lead to progress. With Dewey, she centered the notion of value driven social experimentation (Dykhuizen, 1973). In summary, this was a process of looking-acting-reflecting on the situation at hand with a readiness to try different methods if it seemed people's concerns were not effectively addressed (Addams, 1990/1910).

This was in stark contrast to the interpretation of science made by Mary Richmond. To her, settlement house work was "doing harm by their cheap sprinkling sort of charity" (quoted in Brieland, 1990, p. 135). Having been heavily influenced by the medical profession in her own work, it became quite clear to her that the settlement "can pretend to be scientific when it is nothing of the kind"

(quoted in Franklin, 1986, p. 509). Her aim in developing casework was to provide structure and consistency to all helpers so help could be provided in the most efficient, standardized way. Armed with a scientific framework for practice there would be little need for academic theorizing and philosophizing. Richmond wrote in 1899 in a paper entitled "The Settlement and Friendly Visiting," that in recommending a social worker she would choose:

> One who has this practical resourcefulness than one who had a perfect equipment of advanced social theories . . . The former would find the most natural and effective way out . . . the other would say the whole social order was wrong and must pay a ransom for its wrongness by generous material help to its victims. (Franklin, 1986, p. 511)

Despite such dismissals of the practical value of social theory, Jane Addams' imagining that the social order could be constructed differently by human actions had tangible and positive consequences. This highly effective social reformer was catalyst in a range of legal and policy reforms in favor of women and children. With others she successfully lobbied for a federal Bureau of Children's Affairs and was instrumental in effecting a range of legislative reforms for the protection of women and children. In 1910 Jane Addams was elected the first woman president of the professional body now called the National Conference on Social Welfare (Davis, 1973).

Mary Richmond's space to invite Flexner's judgment.

Mary Richmond's space to invite a non-social work expert for advice on how to do social work, was cleared only with the collapse of the power and influence of Jane Addams. Here another finding of Collins (1990) seems germane. Among oppressed groups it is easy for the powerful to canonize a few spokespeople for the many and thereby control the many. Jane Addams was not alone in her commitment to moral critical pragmatism but only she became St. Jane (Lasch, 1965). Her fall from grace among Americans with the demise of the progressive era and the growing militarism and anti-socialism of American society worked to erase the message with the messenger (Davis, 1973). In 1912 she embarked on a series of risky ventures that left those social workers dependent on a secure career and paid position doubting if they could follow her. Throwing her support behind what was to be Teddy Roosevelt's failed bid for Presidency, Addams committed social workers to an overt political stance without consulting them. Involved in the peace movement in a time of war she continued to support talk of social initiatives at a time of fear mongering about socialism (Davis, 1973). Jane Addams took risks in the pursuit of her moral purpose.

The political judgment of social workers was that she got it wrong. In the binary style coming to dominate Western thought, if she was wrong that meant the scientific philanthropists must be right. The logic of scientism was used to argue that her fault lay in being pre-theoretical, pre-scientific and biased by her value commitments (Davis, 1973). Deegan (1988a) has traced the ways in which Addams' links with the University of Chicago's School of Sociology were severed at this time by new male faculty. Similarly affected by the rising ethos of positivism, men such as Robert Park were keen

to develop a reputation of being uncontaminated in their scientific endeavor by reform efforts and "social work" (Deegan, 1988a).

From that time on, though there have always been cross and counter currents apparent, the shaping of American social work was delimited by an individualizing method that prevailed over questioning values and purpose. Mills' (1959) famous quote on social workers and lawyers having a trained incapacity to rise above the case by case approach finally made sense to me. At the same time I strongly connected Addams' cross-cultural work in Chicago inner city slum areas of the 1890's and my own work with remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley of the 1970's. This connection was mainly around the sense of needing to know the local and particular environment and stories and lived experiences and needing to work across methods according to the worker's reading of any particular story or request for help. In particular I connected with Addams' recognition of the need to work for political and legislative change as part of the social work task.

The Interpretive Turn and its Consequences/Opportunites for Social Work

In this section I consider some of the current trends in social thought that have potential impact on the way social work is conceptualized and practiced. Starting with philosophy and anthropology, I move to feminist social theory as an early and experientially developed post-modern sensibility. Focusing on the feminist writings of Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990), I connect her sociology for women to the sociology/social work Addams' pursued at the turn of the century. I use Smith's conceptualization of the textual workings of "the relations of ruling" to understand the rise to dominance of the casework method in social work and the erasure of the critical ethnographic practices of those who worked in the style of Addams.

The chapter concludes by exploring the ways in which Twenty Years at Hull House was an early form of autoethnography in social work, centering the importance of values and reflexivity in practice while insisting on the primacy of praxis--praxis meaning both intellectual and active engagement with the "actualities" of the world from a moral stance. My purpose in this section is to make clear the intellectual territory from which in the next chapter I move to make explicit my methods in writing my autoethnography of social work practice.

Philosophy

In thinking about the thinking that has come together to shape this project, it was very hard to decide where to begin naming my conceptual influences. I start with the discipline that traditionally has made strong claims to be about thinking about thinking--philosophy. Above I have briefly outlined the nineteenth century philosophy of Auguste Comte[37] that became powerful enough in America and much of the West to be taken for granted as "reality." In the twentieth century, philosophers belonged to the first academic discipline to publicly dialogue about the consequences of this belief in an obdurate reality that can be measured and controlled. In particular, they thought and wrote about the

ways in which this belief can be used by the powerful to dominate the less powerful (Foucault, 1972;
Lyotard, 1991).

The meta-narratives of the enlightenment.

Beliefs in progress through reason have come in this postmodern age to be known as the
meta-narratives of the Enlightenment. This story is that in a democracy, science will take us down the
path to progressive evolution. In the imperialist nations "we" will gather the rest of the world behind
us in progress by sharing the fruits of our scientific knowledge. With such stories the dogma of
science has replaced the dogma of religion in the justification of classism, racism, sexism, and
imperialism (Lyotard, 1991).

The possibility of theorist as critic was ruled out in Comtean philosophy by methodological
inhibitions. The path to progress was known and the hoped for destination could only be reached by
working within the scientific method. Marx's stress on moving from what is to what should be by
praxis became lost in the insistence on the boundaries between theory and practice, and thought and
action (Bernstein, 1983).

Postmodernism.

Now in a discourse that is increasingly interdisciplinary, the tenets of this philosophy of
positivism as the only epistemology that counts have been challenged point by point. So in a
postmodern world:

•   there is no single objective world to be known by neutral   scientific observers -
there is no obdurate reality
•   there are many ways of knowing delimited in the particular by   the position of the
knower in the world
•   there are no fixed laws of historical development by which to   predict the future
•   moral and political choices cannot be established scientifically
•   social order cannot be assumed to be the natural order of society
•   values are an integral part of any understanding to be made of   the world (based on
Bernstein, 1983).

The conception of normal society as a totalized, harmonious whole has collapsed in the face
of the actualities of the twentieth century. Foucault (1972), in his systematic recovery of detailed
material evidence on the nature of human life and culture since the beginnings of industrialization in
the West, suggests that such a conception of normal society has not served to light the way to the
progress of the Enlightenment but rather has served to protect the interests of the powerful and
extended their control over others in society. His archaeology of knowledge traces the historical
workings of power in the establishment of a modernist surveillance society that controls the less
powerful (Foucault, 1972).

Foucault's writings can be read as a revolt against the scientistic powers of "normalization."
He argued that the application of expert knowledge is not necessarily about progress. Rather in an

update of the religious confessional, it is about encouraging individuals with personal troubles to confide these to experts. These are held to have the "knowledge" to reinterpret them back to the troubled by using the dominant discourse's codes of "normality" (Foucault, 1978). By this means personal troubles are understood and addressed in ways delimited by conformity to the status quo. Support for such a skeptical interpretation of the officially endorsed processes of helping the troubled comes with increasing public awareness that the application of expert knowledge in this century to human troubles has not necessarily resulted in even a slow progress (Chira, 1994; Lyotard, 1991).

The beginnings of this critique of the meta-narratives that justify the workings of modern society can be traced to Nietzche's philosophical writings at the end of last century: "This is my way; what is your way? The way doesn't exist." Nietzche's chief difference from feminist post-modern recognition of multiple realities, I see to be his inordinate stress on developing an autonomous, modernist sense of self, casting communal and family ties of relationship as obstacles to this end (Hayman, 1980; Hollingdale, 1973).

Another early philosopher of note in shaping an interpretive and linguistic turn to philosophy was Wittgenstein, who broke out of the Vienna Circle of Logical Positivism in the 1920's with his realization that the name of the thing is not the thing named (Bernstein, 1983). His focus on the necessity of language for making contact with "reality" foreshadowed the interpretive turn to philosophy that in America now is perhaps most marked by the neo-pragmatists such as Bernstein (1983), Rorty (1982, 1985) and West(1989, 1993a). All have addressed the scientism of our age and sought an empirical, interpretive and critical knowledge free of the foundationalism that takes "the standards" of rationality as universal and not subject to historical or temporal change. Rorty (1979, 1982) speaks of philosophers being speakers in a conversation, with no claim to knowing the truth, just a commitment to thinking about thinking. As Kuhn (1970) found for the history of scientific thought so Rorty found for the nature of philosophy.

Neither philosophers nor anyone else are able to provide us with a permanent, ahistorical framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness or rightness. Instead, through discourse with others we can move beyond dichotomous arguments to a commitment to community and open participation in practical tasks (Bernstein, 1983). When we creatively and commitedly listen to one another rather than filter intake paradigmatically, it is possible to move from hermeneutics to praxis. It will be my argument in this thesis that such movement from hermeneutics to praxis was demonstrated in many of the activities of settlement houses in the first wave of American pragmatism. Further, I argue that such a process continues to have wide potential in the practice of social work in a wide range of settings.

The neo-pragmatism of Cornel West.

It is West (1993b) among the writers of neo-pragmatism who evokes in me a strong sense of what such creativity and commitment might be about in current actualities. He starts from the pain of black people in the United States and the joy and history of their struggle for democratic inclusion,

served by a philosophy of hermeneutics and praxis rather than undone by a neutral science of positivism. Making the point that there can be no coming to a moral commitment in a culture that will only applaud and reward personal accomplishment, West (1993b) advocates the necessity of intellectuals moving beyond the head business of the academy to engage with the lived experiences of others. His book of dialogue with black feminist activist, bell hooks, is woven with the values of humanist Christianity and how to live these into truth. West suggests:

> A rich life is fundamentally a life of serving others, a life of trying to leave the world a little better than you found it. That rich life comes into being in human relationships. (hooks & West, 1991, p. 79)

West (1989) depicts an American history of evading philosophy, of evading thinking about thinking. Such lack of reflection, he suggests, has allowed an evasion of the moral issues that attach to consideration of the black presence as a constitutive element of American democratic society. He centers the value of empathy and of never losing sight of the humanity of others. He questions the consequences of letting go the grand narratives of the eighteenth century Enlightenment or Age of Reason. To him letting go of positivism does not mean letting go of the humanist commitment of the Enlightenment. He finds that for himself and many in the black community, the Christian tradition remains as a profoundly democratic sensibility that locates human agency among ordinary people and affirms the value of every human being. To live this tradition is for him to take seriously Marx's idea that the point is not to study the world but to change it. West argues that each of us should look around as to what sort of world we live in, and in community with others, go about transforming it into the sort of world we think we should live in.

Linking with feminist black writers, West names a dominant American discourse of matrophobia as framing black lived experiences of dread, despair and nihilism (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1990; hooks & West, 1991). This they read as the hegemony of a hierarchical binary logic that defines the female as necessarily lesser than the male, the black inferior to white and devalues the nurturing work involved in reproduction. Their work ties to that of feminist researchers such as Haaken (1993) who argue that the co-dependency stress on the pathology of caregiving, implicitly equates the maternal with disease and deviance.

A keynote of American culture is identified as the blindness of mainstream political discourse to the necessary anthropological connections between the political economy and cultural values. Liberal valorization of economic opportunity and conservative valorization of values, both avoid focusing on the interplay between these factors in the ongoing construction of black lived experiences (West, 1993a).

West, like other neo-pragmatist philosophers, avoids starting with epistemology in conceptualizing issues (Bernstein, 1983; West, 1989). A modernist preoccupation with epistemology has been part of the dominance of method over knowing. Rather an ontological entry point into hermeneutics is identified as avoiding the trap of methods and conceptualizations becoming barriers to

starting with the issue of concern. Neo-pragmatists such as West conclude that like Jane Addams, knowledge seekers might:

> learn of life from life itself; where they might try out some of the things they had been taught and put truth to the "ultimate test of the conduct it dictates or inspires." (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 51)

Positivism, hermeneutics, and pragmatism.

Among scientists themselves, study of their practices reveals quite clearly that discoveries are not made by sticking to method (Kuhn, 1970). Using this understanding Fuchs (1993) has argued that there are three ideologies of epistemology that can be discerned to operate in the activities of modern scientists. They are positivism, hermeneutics, and pragmatism. Pragmatism is the ideology of research fronts that are about change and innovation. Hermeneutics is the philosophy of thinking about different interpretations to be made of any phenomenon. Positivism is the philosophy of "normal" sciences with established routines and honed skills of exactitude in method:

> Research fronts have an intensely "political" quality. This is so because controversies cannot yet be settled by recourse to "shared standards" and "established rules" of conflict resolution . . . Truly innovative work is more than an extension of what is already known, or a simple modification of how research is normally done. This much can be learned from the Wittgensteinian lesson that a culture does not determine the precise contours of its own future . . . The pragmatist attitude toward the world is one of active interference, control and manipulation, not of passive representation and mirroring. Dewey . . . criticized what he called the "spectator notion" of knowledge as the philosophy of an inactive and contemplative leisure class and contrasted it with the pragmatist notion of knowledge as instrumental and goal-directed intervention in the world. (Fuchs, 1993, p. 26-27)

All these styles of research can be traced in the scientific endeavors that have been so successful in establishing Westernization as the "reality" for the world. Yet when it comes to researching the personal troubles that accompany this process there has been a dominance of positivism over the other styles and a lack of the cultural support required for providing bases from which risk-taking moral pragmatism might operate. In drug development, oil exploration, and super-conductivity science risk-taking funds are an integral part of the operation.

In contrast, in social work there is an insistence on scientific realism and an active rejection of the philosophizing West recommends. The quotable Walter Hudson (1978) was quite certain that what cannot be measured does not exist and that science should not trust philosophy. In a theme that persisted in his writings Hudson (1982) found that:

> Constructs that cannot be defined, operationalized and then measured are mentalities that are useless to an understanding of the world in which we live. (p. 256)

The more moderate positivist theorist of social work, William Gordon(1984) while admitting a place for values in social work believed that "philosophy only serves to muddy the waters"(p. 310).

Those within social work of a philosophical bent find themselves arguing their case against terms set by a dominant scientism and "abstracted individualism." In a special issue of the Journal of

Sociology and Social Welfare devoted to philosophy and social work, Haworth (1991) defines "abstracted individualism" as "support of an exaggerated illusion of autonomy and independence, or the American belief in 'self-efficacy.' This all too easily supports translating system inequality into individual deficit" (p. 42). He finds little American questioning of the utility or morality of this constant focus on the individual as the locus of concern.

Sherman (1991) and Imre (1991) in the same journal issue remind us that the art of active listening in social work has always been a form of hermeneutic inquiry. They find however, that the dominance of positivism within social work has pushed for a form of interpretation at odds with ontological hermeneutic inquiry. Instead of hearing the client's story in its full contextuality and attempting to understand the client's lived experience, positivist dictums push practitioners to interpret client's narratives using frameworks of "normality."

Such frameworks of "normality" have turned attention away from the play of power in the web of relationships enmeshing each human. In the next section, I examine an intellectual endeavor that has necessarily had to focus on the play of power to make meaning of situations where the "normal" cannot be presumed. Though often positivist in its conception of the cultures "captured" by early practitioners, anthropology is a discipline in which the "capturing" and "controlling" of facts could not take place via the scientific method. Early white anthropologists took for themselves the privilege of "scientifically" defining the reality of other cultures but in this process they were clearly dependent on skills of personal reflection and interpretation.

Anthropology

Practitioners of this most academized and philosophical of all Western scholarly disciplines have been one of the first to feel and think about global local resistance to the logic of Western modernism (Geertz, 1988). Geertz (1973) describes anthropology as a form of hermeneutics and necessarily about interpretation. This did not become obvious while the "subjects of research were not addressed and those addressed were not subject to research" (p. 194). Always containing and to some degree actualizing a potential for cultural critique,[38] its practitioners until recently have spent much energy on a process of salvaging a record of other cultures before they disappeared and collapsed under the force of modernity (Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

Reflexivity as to what we are thinking with as well as about.

Since Geertz' (1973) pioneering work on unveiling the inevitability of interpretation in studying culture, the discipline has developed a rich literature exploring the issue of what we know always being a matter of what we are thinking with as well as what we are thinking about (Brady, 1993). In this developing consciousness, reflexivity of the researcher has become a key tool in any attempt to "know" the culture of the "other" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Rosaldo, 1993a; Rose, 1993). Reflexivity refers to the conscious, active reflection of an ethnographic researcher on their relationship

to what it is they are trying to understand. It is a word that has existed in anthropology for many decades but that has come to the fore with feminist thought which centers the importance of this process in social research (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, & Cohen, 1993; Olesen, 1994; Reinharz, 1992).

Ethnography.

Ethnography, a key activity of the anthropological project, refers to writing about ways of life of people. The word is derived from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning a people, a race or a cultural group and *graphy* meaning writing (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). The academic discipline and the naming of ethnography as a scientific method emerged after a long non-academic tradition of writing about exotic ways of life.[39]   At the height of modernism, a particular form of scientific authority for the anthropologist was successfully claimed by early anthropologists such as Malinowski, Radcliffe-Browne and Evans-Pritchard (Geertz, 1988).

They were writing about other cultures but in a "scientific" way. As Clifford (1988) explicates they created a form of authority, scientifically validated but based on unique personal experiences in the "field." Unlike earlier and contemporaneous "outsiders" living among "natives," the anthropologist was trained in the methods of participant observation which ensured accurate capturing of cultural patterns. Geertz (1988), in revisiting the texts of some of the earlier classics, shows that these texts established their authority not because of their factual weight or theoretical sophistication but because of their narrative strength in convincing the reader to imagine the culture described as an actuality.

In this post-modern era, where ethnography no longer has to orient itself to making claims to scientism, it has become a key method of interpretive research. "Modern ethnography, while connected with anthropology, can be seen more generally as simply diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation" (Clifford, 1988, p. 9).

 The chief means of becoming able to write about other cultures, participant observation, "serves as shorthand for a continuous tacking between the 'inside' and 'outside' of events" (Clifford, 1988, p. 34). In post-modern and feminist research where the relationship of the knower to the known is centered, participant observation methods assume that the lived experience of the researcher holds and shapes what will be known about the field situation.

Clifford (1988) suggests an ethnographic move to discourse and dialogue between researcher and researched over the tradition of anthropologists' autonomously distilling texts from their captured data once home again. He concludes:

> New approaches tend to rediscover discarded practices. Experiential, interpretive, dialogical and polyphonic processes are at work, discordantly in any ethnography, but coherent presentation presupposes a controlling mode of authority . . . this imposition of coherence on unruly textual process is now inescapably a matter of strategic choice. (p. 54)

Autoethnography.

In my project this understanding of the nature of ethnography is key in my selection of autoethnography as the style of research I wished to follow. Like Jane Addams, who wrote out of her own participant observation, I write an ethnography that centers my own experience as the unifying source for the meanings I make of my fieldwork. There being no neutral standpoint from which to do ethnography, autoethnographic research enables reflexivity about starting from where I stand.

Disciplinary boundaries and social theory.

Within post-modern anthropology there has also developed an agreement with Mills (1959) that there is no firm boundary between the purposes and practices of cultural anthropology and those of sociology. The philosophical foundations on which the grand theorists and abstracted empiricists in both disciplines rested their cases are equally dependent on a notion of obdurate reality. In a postmodern era, practitioners of each discipline become aware of the limitations in any final interpretation of an ongoing, dynamic, political social world constructed out of the intersections of history, social structure, and biography. What has not yet fully developed in either discipline is an exploration of the politics and praxis attaching to Geertz's (1973) conjugation, "I have a social philosophy, you have a political opinion, he has an ideology[40]" (p.194). (But see Mascia-Lees, et al., 1993; Rosaldo, 1993a; Rose, 1993).

In the next section I turn to some of the ideas emerging from feminist thought. These ideas have emerged out of the place provided for reflective thought by the praxis of feminism. In this intellectual discourse exploration of the politics and praxis of interpretation has been central. This centering of politics and praxis I strongly link to my own project of reflecting on the practice of social work.

Feminism

This realization, that "they"--the objects of anthropological study--are active participants in making the world we live in and making meaning of "our" behavior, happened mainly "out there." In exotic settings people were known to "have" culture. In the process of decolonization, anthropologists became aware that the cultural was resistant to being known and used as a product. The ongoing dynamics of history, power, emotion and knowledge constructed the cultural. It was not something natives had, but their lived processes of significance. Natives, being human, share the ontological trait of being caught up in the task of making meaning of the world in which they live (Ricoeur, 1974). Because of the different worlds in which humans live, different histories and different languages this necessarily produces different cultural realities. These different realities may have been hierarchically ordered and conceptually separated by powerful Westerners to great effect, but the ordering and segregation proved not to be final but open to contest.

In the West, in tandem with this post-colonial discourse, a social movement occurred that allowed for the thoroughgoing realization among many of "us Westerners" that we did not all share and experience the same standard Western reality. Women's world was different from men's world, yet social science research into the nature of Western society proceeded as if they were the same. Through women talking to each other, sharing experiences and the disappointments of not being able to access the freedoms our culture promised came the political power to point out the multiplicity of realities. Women came to realize that there was no independently strung platform available from which a researcher could objectively know the rest of us. Their early articulation of a form of postmodernism, questioned objectivity and detachment and insisted on the possibilitiy of multiple meanings attached to the same set of facts. Dorothy Smith (1987) gives an academic voice to this public awareness by women of their dominance by men:

> The forms of thought, the means of expression, that we had available to us to formulate our experience were made or controlled by men. From that center women appeared as objects. In relation to men (of the ruling class) women's consciousness did not, and most probably generally still does not, appear as an autonomous source of knowledge, experience, relevance or imagination. Women's experience did not appear as men do to one another, as persons who might share in the common construction of a social reality where that is essentially an ideological construction. . . . the circle of speakers and hearers among men was a closed circle of significance in which women did not enter as such. (p. 51)

Sociology

Dorothy Smith's exploration of the relations of ruling.

In her political act of challenging and seeking to reinscribe what she describes in the above quote, Dorothy Smith also speaks as a sociologist. Connecting with the work of those theorists like Foucault (1972) who highlight the existence of fragmented, local and specific knowledges subjugated by totalizing discourses, her aim is to develop research methods that start ontologically in actual lived experience. Her aim is to trace and uncover these processes of subjugation.

Seeing the everyday world of lived experience as the problematic of sociology Smith develops methods of critical ethnography. These allow for the unraveling of the actions and interpretations of actual conscious individual men and women in a particular site and time. Following and interpreting these trace out the workings of power and interests under what Smith (1987) calls the relations of ruling:

> A mode of ruling has become dominant that involves a continual transcription of the local and particular actualities of our lives into abstracted and generalized form. It is an *extralocal* mode of ruling. Its characteristic modes of consciousness are objectified and impersonal . . . The practice of ruling involves the ongoing representation of the local actualities of our worlds in the standardized and general forms of knowledge that enter them into the relations of ruling. (p. 3)

The crucial mean to this ongoing abstraction and generalization up from the local and particular is in the creation of texts, both written and oral. These generalizing, abstracting texts

develop forms of consciousness that are the properties of organizations or disciplinary discourse rather than tied to the individual subjectivities that the text addresses. The organization of work in management and professional practices such as social work depends on an alienation of subjects from their bodily and local experiences (Smith, 1990). In this pursuit of what Smith calls cultural imperialism through objectivity, it becomes possible for social scientists "to be paid to pursue a knowledge to which they are otherwise indifferent" (1990, p. 16).

In pursuing a value-based sociology that will be for women not about women, Smith (1990) explicates the ways in which the social sciences, including social work have provided totalizing, abstract, and generalized texts that enabled what she calls "the relations of ruling" to reach into and control local, particular experiences. The natures of these texts have in Western society being dominated by men for the last five hundred years and so far as women participate in these practices of constructing and applying these controlling texts, they do so on terms dictated by a dominant male view of "reality."

Mary Richmond's *Social Diagnosis* (1917) as a means of buying into the relations of ruling.

In this explanation of the need for abstract and generalized texts, Dorothy Smith brought me back to the story of Jane Addams and Mary Richmond. When Mary Richmond published the classic abstract, standardized text on social casework, "Social Diagnosis" in 1917, she bequeathed to her profession a means of belonging on masculine terms, to the relations of ruling. As Smith (1987) notes, for women to do anything else, as Addams tried with her local particularistic practice, was destined to be pressurized by the power of the relations of ruling.

Clark Chambers (1986) casts the outcome of Richmond's move as follows:

> When women brought into a model of professionalism often assumed to be androgynous but in fact rooted in Western white patriarchy--a model that stressed linear career lines, formal bureaucratic structures, a hierarchical ordering of power and deference and scientific objectivity--they left behind styles and structures that had sustained and strengthened them in an earlier generation. (p. 23)

Arguably the work of Richmond bought the profession almost fifty years of space for an interpretive approach, once the individualizing, psychologizing boundaries of casework were established. Franklin (1986) notes that in Richmond's first book of 1917 there was an acknowledgement of the client's relationship to the social institutions in their community. By the publication of her second book in 1919 Richmond had added the word "personality" firmly setting social work on a different and psychologizing course.

The subsequent use of Freudian theory opened to caseworkers wide possibilities of discourse and interpretation. This enabled a relatively high degree of craftwork on the part of largely female caseworkers as they sought to make meaning of and respond to the personal troubles they were confronted with in practice. Chambers (1986) points out such interpretation was contained by the rootedness of classical Freudianism in the medical model of patriarchal society.

<u>A reinscription of the relations of ruling by the abstracted empiricists of the seventies.</u>

In the sixties severe challenge came to the effectiveness of this psychoanalytic framework in meeting the relations of ruling requirement of containment and calm in public response to private troubles. This opened a space for men such as Fischer (1978) to write texts promising to control and standardize social work practice--to update and extend the promise of scientific methods that Richmond's text had initiated.

It would seem that this latest commodification and objectification of social work knowledge brings into social work a new regime of truth in Lyotard's (1991) term. Its implementation has exacerbated the likelihood that practitioners will experience what Smith (1987) terms "a bifurcation of consciousness" (p. 6). Smith articulates what many feel to be a critical rift between their personal knowledge of experience and the knowledge of their discipline. She gives her own story of being a female sociologist moving between the pressing particularities of homelife with children and the disengaged world of abstraction spoken at work

<u>Spreading bifurcated consciouness among social work practitioners.</u>

Many writers in social work have written recently in ways that resonate with what Smith says about alienation from an objectified, measured way of knowing (Collins, 1986; England, 1986; Imre, 1991; Morrell, 1981; Ragg, 1977; Saleebey, 1990, 1991; Tice, 1990; Timms, 1983; Weick, 1992; Wilkes, 1981; Witkin, 1992). Ann Hartman (1990, 1992) has written powerful editorials in the key professional journal <u>Social Work</u> affirming that there are many ways of knowing. Committing to one method of knowing she argues may be subjugating and negating the knowledge of those our value base commits us to serve.

<u>The critical ethnography of Dorothy Smith.</u>

Smith (1987, 1990, 1992) offers a methodology for such discomfort and dissatisfactions with disciplinary methods of knowing to be traced through reflecting on our intellectual autobiographies. She advocates the practice of critical ethnography that starts where we bodily live and act. In my case this starts in my practice of social work. Starting with our own phenomenological experiences of doing social work allows for an emic (insiders) view of social work with which to question the dominance of the etic (outsiders) version. By her simple but powerful insistence on the primacy of actual, local, subjective experience, Smith offers a tool for critiquing the "what is" of social work and imagining how social work practice might better serve both its clients and its practitioners.

Distinguishing her Standpoint Theory from other more purely philosophical versions, Smith (1992) insists:

> The standpoint of women situates inquiry in the actualities of people's living, beginning with their experience of living and understanding that inquiry and its products are in and of that same actuality. (p. 89)

A note on emic.

Emic is a term related to ethnography that refers to the meanings made of a cultural scene by natives of that scene. It is often opposed to etic understanding, which are meanings made of a cultural scene by an outside observer, a "scientific researcher." Etic methods of research assume the processes being studied transcend culture and enable the discovery of general patterns. Nomothetic in their stance to knowledge, etic methods are ahistorical and nonbiographical and do not permit discovery of "what a particular interactional moment means to its participants" (Denzin, 1989c, p. 21).

> Emic studies in contrast are idiographic in nature and seek to study experience from within, through the use of thick description or accounts which attempt to capture the meanings and experiences of interacting individuals in problematic situations. They seek to uncover the conceptual categories persons use when they interact with one another and create meaningful experience. (Denzin, 1989c, p. 20-21)

It is an integral aspect of Smith's critical ethnography process that the emic perspective be privileged over the etic (1987, 1992). So the researcher does not test theoretical formulations in the field, but starts and stays in the actualities of lived experience with the intention of tracing the emic perspectives by which those actualities are organized and understood. This relates to an understanding of humanity--that all of us are meaning makers in the situations in which we find ourselves and an ontologically driven project starts right there. Her project seeks to trace the ways in which emic understandings become subjugated by an etic view.

Texts and textuality.

Smith (1987, 1992) identifies texts as a key means by which language, thought, culture and formal organizations come to have their own being outside the local, grounded actualities of people's experiences. All cultures are discursive in moving to connect between actualities through space and time. In that sense it is not possible to talk of a pre-textual phenomenon. So Aboriginal people in a pre-literate state were not without texts that functioned ideologically to communicate values, knowledge and skills transcendentally.

Smith (1987, 1992) is particularly concerned with the abstracting, generalizing texts she sees as the means of ruling in modern society. These texts bring into the diverse actual local sites of lived experience, a fixed form of meaning that provides a way of standardizing reading practices. In this manner textual mediation provides the means of seamlessly, almost invisibly joining the local and particular into the generalized organization of "the relations of ruling." To use the language of feminism, it is the process by which the personal comes to reflect the social, while the social remains relatively impervious to the personal. Smith's purpose in understanding this process is to empower those, including herself, who feel subjugated by cultural promises but no actualization of our equal worth.

Mapping the relations of ruling from the emic perspective.

Smith's (1990) special concern is to explicate how the interpretations that operate locally are "abstracted" into socially organized practices and how we participate in and incorporate these processes into our own everyday practice of living. With this explication those who seek to change "what is" are more knowledgeable/ powerful to do things differently at a social level. Smith acknowledges that anyone's experience can be the beginning place in such inquiry, but uses the term Women's Standpoint to insist on the importance of the sexed nature of her own experience.

The method allows people of diverse ontologies to speak on the grounds of their own experience in a manner that allows them to listen to the experiences of others. This is not about establishing big T, truths that are generalizable and standardized. Through the communicability not commensurability of our experiences, Smith (1987, 1990) argues, recurring stories and patterning of experiences across place and time allows us to imagine and interpret the structural nature of the relations of ruling.

Each knower can only speak local, particularized truths but since knowing is essentially socially organized, it can never be an attribute of an autonomous consciousness. The knower is connected to particular other people in particular ways. Researching and unpacking the cultural meanings of these connections sets the researcher/practitioner on a trail of inquiry that has no set path nor fixed end. Inquiry then becomes an ongoing dialogue with the aim of producing effective maps to get where I or a collaborative want to go. Quite different maps of the same situation are possible given the phenomenological nature of this inquiry. In addition, getting to where you want to go need not be confined to an immediate practical activity.

Given the political nature of knowledge, Smith sees a place for critical, feminist, ethnographic knowledge that is not solely committed to direct service to organized struggle. She sees a place for reflective practice and writing as a necessary part of the overall practice of the politics of inquiry. There is a role for texts that aim to be part of the conceptual practices of power in bringing issues alive to readers and mobilizing their action (1992). Such texts she sees as an important part of developing language to challenge the authority worlds of men have over the worlds of women (1987).

Twenty Years at Hull House as a Critical Ethnography

The bifurcated consciousness of Jane Addams.

Given this brief foray into the ways of actualizing a sociological imagination that Dorothy Smith offers, I want to return to the beginnings of social work and suggest that in many ways, the writings of Jane Addams are a presage of this methodology. Her bifurcated consciousness arose from the chasm between the suffocating life of ease she was expected to live as a wealthy woman, and the world of adventure and action that was known to her through memories of her father, travel, and education. Her inquiry into this gap led to her work at Hull House. It took Addams eight years to

formulate her convictions and plan for action. Hull House was the manifestation of her belief that Christianity "cannot be proclaimed and instituted apart from the social life of the community and that it must seek a simple and natural expression in the social organism itself" (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 74). She wanted to live this belief not find it reflected in the intellectual and artistic work of others:

> It is always easy to make all philosophy point one particular moral and all history adorn one particular tale; but I may be forgiven the reminder that the best speculative philosophy sets forth the solidarity of the human race; that the highest moralists have taught that without the advance and improvement of the whole, no man can hope for any lasting improvement in his own moral or material individual condition; and that the subjective necessity for Social Settlements is therefore identical with that necessity, which urges us on toward social and individual salvation. (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 76)

In a postmodern world, I would like to suggest the possibility of reconnecting to her project as a way of naming, celebrating and extending the long tradition of critical ethnography cum pragmatism in social work.

<u>Social Workers--heroines, handmaids, hand-me-downs, and homemades.</u>

In the vernacular that circulates among Australian social workers our tasks are seen to be those of heroines, handmaids or hand-me-downs (Roe, 1988). These terms also well describe the evolution of American social work. First, there were the heroic efforts of Jane Addams and her cohorts in social reform such as Julia Lathrop, Florence Kelley and the Abbott sisters (Costin, 1983; Davis, 1973; Deegan, 1988a).

Then came the time when handmaids to the interests of the male medical profession were of the highest status in the profession. Casework methods of practice evolved from this orientation (Richmond, 1917). Despite better and worse social workers, and weaker and stronger intellectual leadership, social work continued as an honorable and relatively prestigious occupation suitable for women. Some of these women, anxious about the status consequences of being primarily a female occupation, strategized to involve more men in the profession and at certain key times (like the introduction of Social Security) more men sought to become social workers (Austin, 1983). Regardless of such fluctuations social work remained predominantly women's work. The noble work for social reform came to be remembered with pride by the profession. There was talk of cause versus function in the actualities of practice, signifying how the profession wrestled with the contradictions of following skills and values in their professional practice (Morrell, 1987).

The turn to a privileging of those dealing in hand-me-downs dates in America to the work and recommendations of the National Committee on Social Work Research of 1948-49 (Turner, 1986). Perhaps in concert with the uncertainties that multimethods introduced after the admission of group and community work to the profession, the Committee was established to ensure that greater attention was placed within the profession on scientific methods and research. This fitted with the influential edict of Greenwood (1957) in the fifties that all the "real" professions were applied sciences.

The sixties were disruptive times for social work. After the severe challenge to the asocial nature of American psychoanalytic thinking it was unlikely that the profession could maintain this as the dominant pattern of practice. The Great Society experiments were exciting, but read through the lens of positivism seemed not to work. Society was not fixed up, people did not quieten and social workers as a profession were discomforted by the continuing attacks on their professionalism and effectiveness. In the seventies with a move to tighter government funding and demands for accountability, discomfort was fueled by experimental studies that "proved" social workers ineffective in their intervention strategies (Reid, 1970). It was these empirical measures of social workers' failure to actualize their professional promise to become applied scientists that motivated and allowed the writing of abstract empiricist texts in the seventies (Fischer, 1971, 1973, 1978, 1983; Hudson, 1978). These served to make it clearer to social workers just what was technically expected of them. By whom was a question left unexplored.

In current Australian social work practice, Roe (1988) has argued that each of us is expected to be heroine, handmaid and hand-me-down. In this climate of impossible expectations, Roe concludes that it is up to each practitioner to have a clear sense of purpose and competence about practice and to be prepared to articulate that sense in the face of the expectations of others. I resonate with Roe's advice. I readily see I have played all those roles in my time. Part of becoming an effective practitioner was to learn how not to be driven solely by other's expectations of the role of social worker.

I add to Roe's categories the name of the style of practice I aspire to follow--the homemade. Homemade in the sense of emerging from the situation in which I find myself and from my reading of that particular context. Homemade in the sense of my deciding what was to be done given the purpose and nature of my engagement in the setting. Using the language of postmodernism, homemade in the sense of 'little' or first order narratives constructing their own pragmatics around a practitioner openness to allowing the phenomenon itself to shape action (Rorty, 1985).

Twenty years at Hull House as a text in emic social work.

My sense of doing homemade or emic social work relates to my practice in a remote location, without close social work supervision driven by commitment to an idea that Aboriginal living conditions should become better and that I could be part of that process. I make numerous connections with the work of Addams and conclude that if were not for the obscuring heroine tag, her work could also be seen as homemade in nature. I connected around the issues that we were both living and working in cross-cultural settings, doing community, group, and case work according to purpose and particulars before local institutionalization as to the nature of social work practice. I imagine there are many more social workers who could connect around issues like this. Certainly in conversations with social workers I have found many who share this notion of working with clients "where they are at." They do not solely imply an innner psychic sense of being.

Understanding <u>Twenty Years at Hull House</u> as a text in emic social work rather than as a pre-scientific, pre-theoretical personal memoir opens to me ways of re-examining the social work values, skills and insights Addams shares. She writes with the authority of being a patently effective practitioner of social work with a sociological imagination. I read Jane Addams' writing as being of the style Smith (1992) describes as important to motivate action for change in value based directions. Writing was always an integral part of Addams' practice (see Addams, 1909, 1915, 1930, 1972, 1990/1910). Parts of this textualization process were extensive public speaking efforts and articles in popular magazines to convey understanding of the issues at stake to the public so they could become part of practices of caring and of lobbying for reform.

In contrast to what Steedman (1990) terms the "interiority" of much autobiographical women's writing, Addams' writing was primarily of a public square nature, entering into what Bakhtin (1981) has called the "dialogics" of cultural discourse and change. She did this with a conscious use of her authority as a woman to speak on "women's business" of reproduction--the care required by members of society. Feminists in more recent years have criticized such approaches as being essentialist and maternalist (Koven & Michel, 1993). I would read Addams' actions and writings as an artful use of the power bases available to her to enter the public dialogue. She did not have modernist conceptions of being committed to her entry point in perpetuity in the belief that reality was obdurately fixed and stable.

Jane Addams addresses this point in her autobiographical writings when she explains that she writes of her own experiences so that the reader might understand the way in which her convictions and commitments have been arrived at (1990/1910). Her autobiography displays the development of her critical self-awareness, her sociological imagination, and some of the relationship between her individual experience and wider social patterns.

Belonging to a pre-positivist culture, she identified herself as a sociologist but felt no obligation to establish her objectivity by writing in a depersonalized passive voice (Deegan, 1988a). She achieved in her writings the outcomes that are being urged on sociologists now in this era of post-modernism. Stanley(1993) argues that the use of autobiography by sociologists signals the active, enquiring presence of sociologists in constructing rather than discovering knowledge.

Addams in reflexively treating her "self" as a subject for intellectual inquiry has textualized "the socialized, non-unitary and changing self posited in feminist social thought" (Stanley, 1993, p. 44). Her cameos on lived experience illuminate the ways in which the self is intrinsically social and in which subjectivity is itself socially constructed (Geertz, 1984). Her style was not constrained by a use of the later conventional categories of self/other, public/private, and data/memory. Her writing exemplifies Stanley's suggestion that:

> There is no need to individualize, to de-socialize 'the individual', because from one person we can recover social process and social structure, networks, social change and so forth, for people are located in a social and cultural environment which constructs and shapes not only *what* we see but also *how* we see it. . . . having access to our own ontological and epistemological puzzles, we can make "ourselves" in this sense objects for analytical sociological attention. (1993, p. 45)

<u>The ideological Addams.</u>

Twenty Years at Hull House paints for me an understanding of what it was to be a young woman of economic means and education holding an ideology of humanism and choosing to address issues of poverty and powerlessness in the industrial powerhouse that was Chicago at the turn of the century. Addams claimed not to be ideological but reading her text, this would appear to mean that she did not align herself to any fixed naming of the nature of the world. She dissociates herself from both positivism and Marxism as being closed understandings of the world (1990/1910). She explains her lack of adherence to any particular theoretical creed as related to the fact that her experiences did not allow her firm theory as to the nature of the world. This was despite her awareness of the attractions of such an understanding of the world. Addams in fact lamented her intellectual inability to be convinced by such theories:

> I also longed for the comfort of a definite social creed, which should afford at one and the same time an explanation of the social chaos and the logical steps towards its better ordering. (1990/1910, p. 111)

Yet she clearly followed a Christian based ideology of humanism which I connect to that of West (1993a). Here I am using the term ideology to refer to an understanding, belief, or commitment as to how the world should be. Both West and Addams can be described as moral pragmatists in seeking effective value driven action to bring their actual known world closer to their ideal known world. Foucault would seem to support Addams' refusal to align herself to a fixed theory or method of practice. Reflecting on his experience of student upheavals during his residence in Algeria, he found:

> A political ideology is absolutely necessary to begin the struggle--precision of theory and its scientific value on the other hand are entirely secondary and dead-ends. (quoted in Eribon 1990, p. 194)

Addams has valued her own viewpoints, analyzed her experiences within their particular historical and social contexts and used her insights to take action around her particular social work purposes. She has then textualized this process with the aim of sharing with others the complexities she had experienced in "doing" social work/sociology.[41] Morris (1992) in writing of current Australian culture finds similar tensions in the use of the term ideology:

> [In] the mainstream of Australian public rhetoric, where "ideology" now means *rigid adherence* to "theory," and thence an extremist impracticality . . . ideology is the place of the other, and the other is always immoderate. (p. 16)

Another meaning of the term Morris gives as less hegemonic is "as belief creatively organized by a coherent set of ideas" (p. 16). Morris identifies a shift to this use of the term as "reverting to an older use in naming the object of a social capacity for something like 'belief' " (p. 17). It is in this sense of the term that I posit an ideological Jane Addams. As a pre-positivist thinker she was not entangled in pinning down the obdurate and generalized nature of the world. She was however moved by her ideology into taking action to bring her beliefs closer to actuality.

Stanley (1992) argues that autobiographies are always directed to a certain purpose. Addams has stated her purpose in writing about her work at Hull House but in the intellectual ethos that came to dominate it seems that few could read this as the truth. So Steedman (1990) expresses her distaste of the autobiographies of famous women, functioning she sees to celebrate autonomous and unique success stories as models of individualism. It would seem that whatever Addams' purpose in writing, the reader made their own meaning of the text. In the development of American autobiographies, the myth of the autonomous individual came to erase the parts played by history, social structure and relationships in the construction of the person writing their life (Culley, 1992). St. Jane then wrote an autobiography because she was St. Jane. Being so far from ordinary in the nature of her lived experiences it is not surprising that her autobiography was read as that of a heroine--as one of the geniuses being held to count in the modernist age.

However, reading again it is possible to see that in her autobiography, Jane Addams assumed the position of being both gazer and gazed upon. Giving us a depiction of life gendered, classed and raced to the core, she does not have a voice of dispassionate reason in this. Her self is a communal one, engaged and dialogical as well as individual, detached and introspective. She does not convey an ideology of detached individualism where the properties of human personality are conceived as independent of their material conditions and social environment. She both has and analyzes the experiences she writes about. In this, she bridges the gap between knowing and being, living and theorizing that theorists of personal narrative argue moulds the writing and reading of autobiography in our own culture (Culley, 1992; Stanley, 1992, 1993; Stivers, 1993).

It could be argued that in this she was driven by a desire for sociological understanding not personal valorization and was in fact a pioneer of the sociological autobiographical style. Liz Stanley (1993) recommends such texts as a way of responding to widespread changes in sociological thinking and consequent intellectual refusals of the traditional conceptual splits between action and structure; creator and puppet. Reading Addams it is possible to detect "the cultural specificity of any one woman's relationship to subjectivity" (Alcoff & Gray, 1993, p. 397). Her autobiography helps shed light on how the self is intrinsically social. Part of the self she writes is one from a time when there was:

> a cultural construction of female sexuality based on an assumption that women differed essentially from men [and] women took pride in their independent culture, these writers imagined a form of female sexual autonomy most twentieth-century feminist theorists caught in the thickets of Freud's phallocentrism (and our era's all-too-rigid heterosexist assumptions) are still struggling to achieve. (Bennett, 1993, p. 255)

If Addams was an early feminist critical sociologist writing ethnographically on her participant observation of self and society, how was this not read but instead her writings were dismissed as soft, feminine memoirs from the pre-scientific times of social work? Bruner (1993) would seem to describe some of the process patterning interpretations to be made of this text:

> The decision to remove the persona of the ethnographer from the text is itself as much a "literary" decision, a strategic one, as the opposite, the choice to include the ethnographer in

the events described. Until the past few decades, however, the majority decision was to sharply segment the ethnographic self from the personal self . . . It was a distortion that emerged as a historical response to rigid canons of what was then assumed to be proper scientific practice. Personal memoirs, "literary" writing, poetry and any writing that inserted the Self in the account of the Other deviated from the standard realist mode and was considered inappropriate. (p. 3)

It was to return to Dorothy Smith's (1990) terms an instance of the conceptual practices of power. In practice Jane Addams was one of many practicing social work in this style of making a difference in the lived experiences of self and fellows. The list of Hull House workers who have achieved fame in their own right is long. Yet it was Jane Addams who came to be known as the heroine and author of social work. When this heroine fell her ways of knowing fell with her.

<u>The autoethnography of Jane Addams.</u>

Addams starts her intellectual autobiography by positioning herself in relation to the loss of her mother when Jane was a baby. She died while she was caring for neighbors. Jane spent her childhood in a close and caring rural community and in a close and loving relationship with a father she saw as a competent maker of life. After a college style education, she travels to Europe and encounters the intellectual and social turmoil accompanying the industrial revolution. In England, memories of the French revolution commingled with Christian ideas about humanity to focus attention on what should be done in practice to help our neighbors. The work of John Ruskin and William Morris was having an effect on the university-educated children of the newly rich and Addams visited a reflection of such concern in Toynbee Hall, an early settlement house in London (Davis, 1973).

As one of the "new women" emerging on American society with a college degree and no particular place to apply this preparation, she had the fortune of her now-deceased father with which to carve a space for herself and others to seek the generation of a just society (Deegan, 1988b). She felt democracy could only be meaningful when it extended beyond citizenship rights to social and economic equity in participation. Her ideas developed dynamically as she experimented with ongoing inquiry, but the overall direction to her efforts was set by her belief that by living among the poor and understanding them, she would be able to help bridge the chasm between the rich and poor. Observation and analysis for this purpose were built into the practical enterprise that was Hull House.

Look-act-reflect were the chief tools of her efforts. Her writings powerfully capture how this process worked in the everyday world. You can picture with her the toddler with the broken neck (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 102). He was blown from the roof of his tenement building while his mother hung out the washing there. His mother asks for a day's pay so she can stay home to hold the younger baby. A hold was what the dead child always wanted, but his mother never had the time. Of course you can see the necessity for factory reform, housing standards, and an eight hour day.

There is the clerk who asks for relief and she directs him to outdoor work digging ditches (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 96). Addams is experimenting with scientific philanthropy and this is what the rules dictate. This pale indoor worker protests that his health won't stand it but she smiles and

urges him to just give it a try. He can come back if it doesn't work out. He doesn't come back but we know what it feels like to have to continue meeting the gaze of his orphans. This approach is exactly what Dorothy Smith advocates as the way to break free of the totalizing, generalizing concepts and methods of the social sciences that constitute women (and I would add welfare clients, blacks and all those others) as object rather than subject. "If we begin where people are actually located in that independently existing world outside texts, we begin in the particularities of an actual everyday world" [Smith, 1987 , p. 16).

Support for rereading and revaluing the reflexive, emic work of this early American social worker comes from the work of Dale Spender and Patricia Hill Collins. To Spender I owe the understanding that the ideas of female thinkers do not just fade because they lack relevance and truth: they as easily fade because they challenge by their existence the interests of those in power (Spender, 1983). Collins revisits earlier black women writers with today's tools of analysis and conceptualization, and finds that many were offering cultural critiques that resonate strongly with those that theorists/activists make today (Collins, 1990, 1992).

Some idea of how the later dominance of positivism erased the work of earlier women writers on the nature of care and nurturing relationships is captured in the biography of American woman sociologist, Jessie Bernard (Bannister, 1991). In her early career, her writings served to distance herself from earlier women in social thought such as Jane Addams. Bernard then insisted that somehow her rationality placed her above the issues of emotions and politics that had concerned earlier generations. By the end of her career she had become a committed feminist, determined to unveil the ways in which scientism disempowered women. Her intellectual life spanned roughly the 1920's to the 1970's. Her biographer describes the cultural processes Bernard lived as follows:

> Objectivism projected a mixed message at best, so far as women were concerned. On the one hand, its images of sexless intelligence, its attack on gender specific instincts and its stark professionalism promised escape from Victorian stereotypes and related constraints. But on the other, as she herself would later see, it introduced its own gender biases in making power and control the end of social science; in promulgating the cult of expertise that intruded increasingly into domains of life previously the preserve of women and in excluding women, de facto if not de jure, from the new world of team research and foundation grants. (Bannister, 1991, p. 79)

Values

The value of social work.

Fischer (1978) has argued that the value of social work is that it is individualizing. This I read as a peculiarly modernist American take on a humanist commitment to the equal worth of all people. It is one that mutes the possibility of social work shifting from private troubles to public issues through the community solidarity Addams (1990/1910), Dewey (1929) and West (1993b) describe as the essence of democracy.

In contrast to Fischer, I take the value of social work to be its potential strength in recognizing the universal singularity of each of us and providing services that listen and respond to personal troubles in a variety of ways that can best be evaluated by the critical reference group, the clients themselves both singularly and as collectivities (Denzin, 1989c; Wadsworth, 1992).

Values in Social Work.

Values are a concept that has caused the profession of social work in American culture some discomfort over the years. They remain a distinguishing feature of the profession yet a potential weak spot in claims to be scientific. The trinity of equipment for the professional is values, knowledge, and skills. Yet there has been slippage over the years as to what values mean in the anthropological sense. Far from being the powerhouse of the profession, they have become an item of psychological preference. So Gordon (1984), a key social work theorist in arguing the clear borders between values and knowledge for social work, has explained:

> Values had better be explored as psychologically based ideas of what *should* be. These preferences can be approached empirically and kept clearly distinct from psychologically based conceptions of what *is* . (p. 310)

This conception of values has the advantage of being an empirically measurable one but stands in marked contrast to the observation of British philosopher Iris Murdoch:

> The ordinary person does not, unless corrupted by philosophy, believe that he creates values by his choices. He thinks some things really are better than other and that he is capable of getting it wrong. (quoted in Wilkes, 1981, p. 61)

Values in this view are the guiding principles and beliefs by which we live our lives and it is in living our lives that we have an opportunity to reflect on their usefulness. A conception of personal choice values contradicts the Einsteinian notion that there are no value-free facts and no fact-free values. Such a conception, however, is in keeping with a culture of individualism that resists the idea of overarching cultural structures shaping people's lives. Turning values into empirical data to be known and controlled suggests that with positivistic research social workers can find the answers to personal troubles of clients. Mills (1959) would support those practitioners who feel that humans must always be involved in making moral decisions on their personal troubles:

> To tell them that they can really know social reality only by depending upon a necessarily bureaucratic kind of research is to place a taboo, in the name of Science, upon efforts to become independent . . . and substantive thinkers. (p. 189)

Head-heart-hand approaches and neo-pragmatism.

Caring about human differences when they are culturally interpreted as diminishing the equal worth of people seems to be at the heart of Jane Addams' work and a value position I would share. I seek to connect my research methodology to that she establishes in her narrative Twenty Years at Hull

House (1990/1910). In this I seek both to connect with a long history of narrative practices in social work and with current developments in the use of narrative analysis in research and practice for social work (Riessman, 1993; Sherman & Reid, 1994).

Collins (1990) in Black Feminist Theory outlines a project I see as similar to a humanist social work that incorporates a sociological imagination. The work of early black women intellectuals she revisits through the frames of postmodern critical feminist theory is full of wisdom on process, oppression and building community still applicable today. Collins, in retrieving and celebrating this wisdom of women of past ages, underscores how much knowledge and power are connected in what we are learning about the past.

Part of my motivation to write my story after the style of Twenty Years at Hull House is the relative silence I see in current social work and sociology literature on the ideas of Addams and her fellows having practical relevance for today. Exceptions to this silence are the works of Deegan (1988a) and other scholars such as Brieland (1990), Davis (1973), Franklin (1986), Lagemann (1985), Lasch (1965), Muncy (1993), and Platt (1990) . These authors have established the close links of this Chicago settlement house movement to the development of the Chicago School of Sociology and the fieldwork methods of participant observation.

The pioneering works of Hull House residents in conducting social research of a quantitative kind are used today by feminist researchers to demonstrate that morally committed research for women does not always mean qualitative research. The choice of method depends on your purpose. So to demonstrate housing was overcrowded it was an effective technique to randomly survey the housing in an area and count the number of occupants (Deegan, 1988a).

Yet, in all the reading I have done for this project only historians and feminists seem to include consideration of the intellectual strength of this settlement house work as well as its moral purpose (Chambers, 1986; Franklin, 1986). In social work research books, the usual cursory history of social work research efforts starts with the American Social Science Association of 1865 and then jumps to Mary Richmond (see Bergner & Patchner, 1988). According to Turner's (1986) key social work theory text, social work practice before Mary Richmond was pre-theoretical.

Even in community work, Jane Addams is not claimed as a mother of the approach. Saul Alinsky actively distanced himself from the work of earlier women social workers in Chicago. He went so far as to insist he would not work with "dames" if he could help it (Horwitt, 1989).

In the qualitative research literature, participant observation techniques are traced back to the Chicago School of Sociology but not to the work of settlement house residents in providing the base and space from which university researchers initially made forays to collect information and understanding (Denzin, 1992; Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993; Rose, 1993; Thomas, 1993). An exception is Vidich (1992) who talks about the genesis of Whyte's Street Corner Society in Boston and the ties with the Settlement House work there.

In conceptualizing my own critical feminist autoethnography narrative on being a practitioner researcher and a reflexive knower of local knowledge it seems both political and ethical to

acknowledge the rich tradition of critical pragmatism in my field that the work of Jane Addams exemplifies.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed some of the post-modern, interpretive ideas as to the social construction of human meaning and understanding that have emerged across disciplines during the twentieth century. I have briefly explored how emic or insiders' knowledge becomes privileged within interpretive approaches and read Twenty Years at Hull House as a pre-positivist exemplar of the critical ethnographic texts Dorothy Smith describes as a means of achieving a sociology that will be for people rather than about them. The next chapter will delineate how I mean to write my own critical ethnography of lived experience as a social work practitioner.

Notes

CHAPTER THREE

Doing My Project

A story is a little knot or complex of that species of connectedness
which we call relevance.   Gregory Bateson (1979)

Introduction

Being a social worker and then helping prepare others to become social workers has been ongoingly problematic for me. So many times I am asked what it is that social workers do exactly. I am enough of a member of positivist western culture to become confused by such questions and wonder why I don't know exactly. Students enroll to find out how to be a social worker and expect direction and certainty from their teachers. Other social workers tell which of the practice models in Turner's (1986) classic tome guides them in practice and I wonder why my practice has never been so focused.

I have been telling the story of being a social worker to myself and others since entering social work education in 1974. When I achieved my aims in practice, the story was one of triumph and celebration. When I failed, the story became one of what I learned from my mistakes. Forcibly transferred away from work in the Kimberley, the story became one of a ceaseless search for what I had done wrong as a social worker--how had I failed to recognize what was professional behavior. Then when I was appointed a social work educator, the story extended to trying to imagine better ways of teaching students to read contexts to effectively pursue the moral purposes of social work. I find other social work educators have a vision of fitting all social work graduates with a standardized set of competencies. I wonder why so much American literature talks of social work as therapy, when I have never known a client to ask for therapy--at least not for themselves. I have lived a process of learning and teaching, listening, showing and telling about what it is to be a social worker.

I relate my narrative activity around being a social worker to Ricouer's (1974) point that the act of understanding through interpretation is not firstly a problem of research method but an "ontological trait" (p. 9). Such activities are part of our nature as human social beings--we are all caught up in the task of making sense of the world that we find around us.

In this chapter I set out the methods by which I move beyond this everyday ontological activity of mine to follow Mills' (1959) advice to make scholarly use of my life experiences in intellectual work--in my case, completing a doctoral research thesis. Much of this chapter will draw upon and revisit territory covered in the first two chapters of this thesis. The particular focus will be to establish the methodology and methods I follow in writing an autoethnography of social work following the style of Jane Addams. I identify my research approach with the traditions and methods of Denzin's (1989) interpretive interactionism. I connect these to the methods of critical ethnography developed by Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990) and Liz Stanley's (1990b, 1992, 1993) writings on

autobiography as sociology. Having identified some of the particular methods by which I muster the life experience from which to write an autoethnography, the final section of the chapter focuses on explicating narrative and writing as methods of knowing, and the nature of the authority these methods provide together with the criteria by which the reader may gauge the success of this project.

My Autoethnography

The life I want to write as emic social work is a life that struggles to hold together two practices I found most useful as a social work practitioner--the practice of ethnography and the reflexive use of self. It is in this sense I call my reflection of lived experience an autoethnography. Denzin (1989b) defines an autoethnography as "an ethnographic statement which writes the ethnographer into the text in an autobiographical manner" (p. 34). The implications of this as a variant from traditional objective ethnographies was touched on in the last chapter referring to the autoethnography of Jane Addams. In the postmodern intellectual position from which I have conceptualized my project, such an autoethnography highlights and centers the impossibility of the knower being separated from the known and acknowledges that there can be nothing but interpretation of lived experience (Denzin, 1989c; Geertz, 1988). This approach understands that meaningful interpretation of lived experiences can come only from individuals who have immersed themselves in the phenomena they wish to understand (Denzin, 1989c; 1990). My interpretation of the nature of social work practice will not aim or claim to completely capture the problematic phenomena of being a social worker. Rather it will be a considered textual offering in those ongoing dialogics around the nature of social work practice in which I already participate.

Dorothy Smith (1974) summarizes the value of an autoethnographic approach with her argument for a standpoint epistemology which starts from the ontology of the knower. I know the socially constructed world of social work experientially. I want to start from here to move out tracing the social through processes of reflection, inquiry, and selection of salient facts. Stanley (1992) notes that autoethnographers following such methods find themselves immersed in both theorizing and living in marked contrast to the usual intellectual schism between thinking and doing.

> The posited dichotomy between epistemology and ontology, between knowing and being, or between analysis and experience, is a false dichotomy and should be rejected along with other apparatus of Scientism. (p. 122-123)

Bruner (1993) similarly talks of the false dichotomy in separating field memoirs from the written ethnography as if the processes of production can be kept separated from the product of ethnography. He argues that such separation of personal from ethnographic self does violence to the lived experience of ethnography. In contrast, an autoethnography enables a development of critical self-awareness, a sociological imagination, an exploration of the social sense of self and of relationships between individual experience and wider social patterns (Ribbens, 1993).

Such an autoethnography need not be in the traditional, totalizing style of anthropological ethnographies. Ethnography, while connected with anthropology, has also come to mean simply

diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation (Clifford, 1988; Frow & Morris, 1993). This covers a state of being in a culture while looking at a culture--a form of personal and collective self-fashioning. Frow and Morris (1993) make the point that Australian culture currently uses a plastic concept of culture. Many Australians in the media, the field of cultural studies and more generally are writing autoethnographically. Such activity highlights the potential of autobiography in understanding the social. No longer is it considered necessarily self-indulgent, vain and excessively inward-looking for an ordinary person to write about their life. Rather a critical form of autobiography reveals how the self is intrinsically social and that our subjectivity, far from being something in the way of social analysis, is itself social.

Liz Stanley (1993) has identified three particular reverberations within sociology of the widespread postmodern intellectual changes in social theory covered in Chapter Two. The first is the growing refusal to accept and sustain a dichotomizing of structure and action in studying the social. Stanley links this to contemporary sociologists seeking to steer a course between a concept of selves as puppets and selves as creators (Berger, 1963). There is also a questioning as to whether sociological knowledge is made or found. If the sociologist is an active producer rather than a discoverer of sociological knowledge, this implies that all knowledge claims must be provisional and not foundational as positivism held. All three points connect to what Stanley sees as the renewed interest in autobiographies as key means of investigation into the social.

Stanley (1992) argues autobiographical texts that document the lives of all of us, not just those famous, white and male, are a way of picturing social structures through single lives. Such texts are never about autonomous individuals but necessarily contain the potted biographies of significant others to the autobiographer, even within the silences and selectivities of the autobiographer's voice. By being particular rather than general, such texts start from local and little narratives, but have the potential to enable connection to lived experiences at other sites to build a general picture of how the relations of ruling operate and how to research them (Smith, 1990).

I identify the nature of my autoethnography as what Denzin (1989a) calls a self story. Self stories deal with ongoing problematic occurrences in a person's life. In my case the ongoing problematic occurrence is being a social worker. Denzin (1989a) defines the self-story as:

> a narrative that creates and interprets a structure of experience that is being told about; the self of the teller is at the center of the story. (p. 144) The emphasis on self, biography, history, and experience must always work back and forth between a concern for process and the analysis of the specific lives of individuals who live the process that is being studied . . . Process and structure must be blended with lived experience. (p. 38-39)

The Research Question

In this section I encapsulate the research question that drives my autoethnography, before moving on to explicate the approach of interpretive interactionism that Denzin (1989b) describes as a suitable methodology for addressing such research questions of lived experience. My research

question in one sentence is: <u>How do I practice as a social worker in ways that are characteristic of</u> <u>social work?</u>

Now in reflective middle age, the story in answer to this question becomes a written one. A text linking my multiplicity of lived experiences to the highly reflexive stance I have developed about the nature of knowledge, the conduct of research and my place in these, the nature of my relationship to those my story references and the ethical implications of writing my lived experience (Olesen, 1994). Inevitably the linkages I make affect the nature of my personal narrative. Following Bruner (1984):

> A life lived is what actually happens. A life experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is. . . . A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context. (p. 7)

The first two chapters have laid out some of the experiences and prejudgements I have on entering a hermeneutic circle of inquiry into my becoming a social worker. Having entered the profession of social work with an education in anthropology, I found practice required me not just to study the other but to work with others to effect the changes they sought in their lives. License to act came when my help was engaged by clients and others in addressing personal troubles. The possibilities of action were delimited by my statutory base in a state welfare agency, by the historical knowledge clients' carried as to the nature of help available from welfare and the degree of empathy I could develop as to the lived experiences of clients. The context in which I struggled to achieve social work ends was one in which the profession of social work was newly institutionalized and in which the majority of my clients were those classically placed at the far end of otherness--Australian Aborigines. Empathy in such circumstances needed to go beyond a psychologizing around Western notions of normality. At the same time, empathy could not just be a knowing about the exotic other. Empathy, a key skill of social work in which relationship is central, is a knowing with the other.

In taking anthropological fieldwork methods courses, students such as myself were early taught that "field work centered in rapport--minimally acceptance and empathy but usually implying something akin to friendship" (Clifford, 1988, p. 34). Such a relationship with field informants helped establish the authority of the final ethnography. Failure to establish such relationships meant failure as an anthropologist. It was taken-for-granted that such relationships were possible given the right attitude and perseverance on the part of the anthropologist. Bad luck might occur but empathy and rapport were assumed possible in interaction with all humanity.

Social work emphasized that the social work task was to understand the person-in-the-situation (Monkman, 1991). To do this it was necessary to develop a relationship with the client in which rapport and empathy were central. Jane Addams (1990/1910) talked of being like neighbors, like friends in this but later professional training came to emphasize the professional nature of this relationship. One of Biestek's (1957) casework principles was the ability to be objective in the maintenance of the casework relationship. The irony was that social work would seldom write the

objective texts about particular people that anthropologists wrote of particular communities. Increasingly however, social work texts are not about particular people but about a generalized other and the theoretical frameworks through which they may be known (Turner, 1986).

Much social work knowledge taught that knowing with the other by relationship can never be conclusive but always ongoing, relational, dialogical and open-ended (Biestek, 1957). Practitioners make their interpretations available to clients with the aim of developing understanding. As the relationship was ongoing and dynamic, all such interpretations are unfinished and provisional. The interpretations that emerge from engagement in the social work relationship allow the client to make choices as to their future actions based on a more reflective understanding of the social possibilities open to them.

Social work teachings about practice then were on the process of making meaning with the client, while the traditional anthropological education I received was about finding the meaning of exotic cultures through the processes of rapport and empathy. Starting from my practice of social work, I explicitly address the notion of knowledge being made or found. Does this have to be an either/or question and what consequences does my answer have for both my practice of and education for social work?

My conceptual frame outlined in the last chapter draws on some twenty years of reading and reflecting on professional and related literature and a constant struggle to ground and test such understanding in the action of social work practice. Any conceptual frame must be personally meaningful to the user to be open to ongoing reflection. I have consciously sought to develop and articulate a theoretical framework that is both relevant to my practice of social work and open and oriented to the thinking of philosophers, researchers and practitioners in the field of social theory. Other social work writers have similarly addressed the question of how we practice out of our conceptual frames (See Dean & Fenby, 1989; Haworth, 1984; Imre 1984, 1991; Peile, 1988a, 1988b; Scott, 1989, 1990, 1993).

> Tacit as well as explicit philosophical commitments are integrally involved in everything that social workers do, not only in practice, but also in teaching and research. (Imre, 1991, p. 3)

In social work field placements, there is a focus on communication, building relationships and rapport, active listening and reflexivity via talking through issues with a supervisor/mentor/listening board. All this knowledge is about a conscious use of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Process skills enable practitioners to begin to research the situation: the lived experiences of clients. These findings are to be the guide in taking action. Rein and White (1981) note the contradiction that much of this knowledge originating in the context of practice itself does not enter the generalized texts through which social work students are taught social work knowledge. Dorothy Scott (1989, 1990) similarly notes that the taught theoretical frameworks ascribe meaning to phenomena social workers face and filter our view of reality away from this practice wisdom. Sands (1990) has commented on how closely the process skills of direct practice resemble those of ethnography-- attentive listening, rapport building, and allowing the other to articulate their concerns.

The lack of connection between the personal and the social in the taught frameworks, however has led to a social work focus in the use of these process skills on understanding the individual as an acultural entity and not as a social construct. Freudian frameworks and casework were both outcomes and creators of a lack of frames able to meaningfully incorporate the socially constructed person-in-the-situation. Denzin (1989a) has argued that consideration of person-in-situation brings together biography, history and social context in a unique configuration. What I want to explore in this thesis is how such consideration of person-in-situation occurred in my own practice and what consequences this had for my practice of social work.

Interpretive Interactionism

Denzin (1989b) argues for the application of an interpretive interactionism perspective to the study of personal troubles and turning point moments in lives of interacting individuals--the very stuff of social work practice. In this present work I identify my personal trouble as knowing how to be a social worker and explore whether such a personal trouble is a public issue and if so, how. I attempt to bring alive the existentially problematic experience of being a social worker at a particular time and place in human history. I want to use the methodology of interpretive interactionism to seek to enact Mills' (1959) idea of a sociological imagination, where researchers use their own lived experience as part of their research. To my mind it is a methodology ideally suited to the social work practitioner using the skills of talking and listening to others and beginning and ending "with the biography and self of the researcher" (Denzin, 1989a, p. 12).

Riessman (1994) has commented that research methods are like maps in reflecting the interests of the mapmaker--their particular point of view. In following the methods of interpretive interactionism I am aligning myself with a particular way of viewing the human world and a particular way of how it can be understood:

> The lived experiences of interacting individuals are the proper subject matter of sociology . . . The meanings of these experiences are best given by the persons who experience them. (Denzin, 1989a, p. 25)

In a related move that, for me, centers the importance of our sexed bodies, Smith (1987, 1990), in outlining her methodology of critical ethnography, calls for our everyday experiences to be seen as a base from which women can value their own viewpoints, analyze these experiences and their particular historical and social contexts and use these to talk back to sociological writers and create a different sort of sociological discourse. While both researchers are sociologists, I understand their methods to have direct applicability to social work research.

Social work philosopher Roberta Imre (1991) comments "words incorporate beliefs, and there is an increasing awareness that beliefs underlie all knowledge and ways of viewing the world" (p. 198). The methods of Denzin and Smith offer a way of researching how beliefs play themselves out in constructing the ongoing actualities we live. Both claim that such research allows for the more conscious development of effective maps that will take us where we want to go. These maps have to

be made not found and their making and application is always a political and moral process. In the case of social work such methods allow for a talking-back by practitioners to those writers who insist on a positivist vision of what it is to do social work. Such methods resonate with an increasing appreciation in social science literature of using the researcher's own life as source of interpretation (Ellis, 1993; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992).

<u>The nature of interpretive interactionism.</u>

This is a mode of qualitative research that seeks to depict with verisimilitude the voices, emotions and actions of people in the study situation (Denzin, 1989b). The beginning premise is that we create the worlds we live in by attaching meaning to our lived experiences. The social processes of interaction, self-reflection, and shared interpretations are the means of this creation. Integral to this approach are lengthy immersion of the researcher in the study situation through methods such as participant observation, ethnography, field work, creative interviewing, and cultural studies.

The approach differs from many other sociological conceptions of knowledge and research in eschewing the notion of an obdurate reality. Assuming there are multiple realities, it studies, expresses and interprets subjective human experience. The goal of generalization is rejected and every instance of social interaction apprehended is seen as a slice of the phenomenon being studied (Denzin, 1989b, 1990, 1992). Denzin (1989b) has summarized the characteristics of interpretive interactionism as follows: (a) existential, interactional and biographical; (b) naturalistic; (c) sophisticatedly rigorous, meaning a commitment to making materials and methods as public as possible; (d) encompassing both pure and applied research projects; (e) postpositivist; and, (f) concerned with the social construction of gender, power, knowledge, history and emotion. (Drawn from Denzin, 1989b, p. 19)

The procedural steps a researcher using this methodology can usefully follow are set out below.

<u>The process of interpretive interactionism.</u>

1. *Asking the Research Question* in one sentence. In my case this is: <u>How do I practice as a social worker in ways that are characteristic of social work?</u>

2. *Critically analyze prior writings, conceptions of the phenomenon being studied.* This I have done in Chapters One and Two and will continue to reflect on throughout the thesis.

3. *Situating phenomena being studied in the natural world.* In my case I situate the phenomena in the places I have studied, practiced and taught social work. Sites of focal interest are the Kimberley region in Western Australia, Perth in Western Australia, and Champaign-Urbana in Illinois.

4. *Bracketing the phenomena* - locating themes or essential features of the phenomenon that are uncovered. This involves taking the phenomena apart and analyzing it in terms of my understanding. My bracketing will occur within the reflecting, researching process around moments of

practice I identify as epiphanic. By this process I will recreate my lived experience around particular themes and elements.

5. *Construction* - Writing this text puts back these themes or essential features of my social work practice into a coherent whole in an order as they occur in experience.

6. *Contextualization* is placing the phenomena being studied back into the natural world. In my case creating a sense of how my experience has been described, shaped and given meaning by myself. (Based on Denzin (1989b, Chapter Three)

Criteria for evaluating interpretive interactionist research.

Denzin(1993, p. 11) has suggested the following four queries to be borne in mind by both the writer and readers of this text.

1. Do my interpretations illuminate and reveal social work practice as a lived experience?

2. Are my interpretations based on thick contextualized materials that are temporarily, historically, and biologically grounded?

3. Do they engulf and incorporate previous understandings of social work practice?

4. Do they cohere into a meaningful totality that produces understanding however provisionally and incomplete?

Research Methods

There are a number of particular methods associated with this research approach. In the following sections I outline some of the major methods and research considerations I was guided by in my project.

Participant observation.

This refers to researcher immersion in the naturalistic field of study. Denzin (1989b) defines this as:

> Observing and participating in the worlds of lived experience that one is studying; involves learning how to listen, see, and talk within the worlds being studied. (p. 143)

It is a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection. In fact, it is a method of multiple methods and can be seen to be the word developed within sociology to cover what in anthropology is known as ethnography (Whyte, 1943). Denzin (1989b) uses the term triangulation to refer to the effectiveness of such a multiplicity of methods within participant observation. Richardson (1994) has recast the outcome as crystallization. By this she reminds us that we never fully capture obdurate reality in this way but achieve instead "the deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of a topic" (p. 522).

Clifford (1988), in a similar vein, notes that participant observation is a shorthand term for a continuous tacking between the inside and outside of events. It "may be taken seriously if reformulated in hermeneutic terms as a dialectic of experience and interpretation" (p. 34).

Creative interviewing.

When fully immersed in the field the researcher has an opportunity to move out of a fixed researcher/researched binary and move to an engagement with others in the field towards "creatively and openly share life experiences with one another in a mutual search for greater self-understanding" (Denzin, 1989b, p. 103).

Instead of operating from a fixed instrument of inquiry, such as a questionnaire, the researcher uses the self as an instrument in joining in relationship with others to share understandings with one another in search of greater self-understanding. This method of inquiry relates directly to a third--reflexivity. I was in class when Denzin shared the moment of insight that came when he set out to interview Americans on their reaction to President Kennedy's assassination and found that morally he could only be with them in their reflections. Yet in my readings of written texts on this method, I find that it is women writers in particular who are able to explicate for me what is involved in reflexivity.

Reflexivity.

Reflexivity involves treating one's self as a subject for intellectual inquiry and "encapsulates the socialized, non-unitary and changing self posited in feminist social thought" (Stanley, 1993, p. 44). Following Smith (1987, 1990) I mean to start my inquiry with reflexivity on my life. In Smith's critical ethnography this means locating biography in history and social structure. Smith talks of reflecting on our intellectual autobiographies. Reinharz (1979), arguing for this start in reflexivity, reminds us that this method produced the beginnings of Western Cartesian thought and its binary logic. The irony is that the power of binary logic and the connected separation of the knower from the known has now produced a strong taboo on allowing such research methods because of their necessary lack of "validity" by the tenets of a fixed scientific method. Descartes himself thought of his binary logic while lying in bed and thinking and never proved his thesis in accord with Comtean standards (Vrooman, 1970).

Lessons from Descartes.

Reflecting on the enormous consequences attached to Descartes' habit of staying in bed and thinking, I am aware of Smith's (1987, 1990) insistence that research methods of reflexivity should consider the material and ideological forces allowing and shaping such habits. The changing nature of such forces means we never come to closure on any reflection. "I think therefore I am" is a powerful insight but not necessarily the full or only story. It was for its day; however, a critical insight in

allowing that what is does not have to be and that the power of human thought can make the world a different place.

Descartes' desire to think reflexively came from a consciousness of the gap between the power of reasoning he experienced in mathematics and its lack of application in his everyday unsatisfactory world of lived experience (Vrooman, 1970). Though his understanding was to become central to the modernist consciousness, in the times he worked his energies were spent in finding a power base from which to persuade others of his logic.

The story of his untimely death from pneumonia in the pursuit of patronage for his ideas suggests at an action level he was aware of power and human agency as integral to the realization of ideas. A letter to Queen Christina of Sweden in November 1647 addresses her question of how she could attain the sovereign good, *De vero bono*. Descartes pronounced that man's greatest good lay in his will to do right:

> I do not see how it would be possible to use our knowledge and our will better than to have always a strong and constant resolution to do exactly the things which we consider to be the best and to use all the strength of our intelligence in striving to understand them. (quoted in Vrooman, 1970, p. 224)

Later, finding this Queen one of the few Europeans with power willing to give a place and base for his ideas on logic, this Frenchman traveled to the cold of Sweden to represent and hopefully legitimate his knowledge. Queen Christina's passion for working in the early hours of the morning to understand his teachings forced him to take chilly trips from home to the palace and so catch the cold that led to his death (Vrooman, 1970).

In feudalist Europe of the seventeenth century the language of Cartesian rationality was a revolutionary one. It is one of the ironies of human communication that in the twentieth century it has become a chief means of maintaining a hegemonic modernism:

> For Descartes, man's free will was his most noble possession, the quality which made him in some ways comparable to God and in some ways seemed to free him from subservience to God. Man's dignity and greatest happiness, therefore lay in the exercise of his free will. (Vrooman, 1970, p. 224)

Twentieth century existentialist philosopher Sartre said of Descartes:

> We shall not reproach Descartes for having given to God which properly belongs to us; instead, we shall admire him for having established the basis of democracy in an authoritarian age and for having followed to their logical conclusion the exigencies of the idea of autonomy, and for having understood . . . that the unique basis for existence was freedom. (quoted in Vrooman, 1970, p. 260)

In attempting my project I take from Descartes' story lessons that seeking knowledge works outward from self experience to the world as a whole and is always a political activity. In this movement none of us can escape the cultures into which we are born, yet all have the potential to think anew, to reflect and create. To enter into the dynamics of communicating our understandings requires a sensibility of the politics involved. The first task, however, is to clarify what it is I have to say to

others by writing an interpretation that helps me understand what I identify as the problematics of the lived experience of becoming a social worker.

<u>Narrative as method of knowing.</u>

When interpretation is taken to be the only possibility of understanding (Denzin, 1989b), positivistic approaches remain an important interpretive way of gaining knowledge; but they are no longer accepted as the only way. With the acceptance that we live in a socially constructed, multiplicity of human lived experience, each of us becomes aware that we depend on our own consciousness to interpret and negotiate our lived experience. That consciousness is always developed within a cultural context and is necessarily a social phenomenon (Stanley, 1990c). In my project of writing a critical, interpretive autoethnography I want to explore whether reflecting on my own experience of becoming a social worker leaves me with any wisdom I could usefully communicate to others preparing to become social workers.

In this I intend to communicate narratively. Laurel Richardson (1990) has characterized the narrative as the centerpiece of the human sciences:

> Narratives exist at the everyday, autobiographical, biographical, cultural and collective levels. They reflect the universal human experience of time and link the past, present and future. Narrative links sociology to literature and history. The human experience of stability and transformation becomes sociologically accessible. Narrative gives room for the expression of our individual and shared fates, our personal and communal worlds . . . It is the universal way in which humans accommodate to finitude. Narrative is the best way to understand the human experience because it is the way humans understand their own lives . . . It rejuvenates the sociological imagination in the service of liberatory civic discourses and transformative social projects. (p. 65)

Naming narrative as our method of knowing extends the interpretive turn of the social sciences. Nature and the world do not tell stories. We humans do. "Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations" (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). We decide what gets included and what excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted and what they are supposed to mean.

In social work, people construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and to construct lives. Telling stories is a means of fashioning an identity both as a social worker and as a client. A practicing social worker soon learns the importance of rhetoric, nuance, and style in the presentation of stories. Geertz (1988) has analyzed classic ethnographies to show how they too depend on these devices in convincing the reader of the truth of their depictions.

Neither social work stories nor ethnographies are true in any final, totalizing sense. Both, however, are true in the sense of conveying an understanding of the lived actualities in any particular place and time. They are true in the sense of the truths of the metanarratives of Modernism that Lyotard (1991) describes as motivating and justifying human action. Speaking specifically of the narratives of autobiography, Stanley (1992) notes "narratively structured autobiographical accounts and analytically structured theoretical accounts are in fact highly similar" (p. 110). Autobiography reveals itself as a selective arrangement of relevant facts--"a theory: a theory of a character or a person

but a theory nonetheless" (p. 121). Our ability to generate analysis out of narrative is a way to bridge the gap between knowing and being--between those who analyze experiences and those who have them.

Taking Dorothy Smith's standpoint idea as my starting point, I have designed a research approach that incorporates the ideas of Norman Denzin and Laurel Richardson on textuality and narrative as methods of researching (Denzin, 1994; Richardson, 1993). As practitioners, social workers deal in stories everyday. I've often heard welfare workers approach a client with the words, "What's the story then?" As Richardson (1990) notes, "Narrative is the primary code through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes"(p.110). Such stories are always contextually embedded and looking for particular connections between events. Return briefly to the welfare worker's comment above--"What's the story then?" This has to be interpreted within the context of the Australian welfare system, where clients actually approaching the system for assistance need a story to access resources. Good stories are those that happen to speak to the logic of the system and evoke worker interest. In private therapy practice in America in contrast, telling stories can in itself be the locus of intervention with all parties of the belief that this therapy process will enable greater self-understanding to develop in the client. Because the client or their insurer pays for the service, the story itself is not a condition of accessing the services. In both cultures, presumably all clients have some personal trouble that motivates the articulation of stories.

Riessman (1993) has applied postmodern theory to narrative analysis in American social work. A postmodern therapeutic process consists of dialogue between client and therapist in which new realities are co-constructed that allow for reflecting on interpretations of past and present situations from which clients can choose the most empowering representations. Such a process would be non-hierarchical and not driven by techniques. It would be discursive and respectful of clients and individualized around each situation. What Riessman (1993) does not explore is how such discourse might move the therapist out of the casework framing of practice. While she posits that a postmodern therapeutic process encourages discussion of social justice, poverty, race, gender and power, Reissman does not detail what engagement in the discourse might mean for the practice methods of the social worker.

Social workers dealing with personal narratives as the stuff of everyday practice would seem confronted with this issue of what does it mean for the reflexivity and moral commitment of the social worker to dialogue and engage with client's stories of their everyday lives. In the next section I detail some of the feminist scholarship presently being conducted on the nature of personal narrative.

Personal narratives.

Camilla Stivers (1993) is another social theorist who has taken the interpretive turn as an opportunity for renewed assessment of personal narratives as a way of knowing the social. From a feminist postmodern perspective on the nature of knowledge, she has developed a set of propositions on the nature of personal narratives. Once the Kuhnian notion that each researcher operates out of a

framework as to knowledge rather than *the* framework is accepted, then it becomes apparent that no researcher can just collect facts. What each of us sees through the lens of our intellectual and value assumptions:

> are not "brute facts" but phenomena that are treated (or not) as facts based on the relevant knowledge community's definition of what counts as a fact (or knowledge, or truth). (Stivers, 1993, p. 409)

Stivers moves from this understanding to argue that what has been seen as the binary division between the knowledge of social science and personal "anecdotal" knowledge is no longer sustainable. Her propositions set out this lack of sustainability and argue, with Richardson (1990), for the importance of personal narrative in social research.

Stiver's five propositions on personal narratives.

These points are paraphrased from Stivers (1993, p. 410-411):

1.   If it is impossible to remove the observer from the knowledge acquisition process, then frankly subjective knowledge such as that found in personal narratives can no longer be excluded by definition from scientific ways of knowing.

2.   If there is no knowledge not biased by being grounded in a set of intellectual assumptions and a bodily ontology, then the particular, contextual knowledge claims of personal narrative have a place in ongoing scholarly discourse.

3.   If there is only interpretation in representation, facts can't speak for themselves. Facts are always fashioned out of human thought, imagination, experience, and belief. Without a hard and fast boundary between fact and interpretation, the justification for excluding personal narratives from social science disappears. It is vital to recognize the interpretive moment in all knowledge acquisition so that subjective accounts are not devalued as "soft."

4.   Feminist theory is as weighty as positivist theory in claiming that individual, contextual accounts can be as meaningful as national, objective, surveys such as the Census. The blend of subjectivity and objectivity in each is different but both ultimately rest on philosophical beliefs about the nature of the world and how we can know it. The power of "interpretations themselves constitute a societal change process" (p. 424).

5.   Human knowledge is a perpetually unfolding and developing process in which personal narratives play an important role. There is never one story to tell about any phenomenon:

> The sense of self is an essentially narrative phenomenon; people conceive of themselves in terms of stories about their actions in the world, using them to make sense of the temporal flow of their lives. We find identity and meaning as a result of the stories we tell about ourselves or that others tell about us. Therefore a narrative approach to self-understanding is not a distortion of reality but a confirmation of it. (Stivers, 1993, p. 412)

Personal narratives then become a way in which I as a researcher can explore the bifurcated consciousness I have in being a social worker and teaching about what it is to do social work. In the

next section I trace the way in which I would hope to use the hermeneutic circle of interpretation in writing a personal narrative of how I practice social work.

<u>Dilthey's (1833-1911) hermeneutic circle of interpretation.</u>

Dilthey, a German scholar, in resistance to the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and body, conceived a study of human life grounded in experience. In a concept that resonates with the social work focus on understanding the person in their environment, Dilthey saw the individual as simultaneously an element in societal interaction and also as an investigating and contemplating intelligence (Sherman, 1991). He developed a model of what it is for each of us to interpret and understand lived experience.

My story is one of the processes involved in listening to and responding to the stories of clients. Through writing it I would hope to do what clients do every day. To move through the processes of the hermeneutic circle in a manner that allows me to engage with readers in a process of effective communication. It will be effective if it allows me to fulfill my desire to resolve a personal trouble--the trouble of understanding what it is to be a social worker. I follow Denzin's (1994) explication of Dilthey's hermeneutic circle in setting out the four interplaying processes involved.

Interpretation

In my case this covers consideration of how I move from the universe of lived experience into the actual writing process: what and whom will I write about, what do I want to include and how shall I best represent the remembered actuality. How do I keep hold of the passions that move the project and write to them in way that will be meaningful for the reader, while continuing Mills' project "to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (1959, p. 6). How do I realize in my project, myself as a universal singular and hold to Sartre's (1981) insight on the nature of my identity?

> Summed up and for this reason universalized by *(our)* epoch, *(we)* in turn resume it by reproducing *(ourselves)* in it as *(singularities.)* Universal by the singular universality of human history, singular by the universalizing singularity of *(our)* projects, *(we)* require simultaneous examination from both ends. We must find an appropriate method (my italics). (p. ix-x)

I also want to include in my interpretive project an appreciation of the sexed bodies through which our lived experiences are biologically and culturally shaped (Smith, 1992, 1993).

*Representation*I want to talk about my life and there have been many 'other' people in it. With what voice do I speak about the manner in which other people's lives have entered my subjectivity. Like Rose (1993) I never told people I was doing this research for this purpose at the time I was living it. Not even myself. Now that I choose to move into written text, what are the ethics about speaking of my life? It may be just the Thesis Committee who reads this text but theses are also public documents. It is my life I am writing about but credibility as a researcher depends on readings made of

my text. The nature of these readings in turn depends on from what community of interpreters they are made.

There are strong narrative traditions in social work to which I connect (See especially Addams, 1990/1910; Hartman, 1990, 1992; Riessman, 1993, 1994). Such narratives do not usually recognize a necessity to explain their methods. They are not always recognized as research activities by the profession at large (Austin, 1991).

Writing an emic research thesis in narrative style is one way of reclaiming and celebrating the long traditions of relationship, reflection, reflexivity, rapport, and risk-taking that have marked the style of effective social work practitioners. Today these are inscribed as the marks of feminist research (Reinharz, 1983). A British feminist researcher, Sue Wise, (1990) has written her own narrative on becoming a social worker in the British context and captured for me some of the ongoing tensions involved in praxising social work. Her work gives me reason to believe that there can be communicability between practitioners even when there is little commensurability between the contexts of practice (Bernstein, 1983).

I have already written one text on working with Aboriginal people and remain sensible of the problematic readings made of that by Aboriginal people, practitioners, and bureaucrats (Crawford, 1989). I learned much about what to do differently next time and recognized that some of the most criticized aspects of the text I would not change at all. The criticism meant the text in one sense had been effective.[42] Many of these concerns will be addressed and hopefully resolved in the context of the actual writing process as it unfolds. Foremost this text is to help me understand myself and my experience. Certainly I would aim not to write harmfully of the lives of others but at the same time I am committed to writing of the actualities of my lived experience.

As I write this text, Dorothy Smith's understandings as to the relationship between textuality and the relations of ruling remain powerfully in my consciousness. As well as seeking to textualize my own understanding of lived experience I am also committed to incorporating my readings of two other texts that speak to the same historical, localized social processes within which my practice took place. This will give both my readers and myself an opportunity to reflect on the ways that texts operate in informing abstract understandings of the actual (Smith, 1990).

My aim in writing a representation is to seek an effective map of truth that will help me to get where I want to go. Realizing quite different maps are possible, I want to explore a specific site to build a more general picture of how the relations of ruling are put together and how to investigate them. Important to my project is consideration of how textuality operates in the organization of power and how concepts of ideology enter directly into ruling, replicating controls across multiple sites (Smith, 1990).

Legitimation

Speaking my life has its own authority but if I want to hold to the will to power I owned in the first chapter I need to move into a public arena with this proposed text. Writing from a critical postmodern perspective such legitimacy will not come with the establishment of the validity,

reliability, and generalizability of my methods. Instead I would hope to capture a notion of how the local, personal, and political interplayed in my practice such that readers could believe that this is one of the ways that history, biography, and social structure are played out in a particular site. Hopefully, this will connect with the reflections other practitioners, other clients and other bureaucrats make on their own sites of lived experience.

*Desire*The desire to engage with a community of interpreters in writing shapes decisions about what will be written. Having chosen to leave the comforting rituals of what Fuchs (1993) calls bureaucratic styles of research, I come to perhaps the most difficult aspect of this research project. I have a passion for talking to myself and to others. In that I have little sense of intrusion into people's personal space. Writing text becomes a different matter. To sustain reader interest and commitment to the project requires a certain confidence in my competence as a writer. Richardson's question, "How do we write texts that are vital?" (Richardson, 1994, p. 517) is a paralyzing one that reminds me why I find lectures so much more discomforting to "give" than tutorials. Sharing that actively allows the connecting of giving and taking seems a more democratic way to communicate (see Kelly & Sewell, 1988).

On the other hand the discipline of writing requires me to think through and articulate what often otherwise remains at the level of intuition. "The practice of the art of interpretation allows the fieldworker to translate what has been learned into a body of textual work that communicates these understandings to the reader" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). The space for this is assured in undertaking a doctoral degree.

Writing.

Writing is itself one of the methods of interpretive interactionism as it is of more positivistic styles of research. Writing is a way of knowing, a method of discovery and analysis. The language we use to write is a tool that shapes the way we approach what we want to write about. In accord with Whorf's insight, using English will shape what I can write. The positivism inherent in the use of the English language has shaped and reflects a cultural belief that simple scientific language serves to convey unadorned facts. Richardson (1990) has described this as the "modernist belief in the transparency of language" (p. 15). Within English there are different styles of scholarly writing. Each of them are political sites of praxis (Lather, 1991). Laurel Richardson (1990) points out how a traditional social science model of writing:

> requires researchers to suppress the story of their own research, the human processes through which their work was constituted over time. Deductively staged writing seems godlike, objective, eternal and true--rather than human, positioned, temporal, and partially true, which it is, as all writing is. (p. 57)

A writing style I am familiar with from both social work and anthropology is that of thick description. The traditional social history and process records of social work relate closely to the fieldwork recording techniques of anthropology. Thick description:

does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (Denzin, 1989b, p. 83)

In this project the basis for interpretation and understanding by readers lies in the clear thick descriptions I can provide of the processes, settings, and events I'm seeking to interpret. I also want to convey a strong sense of the process of doing this research project within the writing so that I highlight its ongoing dialogical nature.

I do not have detailed field notes of the seven years I lived in Broome, practicing as a social worker. Instead I have thick memories of time spent in a context very different to any I have known before or since. Seven years of immersion in a setting very like that of the classic anthropological endeavor--exotic, different, and thoroughly "cultural" in comparison to my "normal" environment. Everyday interaction with the outside world was relatively limited. It was a matter of local knowledge who was of the community, and news and gossip circulated without end. We were all saturated with knowledge of each other's doings and well aware how different twists could be put on the same event by different interpreters.

At the same time as I was a member of the Broome community, I was an outpost member of the state welfare bureaucracy, networked into a different but overlapping culture of communication and interpretation. How do I select from all this participant observation, thick descriptions regarding my research question?

Epiphanies.

Denzin (1989b) describes epiphanies as turning point experiences in people's lives. "Having had this experience, the person is never again quite the same"(p.15). To use epiphanies as a way of approaching my memories of lived experience offers a method of organizing my writing in accord with my theoretical framing:

The epiphany occurs in those problematic interactional situations where the subject confronts and experiences a crisis. . . . Epiphanies occur within the larger historical, institutional, and cultural arenas that surround a subject's life. The interpretive scholar seeks, as C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 5) observed to understand "the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals." . . . These existential crises and turning-point encounters thrust the person into the public arena. His or her problem becomes a public issue. (Denzin, 1989b, p. 17-18)

Interpretive studies with their focus on the epiphany, attempt to uncover this complex relationship between private troubles and public issues in a person's life. In this way all interpretive studies are biographical and historical. They are always fitted to the historical moment that surrounds the subject's life experiences. (Denzin, 1989b, p. 19)

It is my intention to organize my text around two major epiphanic moments--entering the Kimberleys and leaving some seven years later as the result of a Ministerial directive that my husband

and I be transferred back to Perth. These central epiphanies will be surrounded by cameos and collections of smaller life epiphanies gathered and connected narratively in the style of Jane Addams.

Reflection.

I will follow Addams in proposing to insert into the text writings from an earlier reflective "me"--two pieces I wrote at an earlier time in attempting to make sense of my experiences as a social worker (Crawford, 1988, 1992). Paraphrasing Addams, I reproduce them here because it captures with freshness earlier motives and strivings and because it was received by other practioners as reflecting some shared meanings of practice.

Then in keeping with Smith's (1987, 1990) focus on the importance of texts as part of the relations of ruling, I will include a chapter reflecting on two other texts that reflect on the Broome of the time of my living there. One is a government inquiry, The Wellbeing of the People (Carter, 1984). This review of Western Australian welfare services was directed by a social worker, with participation from the profession as a whole. The other text, written by a fellow Broome resident with input from many other community residents, is an Aboriginal musical play (Chi, 1991). Comparing the stories told in these two texts is one way of "working the hyphens" (Fine, 1994) involved in being both a community resident and a member of professional social work--of working with generalized stories and with stories of the local.

The concluding task of this research project will be to search for themes in my narrative that will provide me with a sense of direction in attending to my continuing commitment at Curtin to prepare others to become social workers. In the overall aim of learning from reflective experience I resonate strongly with the propositions Stephen Kemmis (1985) has advanced as to the nature of reflection:

1.   Reflection is not biologically or psychologically determined, nor is it "pure thought;" it expresses an orientation to action and concerns the relationship between thought and action in the real historical situations in which we find ourselves.

2.   Reflection is not the individualistic working of the mind as either mechanism or speculation; it presumes and prefigures social relationships.

3.   Reflection is not value-free or value neutral; it expresses and serves particular human, social, cultural and political interests.

4.   Reflection is not indifferent or passive about the social order, nor does it merely extend agreed social values; it actively reproduces or transforms the ideological practices which are at the basis of the social order.

5.   Reflection is not a mechanical process, nor is it a purely creative exercise in the construction of new ideas; it is a practice which expresses our power to reconstitute social life by the way we participate in communication, decision-making and social action.

Narrative Authority

The use of I throughout this text explicitly signals that the knowledge I present is contextual and specific to my experiences. The authority of any narrative text lies in its capacity to connect with the reader in ways that are meaningful to them. The descriptive realism I aim for will also have authority if it has meaning for and structures my future actions (Denzin, 1989b). Ideally this narrative will work to identify shared global features of social work knowledge seen from the particular vantage points that this style of social inquiry makes available. It is my belief that this activity called social work has an important part to play in making the world we live in.

Limitations of the Study

An issue of concern in this proposed research is confidentiality. A hallmark of social work practice it is a principle towards which I have long had ambivalent feelings. In many ways, confidentiality functions to silence the broadcasting for public action of the private troubles social workers hear about every day. It functions to dampen the likelihood of developing a sociological imagination among practitioners. In a small country town setting practicing confidentiality without reflexivity can also function to make the social worker seem precious about matters of public knowledge. Part of the conceptual concern of this research is that it is about a particular place at a particular time and in the context of West Australia: I would have little story if I tried to disguise that it was set in Broome.

At the same time I am conscious of many good and moral reasons not to speak about the private lives of individuals in ways that could identify them without their consent. Honoring my ambivalency about confidentiality will be a continuous struggle throughout the project. Where it seems appropriate I have given participants in my life a pseudonym. This particularly applies to those Aboriginal people belonging to communities in which it is not acceptable to name the dead.

Another limitation of the study may well be that it underplays the messiness and emotionalism of living this life. I quote Clifford (1988) on this point:

> One is tempted to propose that ethnographic comprehension (a coherent position of sympathy and hermeneutic engagement) is better seen as a creation of ethnographic writing than a consistent quality of ethnographic experience. (p. 112)

He is commenting on the play between the ordered world of Malinowski's (1984/1922) Argonauts of the Western Pacific and the existential grief and confusion captured in Malinowski's (1989) day-by-day diaries of the same lived experience. Clifford argues that good ethnographies are "truthful" but their facts like all facts in the human sciences, are classified, contextualized, narrated, and intensified. Writing this text, as I work my way around it and rearrange and redraft, I begin to feel more knowing and controlling of my subject matter and no-one answers back. I resonate with Clifford's hope that we can begin to fashion engaged texts that are more dialogical and open-ended in narrative style in recognition of the fashioned contingent status of all cultural descriptions.

This emic, idiographic, ethnographic study is incomplete and partial, subjective and emergent. It is my hope that these limitations are in fact strengths and will speak to the possibilities of engagement across differences (hooks, 1990). The act of speaking out becomes a way of coming to power, not over others but with others (hooks, 1990). I am bearing witness to how I practice social work, not confessing.

Notes

CHAPTER FOUR

Coming Of Age In Perth

. . . this volume endeavors to trace the experiences through which
various conclusions were forced upon me.   (Addams,
1990/1910, p. 2)

The social scientist is not some autonomous being standing outside
society. No-one is outside society, the question is where he [*sic*]
stands within it.   (Mills, 1959, p. 204)

In the common parlance of social work, the chief instrument for each practitioner is said to be an active and reflective use of "self." In this discussion what is not often explored is the meaning of self. During my first social work course, I know it was a constant fear of mine, that faculty members would be able to divine the "real" me through the power of their expertise. At the same time I was often perplexed when pressed by faculty to identify my "real" feelings on an issue whenever I put forward several different considerations on the same issue, such as support for the teenage unemployed or euthanasia. I just did not know the "right" answer.

The concept of self I held then was a most confused one as I tried to fit my ideas with those in the texts and lectures. It seemed that undergoing psychoanalysis would lead to greater self-awareness but that possibility was rather remote in the Perth I knew in the seventies. At the same time there was a strong counter-message that to think about the self at all was hedonistic, narcissistic, and barrenly solipsistic for a social worker intent on making a difference in the world.

Thinking, Writing, and Using Self

In the years since that confusion I find there has been extensive literature on the conscious use of self across the disciplines. The self of post-modern texts--especially in feminist research, anthropology, and sociology--is a socially constructed self. This self is quite different from the autonomous, unitary and unchanging view of self that emerged in the age of modernist individualism. The self of feminist social thought is a "socialized, non-unitary and changing self" (Stanley, 1993, p. 44). It stands in marked contrast to the modernist notion of self developed and celebrated in the post-Enlightenment years when new knowledge was seen to emerge from the work of noteworthy selves

that could be called geniuses. Pletsch (1991) in his biography of Nietzche notes that in the culture of nineteenth century educated Europeans,

> God was retreating to the wings, and the genius was taking his place at the center of the stage . . . When Nietzsche was a boy in the 1850's , every young man with talent and access to a good education could wonder if he was a genius. (p. 8-10)

The written lives of Addams and Roosevelt.

Muncy (1993) in comparing the contemporaneous autobiographies of Jane Addams (1990/1910) and Theodore Roosevelt (1958) makes the point that Roosevelt presents himself as a unique individual and bounded self. He presumes the story of this self is of interest in its own right. Addams suggests that she takes the license to talk about herself in order to be helpful to those wishing to understand the complexity of settlement house work. In this she acknowledges that autobiographical writings were not expected nor encouraged from women for publication. Her name doesn't appear in the title of her text and her belief in the inseparability of her self from her context is apparent thoughout her work. Roosevelt in contrast presents a controlling, decontextualized, and separate self. Acknowledging the influence of Nietzche's writings on his own, Roosevelt had no difficulty in thinking of himself as an autonomous self-determining individual. Addams in contrast does not aim to assert herself as an independent being even in writing an autobiography.

Roosevelt as a progressive man of action, a confidant imperialist was, of course, the type of American who should write about himself in the ideological setting of individualism. The irony is that Addams' very different sense of self was also admitted to the pantheon of American genius because of her achievement of the status St. Jane. Now in this post-modern context, it is possible to reread both texts for a sense of how much they reflect the social specificity of self; especially in terms of race, class, and gender. In this, Addams and Roosevelt each provide us with a sense of self that differs between themselves and between the socially constructed senses of self we live one hundred years later.

Denzin (1989b) defines the "self" as a process that connects "the stream of thoughts and experiences the person has about herself around a single pole or point of reference" and a "person" as "a cultural creation" (p. 184). Muncy's (1993) comparison of the autobiographies of Roosevelt and Addams served to heighten my awareness of how, for each of us, consideration of the self is inscribed with the symbols and meanings circulating in our cultural setting. They pervade even our most conscious renditions of the self and raise the question as to whether there can be a self that is not already and always social (Stanley, 1992, 1993).

Denzin (1989b) and Stanley (1992) have separated out for discussion the textual self from the referential self and argue that in autobiographical writing there are no naive authors. The self that appears in the text is always a constructed self and autobiographies are always already theoretical and purposive and not a capturing of raw experience. At the same time, in this framing and purposiveness of autobiographical writings, there is always a cultural specificity to the nature of the writer's

relationship to their subjectivity. There are no all-knowing autobiographies. None of us can ever become fully conscious as to the nature of our subjectivity. There are no essential, obdurate selves. To reflect on ourselves with the reflexivity that lies at the heart of feminist approaches implies not uncovering an inner core of being but articulating the ways in which we experience our connection to the world.

In this chapter I write a personal narrative that depicts the social sense of self with which I entered a career as a social worker. It will not be all there is to say about my life but it is driven by a desire to convey what I reflectively see as the most important elements in constructing my sense of self at that time and now. In this I am conscious of Stivers' (1993) understanding that:

> The construction of personal narrative is both a way of systematizing, of ordering reality, and a way of maintaining the dynamism of knowledge creation since there is never only one story to tell about any situation. Personal narrative models a way of knowing for social science by blending the subjective with the system-wide. (p. 424)

I am also conscious that to write or tell of the self can be understood in different ways. Alcoff and Gray (1993) write of women's subjectivity in the West often not being celebrations of autonomous achievements but a sharing of life concerns. There are dangers attached to talking about the self when women or others with personal troubles confess themselves to experts. These experts are thereby given the power to interpret the nature of this reported subjectivity. Alcoff and Gray refer specifically to survivors of sexual assault and the ways in which their stories of self are reinscribed by experts. This is an example of what Foucault (1980) terms the discourse of normalization. Alcoff and Gray demonstrate that this confessional style of speaking about self is common among women and the disempowered generally.

Personal narratives in this sense are full of emotions, feelings, and sensationalism. Such personal narratives in a positivist understanding of knowledge are of little standing because they are not the product of the scientific method. To qualify as knowledge such narratives need to be reinscribed by an expert who can theorize about experience, know about feelings, and be objective on the subjective. Personal traumas in this way become admitted to public discourse only when they have been processed into an acceptably neutral factual form and language.

The suggestion in a critical interpretive approach is to move from confessing about self to bearing witness to it. Personal narratives then become a crucial tool in disrupting the positivist dichotomies of experience and theory, subjective and objective, and body and mind. Following Smith (1990), the use of personal narratives allow the reflexive inquirer to be both a reporter and theorist of experience.

In writing an autoethnography of my practice of social work it becomes clear that I need to give some indication of the person I brought to an education in social work. In tune with Liz Stanley's (1993) characterization of auto/bio/graphy I am writing a selective rendition of the relationships, lives, and influences that socially constructed my conception of self. This chapter is modeled to some degree

on the first four chapters of <u>Twenty years at Hull House</u>. In the preface to these chapters Addams explains her need to talk about self:

> The earlier chapters present influences and personal motives with a detail which will be quite unpardonable if they fail to make clear the personality upon whom various social and industrial movements in Chicago reacted during a period of twenty years. (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 2)

Resonating with Addams' comment that it is quite unpardonable to hedonistically talk about self, I am not so much confessing as to the nature of my coming of age as bearing witness to the social and historical setting in which I found myself. This is a reflected self and doubtless different from how I would have described the experiences as they were lived. Even then however my description would have already been theoretical and shaped by my language. There is no getting back to raw experience--there can only be interpretation (Denzin, 1989b).

My childhood was a noisy, existential one rather than the deeply reflective one full of the moral concerns that Jane Addams reports as shaping hers. Drawing on the Foucauldian and Deweyan notion of habits and embodied acts forming the self, it appears inevitable that we (Addams and Crawford) write very different selves. For me, consciousness of reflection came later in the teenage years, which leaves me wondering how to order this self-focused part of my project in autoethnography. I start with a description of the nature of the state into which I was born--both my particular circumstances and the geographic entity called Western Australia.

<u>On Being a Western Australian</u>

The place now called Western Australia has been home to Aboriginal people for tens of thousands of years. Indonesians have regularly sailed to fish for trepan along the north coast but not settled. The Dutch, Portuguese, and the English visited from the seventeenth century but no one was tempted to stay. A Dutch trading vessel, "The Batavia," on the way to the Spice Islands of the Indonesian archipelago was wrecked in 1629 just off the coast below Carnarvon. The survivors reached sanctuary on the Abroholos Islands. On the later rescue of the remnants of this group, their tales of horror confirmed the undesirability of laying claim to this vast but seemingly useless land mass (Docherty, 1992).

In 1699, the English buccaneer William Dampier set anchor in Roebuck Bay, on the site that was later to become Broome. He careened his vessel and noted in his journal the endless sand, flies, and most miserable specimens of humanity to be found in this place. His description of the people he met was to become one of the most enduring and quoted comments as to the nature of Aboriginal people:

> The Inhabitants of this Country are the Miserablest People in the World. . . . And setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes. (quoted in Crawford, 1981, p. 4)

Not until 1826 did the British, fearful of French whaling activity on the south coast, decide to move on the place. They set up a military camp at Albany to ensure the continent remained British. This consisted of a party of 44 soldiers and convicts. Even at this early stage when it came to the actuality of Aboriginal occupation, planning proceeded as if the land was *terra nullius.*[43] A conservative estimate of the Aboriginal population across Western Australia at this time is of 60,000 people (Jarvis, 1986, p. 33).

In 1829 the British government annexed the whole of Western Australia and established a settlement at Perth. The initiative was largely that of a group of wealthy men, who asked for a government land grant in return for the creation by private enterprise of a further British colony. The idea was that this would be a convict-free territory--a place where land-starved Britishers of means could make a new "landed" life for themselves. Troubles came quickly. The land first cultivated was not as fertile as imagined. With land freely available there were few to labor for others, especially as the resident Aboriginals proved not biddable to becoming servants. Aboriginals were actively hostile until those around the Perth region were subdued in a massacre called the Battle of Pinjarra in 1834 (most of the historical detail referred to in this section can be found in Stannage, 1981).

In 1830 the white population was 4,000; by the end of the decade it was down to 2,000, and by mid-century it had increased to just under 6,000 (Docherty, 1992, p. 689). Then, as the rest of Australia was resisting the transportation of convicts, Western Australian white settlers were begging for them. The British government obliged by sending 10,000 male convicts between 1850 and 1868 (Docherty, 1992, p. 689). With this solution to the labor problem and the influx of public monies for the necessary infrastructure to the convict presence, both the economy and the population boomed. By 1890 the population had reached more than 46,000 (Docherty, 1992, p. 689). This was not sufficient to overcome a pervasive consciousness of having but a precarious hold over this one million square miles of territory.

Then came the gold discoveries. With the major find of the Kalgoorlie goldfield in 1892-93, attracting mainly male migrants from around the world, the population reached 180,000 by the turn of the century (Docherty, 1992, p. 690).[44] The decade up until 1903 was when all my grandparents came to Western Australia. That this was a decade in which many families came to settle in Western Australia can be read in the demographics. There were 48 females for every 100 males in 1894 and this climbed to 68 females for every 100 males by 1903[45] (Appleyard, 1981, p. 234).

Australia became a federated nation in 1901. Strong opposition was mounted to this move by many Western Australians who felt their activities would be swamped by the much stronger economies of "t'othersiders."[46] This resentment at the power of a Commonwealth government and the feeling of being isolated and neglected when in competition with the more populous states persists to this day in shaping the nature of Western Australian politics. Links with the eastern Australian states can be dated to 1877 for the telegraph, 1917 for the rail link, 1929 for the first regular air service, and 1976 for a fully sealed road link (Docherty, 1992, p145).

Since federation, however, growth has been continuous with the 1991 census indicating a population of over one and a half million Western Australian residents (Australian Bureau of Statistics). Almost 70% of these people live in Perth as has been the pattern since the first white settlement apart from the gold-rush years. Australia as a whole has presently the lowest population density of all continents with 2.3 persons per square kilometer. In Western Australia this figure is 0.6 persons per square kilometer (Docherty, 1992). The constant pattern of urbanized settlement is one material factor as to why a clash between white and Aboriginal interests in the Kimberley region did not become a highly public and political issue until the 1970's.

Family origins.

"The Crawfords have always been shy breeders!" was a favorite quip of my father in response to the many comments at seeing him the father of five children after many years of childless marriage. Reflecting , I can see three different readings to be made of his claim. The first refers to the fact that my mother married my father in 1938 but they did not have children until minor surgery in 1945 resulted in the births of Murray (1945), me (1948), Katherine (1950), Judy (1951) and Joan (1953). This unplanned delay in "breeding" meant that we children had the advantage of being very wanted, despite another quip of my father's that he was only in it for the Child Endowment, a universal social service introduced by the federal government in the forties. My parents in turn had the advantage of seven child-free years of early married life in which to pursue alternative interests. These interests stayed with them for life.

The second meaning refers to the fact that, for my father, becoming a father at the age of thirty-eight repeated a family pattern of long generation spans. His grandfather was born in 1804, we think in Northern Ireland,[47] which brings me to the third meaning. On my father's side of the family there is almost a complete absence of stories about ancestors and origins. My grandfather, William Sharman Crawford came from Shepparton, Victoria where his family ran a saddlery shop. With his new Tasmanian wife, Mary Anne Murray, he arrived in Western Australia in 1897 at the height of the gold-rush years.

There were soon five children, with my father, the youngest, born in 1907 at the residence at the Leederville Police Station, where my grandfather was the sergeant. The next year the family shifted one suburb to the residence at the North Perth Police Station. My grandfather was still stationed here when he retired towards the middle of the century.

Just down the road from this police station in a small brick[48] house on a then, typical quarter acre block lived my mother's family. This house has now been demolished to make way for high density housing while the police station and residence has National Heritage listing for preservation. That difference in outcomes reflects something of the status differences between the two families. Yet my mother's family, particularly on the female side, weren't shy breeders at all in the sense that we children grew up very conscious of ancestral origins and blood ties. While my father's family had no relatives that we knew, my mother's family had many who quickly spread all over the state.

<u>My mother's mother's family.</u>

My mother's mother came to Australia in 1901 from Drumnadrochit in Scotland as a child of ten years with her parents, Kenneth and Jessie Bain and seven siblings. Until I grew old enough to be schooled in all the tales of "Mother England" that filled Australian formal education during the fifties, it was the Highlands of Scotland and what had happened to Highlanders that were the stuff of family education in origins. Much was made of the fact that there was no drop of English blood in the family and hopefully never would be.

Almost mythical was the tale of the three McDonald sisters who traveled from the Isle of Skye across to Gairloch to work in the new fish processing factory. There they met three Bain brothers and three marriages ensued. Two of these figures were direct ancestors. My great-grandfather Bain grew up on Horrisdale Island, just out of Gairloch. (see Map 4: The Ancestral Lands.) (Map not reproduced in this version.) His son, Evan Bain (1976) has left some written trace of family history:

> . . . there were no schools. Consequently my father had no education and could neither read nor write. At an early age he and his brother Duncan ran away to sea, where my father became a seaman cook and a good one at that. His brother Duncan jumped ship in South Australia, married a farmer's daughter and settled down in a district known as Baroota, fourteen miles from Port Augusta. My father left the sea and also married a farmer's daughter in Glen Urquhart, right opposite where the Loch Ness Monster is supposed to be today. He reared a family of eight children - Alick, Bessie, Duncan, Kenneth, Catherine, Evan, Donald and Florence. Jim was born after reaching Australia. (Bain, 1976, p. 2)

Many in the clan have trekked back to these family sites of meaning. My family of origin, with a cousin or two, made our trip together in 1971. We went to the Culloden[49] battlefield and heard again of English treachery. We stayed overnight at the Drumnadrochit Hotel built for English gamesmen in the nineteenth century. We stood at the gate to the family croft, still called Tychat but now a summer home for English people. We looked at the granite strewn pastures as we heard again how it was not possible to feed a family from this land. The Bains had been forced to leave all this beauty for survival. Margaret McMillan, a British reformer for child welfare at the same time as Jane Addams, had a father born at the same spot though into a middle-class family. For her too it was a place of romantic origin, though like me she only visited once in her lifetime. This is how she remembers the place:

> The country is of surpassing beauty. Glen Urquhart . . . is far up the loch. It has a mysterious, romantic loveliness, such as is not often seen or imagined outside the World of Dreams. The dark hills stand around in mystic silence, as if listening, and this peculiar listening silence is felt, too, in the valleys and along the banks of the dark clear loch. The castle looks over the waters, in which its roofless towers are clearly reflected. Little homesteads are tucked away, for the most part, in clefts of the hills, but nothing breaks the strange brooding stillness over the glen. Only on sabbath days a great many people start to life, as it seems, and walk along the quiet hill-paths and roads in sabbath clothes, holding Bibles and saluting one another, as they meet or pass, in quiet tones, as if they still felt and understood the hush of the hills and the water. (quoted in Steedman, 1990, p. 19)

The almost Aboriginal Dreamtime relationship to the land I read here was also evident in our family stories about their homelands. What is missing in McMillan's account is the bitterness about having a whole way of life destroyed by the Highland Clearances and English power that was so evident in my family's tales. This too I now see as very aboriginal and note all the more my family's active participation in clearing Australian land of Aboriginals for their own ambitions.

In these ambitions, my family's activities reflected a common Australian pattern that was very different from that in the United States in relating to government. Ambivalent feelings about government were common enough but few hoped to do away with the support of government services in establishing themselves in the new land. The English might have been hated but the power of the Crown was seen as essential to survival. To quote my uncle again:

> Influence from my father's brother decided him on migrating to Australia. We left the old country on 21st May, 1901 on a German boat "The Oldinberg" and arrived in Port Adelaide in August of that year. I was then eight and a half years old . . . There was very little opportunity in those days in South Australia for a working man with a big family so after two years my parents decided there would be better opportunities in Western Australia. My two elder brothers Alick and Duncan came West early in 1903 and took jobs around Katanning and wrote back to say that there was every prospect of settling in that district. (Bain, 1976, p. 3)

His father bought a horse and hired on as a cow herd with a richer neighbor also making the trip. They herded the stock 120 miles to Port Adelaide, made a rough crossing to Albany and then drove the cows another 130 miles to Katanning.

> My father and brothers then purchased three homestead blocks, one each, which at that time were gifts from the Government, providing you cleared and fenced it and from then on you took up land on conditional purchase. They still had to have money on which to live, which meant taking clearing contracts for one pound per acre from the more prosperous farmers in the district. . . .
> They erected a three room house, consisting of wheat bags sewn together and called the farm Horrisdale. My mother arrived late in the winter of 1903 and settled in. Between the clearing contracts we started to clear our own blocks. People of today may not believe it but Don and I, aged eight and ten, were out swinging an axe and knocking bark off the stumps so they would dry and be ready to burn the following year. (Bain, 1976, p. 3-4)

My grandmother, Catherine Bain, next eldest to Evan, was full of her own stories of the life of hard work on this farm. Every day was hard physical labor all the waking hours; there was no school for the children and the only day of rest was the sabbath, which was kept in strictest Presbyterian fashion. For my grandmother, who loved nothing more than music and dancing, this meant a life of bleak misery because only quiet contemplation was allowed on the sabbath.

Being a female with so many brothers, it was easy for her to see she need have no long term commitment to the enterprise of making the farm a success. As soon as she was able she was off to Perth, where there was more to life than work and the sabbath. In Perth she met and married my grandfather, John Murray.

The real blow to the farm's fortunes came shortly after this with the outbreak of World War I and the call to arms of all true Australians. My great-uncles, pommy-haters[50] all, could not wait to go

to war to defend the Empire. Three of them rode to Albany, enrolled in the Light Horse Brigade and disembarked from there for the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey. The fourth was sent to the war in Europe.

This participation in World War I is now a central story in both the mythology of my family and of Australian culture. The Battle of Gallipoli in 1915 was a truly massive defeat brought about by incompetence and ineptitude. The memory of the battle and those who died in it is commemorated every year in a national holiday called Anzac Day. It celebrates the first major occasion on which Australia as a nation was able to demonstrate its loyalty and commitment to the British Empire. Frow and Morris (1993) in describing the dominant discourse in Australia as one which assumes a concept of cultural identity as mobile, differential, and provisional, comment that:

> When Prime Minister Keating declared in 1992 that the Pacific War and the Kokoda Trail are more appropriate than World War I and Gallipoli as a myth of origins for contemporary Australia, what semioticians call the "productivity" of discourse was officially taken for granted--and the practice of history *formally* defined as a powerful adjunct to trade. (p. xii)

The Kokoda Trail was the site of a forced Australian retreat from the Japanese in New Guinea in 1942 after the Fall of Singapore--the Singapore that British Prime Minister Churchill had persuaded Australians was invincible. With the support of General MacArthur and American troops the Australians were later to advance back down this mountainous, jungle terrain and set the Japanese on the run. New Guineans, dubbed by the Australian media as "Fuzzy-wuzzy Angels," in their support of Australian troops were an integral part of the victory achieved (Shaw, 1984, p. 713). The Kokoda story then symbolizes our strengthening relationships both with the United States and with our neighbors in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Japan is by far Australia's strongest trading partner and perhaps the story serves to remind Australians that we are not completely powerless before the Japanese.

Much the same importance of trade can be seen to have been at play in the original involvement in Gallipoli. Economic survival was then seen to depend on the continuing support of the British. The impulse at both the national level and in the more personal cases of my great-uncles was to assist the British to hold their power base. For the Bain boys it was an opportunity to see the world and for adventure but they did not imagine ignoring the call to arms. Later when the performance of their duties saw much blood spilt for little consequence, it was only politic that the Australian survivors should try to stress these blood ties of reciprocal obligation with their British patrons.

This is what my Uncle Enie had to say on the Gallipoli experience:

> *It was in the year of 1901 on the 23rd May*
> *I left my dear old Highland home in Scotland far away*
> *And sailed across the deep blue sea to reach this Foreign land*
> *And long once more to see the hills and dales of old Scotland*
> This rhyme was written by my brother Duncan in the early 1900's as a boy of sixteen. He never lived to see that dream come true. . . Duncan was killed on Gallipoli among some of the finest men who ever left these shores. I buried him on the beach and had a cross erected to his memory. According to History this was considered to be one of the most useless sacrificing of gallant men--all for the satisfaction of red tape. (Bain, 1976, p. 1)

Uncle Enie, along with many other returned soldiers, went on to spend much energy to making sure that these sacrifices were not forgotten by either the British or Australian governments. Up until the year before he died in 1982 at the age of 89 years, he rode in the annual Anzac Day Parade down St. George's Terrace as a Tenth Light Horseman on his groomed horse, in full dress uniform with the emu feather on his slouch hat flying. The older he got the more the crowd cheered at the increasing rarity of a living link with the glory that was Gallipoli. Many times his photo made the front cover of the newspaper and the television news. He would not have liked to think of Keating's ideas for change and none of our family were ever at Kokoda but true enough, the relationships he embodied between Australia and Britain have largely died with him.

In some ways this special symbolism of Gallipoli can be read as a Scottish and feudal story. To quote from Fodor's travel guide to Scotland,[51]

> The word "clan" means children. That definition is the key to the social organization of the Scottish Highlands . . . The clan system is archaic. It goes back to an era when savage tribes gave up their restless wanderings and chose places to settle down in. A clan chief was revered by his followers as the lineal descendent of him "who first raised smoke and boiled water in that place"--the first landholder, the sacred embodiment of the race. But all the clansfold, rich and poor, bore that patriarch's name and regarded themselves equally as his children. (Moore, 1987, p. 59)

The clan aim of continuity in holding new lands in Australia was lost for the Bains by involving themselves in the British war. The parents were never able to make up for the loss of their sons' labor and eventually lost possession of the farm Horrisdale. Yet the guide book goes on to say that it is common in clan thinking to think of the monarch as the chief of chiefs to whom allegiance is owed and from whom support can be expected. Certainly the two sons, Evan and Donald Bain, who returned healthy enough to qualify for consideration were granted virgin territory to develop as a cattle station[52] and a wheat farm respectively. This was under the governmental system of support for returned soldiers.

Fox (1993) in a recent analysis of Sophocles' *Antigone* reveals how the current Western ideology of individualism prevents a reading of the patrilineal ideology in this ancient Greek text, even though this was a prevalent world view at the time the play was written. In introducing this article, Bruner (1993) comments:

> Patrilineal ideology has been neglected in previous commentaries because we have been obsessed with individualism and with the assumed war between the freedom of the individual and the constraints of the authoritarian state.
>   Fox places it all in the larger context of the evolutionary transition from tribalism to the formation of the state. Tribal societies based on kinship and descent give way to state organizations based on citizenship and government. (p. 16)

The same personal struggle Antigone experienced in living by contrasting, co-existing cultural frameworks, I see as part of my mother's family everyday experience. They all supported free enterprise and government support of that, yet at the same time they were of the opinion that the Bains were different from everyone else and deserving of special consideration. An exchange between my

mother's cousin and his son, repeated by the son to one of my sisters and now part of the store of family talk, captures this strain in thinking quite well. The father was advising the son to take care when he chose a wife to choose someone a lot younger than himself. Women wore out a lot quicker than men and you wouldn't want a mother for your children who looked older than you did.

The son asked, "What about Aunty Pearl?" (My mother.) "She looks a lot younger than Uncle Ed." (My father.) "Well," said the father, "that's because she's a Bain. The Bain blood makes up for the fact that she is only a woman."

Remembering this story, I come across another comment in Fodor's travel guide on "the pride and arrogance which early travelers in the Highlands found so ludicrous in gangs of cattle-thieves who looked to them like the dregs of humanity" (Moore, 1987, p. 59). Mention is made of Harriet Beecher Stowe's support for the Highland Clearances because she saw it as necessary for progress to replace this barbarous way of life. If it was inhuman to keep slaves; it was equally inhuman to live like Highlanders. This reminds me of my time at the remote Aboriginal community of Looma when so many stories were told by the Aboriginal people there of kin killed and imprisoned for being savages and cattle-thieves.

I can recognize remnants of a kin-based way of thinking in myself when my husband exclaims in frustration at having to attend another family function, "You lot can't stop living in each other's pockets." My response is to think to myself on why we would want to. Then I realized my husband's family are small in number and choose to see each other only irregularly. Not everybody has and revels in family connections the way my family of origin does.

My mother's father's family.

My mother's father was born in Sydney in about 1890 and traveled to Kalgoorlie as a small child with his mother, a Miss Bischoff. She was hoping to marry the child's father who was there in search of gold. Mother and son sailed to Albany on the south coast and then overland by coach to Kalgoorlie. The father had died just before their arrival from a typhoid epidemic raging through the waterless goldfields. A Mr. Murray did the right thing by his mate, met the coach, and married Miss Bischoff as he'd promised. So my grandfather's surname became Murray. He had no other relatives that I know of except for his mother's father back in Sydney. Mr. Bischoff had left Bavaria with his brother to escape military service. In Bavaria the family had been piano makers; in Sydney he became a piano tuner. I know of his existence chiefly through the stories told by my grandfather of the time his grandfather spent interned as an enemy alien during the World War I while his grandson served in the trenches in France with the Australian Army.

"Ganna" as we called him was a gentle reflective man. From France he sent back to his wife intricate picture frames he made from the brass bullet casings that littered the trenches. These always had pride of place on their lounge-room mantelpiece during my childhood. He was anti-war and argued for tolerance of difference and foreigners which was rather different to the Bain style of belligerent suspicion of non-kin. His mother lived in Perth all her life after marrying Mr. Murray but

there were no more children. My mother describes this grandmother of hers as an odd woman whom she didn't like visiting because she was "foreign" and didn't seem happy or able to fit in.

Ganna returned from the war with three growing children demanding support. He found a job at the Perth Water Board and stayed there for life. I can still picture him arriving home from work in his blue denim overalls, with his gladstone bag ready to be packed with another lunch. Short, thick-set, and olive-skinned he looked distinctively different from the Bain clan who tended to be long, lean, and fair. He was a demonstratively affectionate man, ready to spend time with children making things work. When we went on holiday to Albany all together, it was Ganna that would gather the gear for spearing cobblers in the estuary after dark, make sure all the equipment was in good order and that each member of the party had a task. When I was fifteen he died from lung cancer.

Back to my father's family.

Sergeant Crawford built his family a substantial brick residence in the late twenties down from the police station and adjoining Smith's Lake, one of the many swamps/wetlands that then ringed Perth. The block next door is where my parents built a house upon their marriage in 1938. This is where I grew up until the age of eight when they built a bigger house on the other side of my grandparents' house.

For reasons that have never been clear to me my mother did not talk to her husband's family any more than was formally necessary. Perhaps it had to do with the Crawfords' thinking that my mother came from a lower class than their favorite son. The trouble was my mother would never bow to this definition of the situation. My father however returned each day to his parents' home for morning and afternoon tea. If my mother's family specialized in diachronic tales of their clan community, my father's family dealt in synchronic tales of the daily happenings of the North Perth community.

My father's sister, Alma, who still lives at the age of ninety in this family home, insists she has no knowledge of her parents' history yet can bring me up-to-date immediately on neighborhood news. My own earliest memories of this house next door are of a boisterous and hale grandfather with a shock of white hair. His luxuriant flowing mustache required a special tea cup. A favorite trick with us children was to have us on his knee and give raspberry kisses until we collapsed in uncontrollable giggles. Such loud goings-on always took place over tea on the back verandah because, inside the house, in a darkened and closed room lay my permanently invalid grandmother. I dreaded the visits to her bedside and invariably we children failed our father by some form of uncontrolled unsuitable behavior.

Both grandparents died before I began school but I have no clear recollection of the occasions. My parents as part of their Presbyterianism believed in shielding women and children from death. We certainly didn't go to the funerals and the subject would have not been discussed in front of children.

After these deaths my spinster teacher aunt Eileen Crawford, formerly of the North Perth State School and now of the Mt. Lawley High School, was the only one left in the house. She had looked after her parents through their final illnesses and now was left alone in the big house until her sister, my aunt Alma, moved back into the house with her husband and son. They rented out their own house which was just up the road. My father's two brothers had also built homes nearby.

Even though my father's family lived so close, we tended not to think of them when we thought family because they just didn't produce the amount of energy, involvement, and relationships that my mother's family did. The total offspring of my father's four siblings was only three children while my mother's three siblings produced a total of nine cousins for us to play with. This was in addition to all the cousins from my grandmother's siblings that lived in Western Australia.

My father.

Edgar Ambrose Crawford was born in 1907, the favored youngest, taking a supportive world for granted and singularly lacking in any drive to "get on." He left school at fourteen and with his father's help bought a small milk delivery business. His father's network of contacts and his own in the North Perth community were instrumental in his continued success. At the back of his father's house and extending into the swamp were stables and paddocks in which to keep his milk-cart horses.

While still a teenager he extended his interest in horses to an abiding passion for trotting.[53] Though he was too big and unphysical to race himself, there were always volunteer drivers in the early days, and later, winnings paid for such services. He had advanced skills in reading horseflesh, both to pick winners and to keep stock in top condition. His nickname was "Lucky Eddy" because of his success at on-track betting laying bets after the race started.

Early in his career he expanded the delivery business enough to hire two men to actually deliver the milk. This suited his dislike of physical labor, leaving him just to do the bookwork one day a week with time to devote to his horse-racing hobby.

Though all his family called themselves Presbyterian no one actually attended church. Nor was anyone in the family involved in active physical sports, drinking, or the Returned Soldiers League--great Australian past-times then and even now. The family were mature, quiet, sedate, and sedentary, given to pastimes like reading, playing cards, and visiting. Dad lived with his parents in this lifestyle until he married my mother at the age of thirty. She was seven years younger at twenty-three.

My mother.

Pearl Roberta Crawford, nee Murray, was born in 1915, the eldest girl and third of four children. Like my father she attended the North Perth State School, where his sister was a teacher. There was one year at public high school before leaving to stay home and help her mother in the house. Later she earned a little money by working as a seamstress. Like my father's family these Presbyterians attended church rarely. The difference was that my mother and her family were active

physically and especially in sports. Her two brothers were surf lifeguards and all-round athletes, while my Mum swam, bicycled, and played hockey and netball.

Did all this exercise help make her the incredibly slim and attractive woman who appears with Dad in their wedding photos? He was tall but already balding and round of figure. When the year after they married, the war started for Australia, she was very keen to join her brothers and become part of the war effort. She became a Red Cross Blood Bank driver. This required driving an army truck around Perth and training as a mechanic in the absence of males. In addition, she became a calisthenics instructor in a government-supported program by which it was hoped women would become physically fit to be prepared for any eventualities--especially as fear spread that the country could be invaded by the Japanese. Through both these activities she met and came to know a variety of middle-class women who became important contacts in her later life.

As children asking the inevitable question of Dad as to what he did in the war years, Mum would always quickly answer that being a milkman was an essential service; it wasn't possible for him to serve as a soldier. My father made perfectly clear his complete lack of interest in going to war for anyone. My mother in contrast taught us to be intensely proud of all our relatives who had served in the two world wars. As children we were taken to wave at the Anzac Day Parade down St. George's' Terrace.

Considering the ethnic similarity of my parent's families it is surprising how different culturally they were in their patterns of everyday living. Both were Presbyterians with good Scottish names but they did almost nothing in the same style. Morris (1993) notes that only 10% of third generation Australians claim a single ethnic background. Thinking about that statistic I recognize that my experiences of mediating parental cultures and creating anew are not unique.

My childhood.

So into this world I was born in 1948 with my brother, Murray, three years ahead of me. I am told I was named after my father's favorite trotting trainer--Francis Robert Kearsley. The clearest, earliest memories I have are of being my father's shadow while my brother went to school and Mum stayed home with the babies. My father spent his days circulating North Perth and sometimes further in relationship with people over horses or milk. Lots of people called him "young Mr. Crawford" to distinguish him from his father. There were the women of Casson House, many with Downs' Syndrome, who made a fuss of us when we visited; Mr. Temple, the barber, who had a daughter my age called Shirley; Bill Barnden, one of the delivery men who regularly became drunk, abusive and then apologetic; and, Browne's Dairy, the milk wholesalers, where more often than not there would be a free chocmilk for me. The Browne family were longstanding social friends of my father's family. Every so often there was a visit to Gregson's Auction to look out for an item for the house. Especially awesome was a visit to the blacksmith. Constantly mopping at his red sweaty face with a wet handkerchief this hairy giant in a white singlet made all our horseshoes by heating his fire with bellows and then hammering the red-hot metal into shape. Then the quick dunk of the shoe into a bucket of

water and holding my breath while the horse was led in to have the seemingly hot metal nailed to the hoof.

Intermittently there was an expedition of doorknocking the slow milk bill payers. Each house had a different smell and a different story. Then there were the trips to other horse owners, often to give advice on what ailed their mares. The solution was usually castor oil, inside or out (the same applied to children so we quickly learned never to say we were sick). Daily there was a trip to the Greek greengrocer, Metaxas, with more milk for them and a lolly[54] for me.

Lollies were a big part of a day of bliss I spent with my father. Each September was Royal Show Week in Perth, equivalent to an American State fair. At five years old I spent the day there with my father. He knew so many people--in the side show alley section, in the stock display section, and even amongst those selling show bags.[55] I met men and women of all sorts, but most often I came to realize later, the type my mother would consider disreputable--Tattooed jockeys gone to seed, fat ladies with loud clothes and laughs, large shambling men who spoke slowly. No Royal Show since has been able to recapture the magic of that day, because the self I was then has disappeared.

Yet this memory of my father at the Show captures an important part of him. He lived the philosophy of all being of equal worth. He did not make judgments on people and was as ready to give his time to what my mother would call a "no hoper" as to "decent folk." There were two exceptions to this enactment of acceptance with others. From an early age his distrust and rejection of Jewish and black people fascinated me. The Mt. Lawley area where Dad had his second milk round had become a Jewish area during the thirties and forties when refugees from Europe arrived. Dad used to spend a lot of energy making sure he didn't let Jewish milk bills run on too long because he "knew" never to trust a "Jew." When it came to "darkies," he didn't actually know any but again it was a childhood truth he had absorbed that darkies weren't really human.

Set against this intolerance was the remarkable set of relationships he developed with southern European migrants who came to Perth after the war. The manure my father accumulated as the owner of horses was the material base to many of these relationships. Many southern European migrants were setting up as market gardeners in nearby Osborne Park. Dad was more than willing to trade manure for vegetables. Then he was willing to help migrant family members find jobs, explain how government systems worked, speak for people to local authorities and generally be supportive to the newcomers. At my father's funeral in 1981, some of these old friends attended with the carrots and cabbages of tradition.[56] I think that would have pleased him.

What didn't please him and caused marital conflict in the fifties was that some felt they should pay for his help with bought gifts. Dad didn't want these gifts but felt that once given, he was obliged to accept and display them. My mother who spent a lot of time trying to achieve the minimalist, clean-lined look of an American Home Beautiful magazine hated to have the objects in her house.[57] Especially as she hated to have Dad wasting time with these foreigners and other "lowlifers." She didn't want any coming into her house to see their gifts on display.

Yet if Mum was intolerant, it was she who told the only story heard in our house of Aboriginal humanity. It related to a visit from country relatives to her parents' place in North Perth in the twenties. This was an uncle who had received land from the Australian government in recognition of his war service. Inland from Carnarvon in the Gascoyne Region, this land had been developed into a sheep station. There were still Aboriginal people in the area when my uncle arrived and two in particular had stayed with my uncle through the difficult pioneering years of sinking wells and fencing. When they died in an influenza epidemic, my uncle and aunt "adopted" their orphan infant son Alarun, in "gratitude" for all the parents' help.

When the family visited, Mum and her siblings spent the morning playing in the yard with their three cousins and Alarun. It was the usual high spirited, noisy, exhaustive kid's play that this family specialized in and Alarun joined in with everyone else. Then came lunch time and a place was set for Alarun. The Murrays were told that's not the way you do it. Instead a meal was placed for Alarun on a tin plate and put on the ground outside the back door. When Mum asked why she was told that you can't have blacks in the house using the same china as the rest of the family. To her this seemed most unfair and years later she would repeat the story with the same sense of outrage that her relatives could call their care of Alarun an adoption.

Playing.

My childhood bears little resemblance to the ordered seriousness of Jane Addams' life as a child. My main memories until puberty are of playing outside in an endless stream of important activities. There was the swamp with boats and rafts to be built, cubby houses to weave and camouflage in the reeds and arum lilies to collect. We once tried to sell these white flowers around the neighborhood but found that our now mainly migrant Italian neighbors considered them a sign of death.

Adjacent to the swamp was a Chinese market gardener growing sugar cane and vegetables. Organized by my brother, we ventured on sugar cane raids and if the hapless fellow was home we then felt free to call out a chorus of "Chin-Chon-Chinaman!" Severe scoldings from Mum followed if she found us out. She had gone to school with the Gooey family, one of the few local Chinese families to survive the institution of the White Australia policy. She dreaded to think they would come to know she had raised such barbarous children but she was sure they would because the Chinese community was so small.

Then there were the horses. We teased some of them too but more often they scared me. After I fell from one at the age of seven I lost all interest in learning to ride. My brother in contrast broke three bones while becoming an expert horseman. My sisters became riders, though not expert.

Part of the stables complex were a mulberry and fig tree and chook-yard. The mulberry tree was big enough for many children to fit on its limbs for mulberry fights. There were regular destemming and chopping occasions to make jam. More exciting was to watch Dad chop the head off a hen or turkey: we watched fascinated as it ran round with just a body. Then the boiling water in the

bucket and the pulling of the feathers. Since this was before the time of frozen poultry in Perth it made us feel rich and special that we regularly ate this meat.

In this place of play we had few constraints. We rolled in the black sand in our bare feet and homemade clothes knowing we'd have to have a bath at the end of the day. There was often company as most of the neighborhood children only had suburban backyards to play in in contrast to our few acres. When we wanted to go further afield there were lots of relatives to visit within walking distance. Thinking now of who did what in such activities I tend to think of what we did, not what I did. A strong sense of individuated self was still to develop--though it was starting when I showed preference for books over horses.

Schooling.

I began at the North Perth School in 1954, walking up the hill each day with my brother Murray and joined with the passing years by each of the younger sisters in their turn. In my first year there were fifty children in each of three infant's classes. My most abiding memory of Miss Budd was the day she received forty-eight coloring sheets to share among fifty. She thought about it some and then named myself and another child as the two who would only waste the paper so could do something else. The sense of incompetence this experience helped me acquire was reinforced many times over the next few years at school but I was comforted by the family tale that I was probably a Crawford--no good with my hands but good with my head.

Another strong memory of first years at school is of being called up to the headmistress's office and asked why I didn't wear shoes. For me the issue was that I didn't wear shoes at home and I didn't like to wear shoes at all. For the headmistress, who I later learned regularly played bridge with my aunt, Miss Eileen Crawford, the issue was that I was a Crawford. She told me that it was different for the poor migrant children who were now coming to the school. They didn't have the money to buy shoes. I, however, came from a good family and it didn't look well for me to be seen in public as a ragamuffin. Mum, who hated any implied criticism of her as a mother, fumed at this reprimand but dressed me in shoes. Then came Arbor Day, a tree planting ceremony accompanied by student dancing. I was to be a tree and was dressed in a specially made green nylon dress with a pink rayon petticoat and no shoes. The Headmistress asked what happened to the shoes on such a special day. "Mum said I wouldn't need them. We have to take off our shoes to dance."

Reflecting on such stories makes me aware of how resistant and ignorant my mother was to many of the niceties of a middle-class life style. Lunch was a vegemite[58] sandwich precariously wrapped in wax paper while other children had special lunch-boxes with wrapped cake and fruit. Our clothes were always home-made and the general principle was that children don't need special money spent on them. Part of this certainly related to the cultural valuing of childhood that my mother had. Childhood was another place where children should be free to find and make themselves with minimal influence from parents. Parents fed and clothed children but didn't take great pains to develop the

individual personality and sense of self of each child. It was much more that children would and should grow like a crop.

School was something required of children but there was little valuing of education in the sense of preparing for a lifetime career. On my mother's side of the family getting on the land was the highest ambition and this my brother grew to aspire to. School for him was an oppressive time which he couldn't wait to leave behind. In this he was countenanced by my mother's culture.[59] Our richest cousins, who had made money on their station, sent their boys to board at the most elite boarding school in Perth at an early age, seven or eight years. On their fourteenth birthday they were brought home so as not to waste any working time on useless schooling.[60] My brother stayed until the end of the year he turned fifteen.

Even my schoolteacher aunt did not encourage the idea of studying for a career. Though loved by us, she was not a role model on the joys of being a spinster career woman. Always the message was that this is the sort of life women have to lead if they don't marry. My father was against women wasting time at school. He felt we should try and become apprenticed to a local business while we were still young and cheap enough to be attractive.

Morris (1992) offers a reading of the devaluing of schooling in many Australian families. Her comments also tie in with my father's empathetic skills at relating across the community. The only part of the quote not seeming to fit my particular experience is the notion of my mother as plodding:

> Australian culture includes a strong tradition of dividing "reason" by associating intelligence with emotion and opposing both to intellectuality; an old mythology of the practical (renewed in clichés about the man-of-few-words from the school-of-hard-knocks) values positively-- especially in men--an inarticulate empathy and intuitiveness as signs of *real* smarts; women err on the side of the sensible, the plodding, even the calculating side of reason. (p. 15-16)

Home.

The building of our new home in 1956 was a major event in our lives. Designed by Mum after many hours of poring over magazines and thinking about the family's needs, she wanted it big and open before anything else. Dad sub-contracted out all the various building tasks to a network of tradesmen trotting acquaintances. We children made on-site inspections of progress every day. At knock-off time there was always a round of beers for the workers and yarning and tipping on the next trotting meet. When it was finished it was a monument to Dad's sociability and Mum's organization and taste.

Though bare of many of the niceties like china cabinets, our new home was large and stylish, with the decor done by my mother. Much commented on were pastel-colored walls and striking curtains made to look as if they were shop bought. Mum didn't want anything old-fashioned in her home.

Housework was a grind for Mum. After the shift she had a cleaner come in once a week. Together they would do the dreary tasks like washing floors and vacuuming. The one who stayed longest was Mrs. Popiel, a Polish women, who spent the war in a Russian refugee camp and escaped

only to find herself in another camp in Egypt. Her stories over morning tea were so sad--she'd lost her husband and now was trying to bring up two children in this foreign country. In such small ways we became aware that the war years were not only the time of glory and excitement that family tales had had it.

Sunday-schooling.

As children, my father used to take us to Sunday School at the St. Margaret Presbyterian Church in North Perth. Dropping us off to find our own way home, he and Mum enjoyed a lie-in. The twin Miss Campbells ran the class. Sixtiesh, with a gray plait of hair around each head, they wanted to know why our parents didn't go to church and to check that no-one in our family ever gambled. For a long time I would say no to the last, quite honestly. Then I unearthed the reason my father was called "Lucky Eddy." This placed me in one of the few moral dilemmas I can remember in childhood. It was resolved when I put family before the Miss Campbells and resolved to lie about my father's activities.

Church worried me. If it was important that we children go every Sunday why did no-one else in the family attend except on rare occasions? At my grandma's house one day, squishing my toes in the thick buffalo grass and helping her pick almonds, I asked why she never went to Church. Her answer was seriously and reflexively delivered. She considered herself to be a Christian. In her mind to be Christian need have nothing to do with any organized church. It was a relationship just between herself and God. You had to be true to yourself in what you did and God would know and you would know that he would know. If you were that, then no human had any right to question your religious behavior. This wisdom then tailed off into yet another of her diatribes against Catholics. That was why they were so immoral. They felt they could do anything and then just confess it. She didn't think God would really approve of that sort of behavior.

Holidaying.

If Dad spent every day with his next door relatives, Mum spent nearly every school holiday with her relatives. At a time when relatively few women drove cars, the family car was at her disposal. A special pleasure was to travel the state, visiting friends and relatives and just going places she hadn't been before. In this her eldest brother was a willing collaborator. He had spent the war years in the Indian army, after being caught by the war in England, where he trained as an engineer. He organized with military precision, day and camping excursions to places bare of any human development. With great stretches of coast then undeveloped it was easy enough to locate such places. Holidays to Bremer Bay, Albany, Margaret River, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton are among my childhood memories. (see Map 5: My Growing-up Country.) (Map not reproduced in this version.) There was hardly a school holiday that we did not travel somewhere to stay. Dad usually only came on these excursions if he could get away without missing the Trots on Saturday night and the Trials, every Tuesday night.

In addition there were regular excursions to my mother's other brother's farm at Mooliabeenie. This is where I would be singled out for teasing because I would keep my head in a book all day rather than help out with farm activities. There was also our horse adjisting place at Gidgiegannup, where my mother's uncle lived as the caretaker. Great-uncle Jack had spent most of his life unsuccessfully prospecting for gold and was always threatening to go off again if people gave him a hard time as caretaker. We children took special care never to upset him, because our parents impressed on us the difficulty of finding anyone willing to put up with conditions on this ill-equipped property. Uncle Jack still did wander off regularly. We would know he was thinking of us when we received a bunch of lottery tickets in the mail with no message, just each of our names handwritten on the tickets.

At the long Christmas holidays we usually stayed in Perth for the round of family festivities, the highlight of which was always my grandma's all night New Year's Eve Party. On a hot December night there was no reason to be bound by the size of the house and the party usually covered the whole block with endless activities for children to participate in and observe. January hot weather was also perfect for swims in the ocean daily and regular beach picnics.

My mother's seizing of opportunities.

Looking back on my mother's energies and activities during my childhood it seems she enjoyed license to do much as she pleased. This was again a combination of cultures. Dad would not be a "boss" to anyone--"bossing" was antithetical to his whole mateship culture and extended to women. Mum's family, while patriarchal, expected women to be active participants in the rural work they saw as central to life. There were many stories of family men who foolishly married useless city women who had no idea of how to pull their weight in family activities. So it was accepted that Mum should drive a truck, fix cars, and take her children about to visit relatives if her husband couldn't get away.

She was actively upwardly mobile in many of the activities she undertook. Always a slim and attractive woman she took gourmet cooking classes and began to give regular dinner parties to friends from the trots. As a skilled dressmaker she could dress glamorously at little cost. Even today at the age of seventy-nine and remarried, living in a distinctively middle-class suburb, traveling, dressing and dining in style continue as favorite activities.

Culturing children.

While Mum was becoming "cultured" the fact we children were just growing up "like Topsy" became an issue of family contention. It happened about the time television arrived in Perth in 1959 when I was ten years old. The aunts next door were one of the first to get a television set. They installed it in their front room which was elegantly furnished with cabinets full of treasures my teacher aunt had brought back from her world trips. We children thought television was heaven and rushed home from school every day to watch the Mickey Mouse Club at four o'clock.

At first our aunts were appreciative of our company but we wore them down. First they transferred the television out to the back room where our boisterousness could not do so much damage to the furniture. Then they persuaded our father to buy his own television. In what I think was a related move, shortly after we children were all enrolled for piano lessons. Dad bought a piano at auction and all became a little more serious about growing up. When Miss Lyons told my mother I was tone deaf I was sent instead to elocution classes with Miss Kavanagh. Looking back the elocution classes were probably not a bad idea but I think I was the only one in home-made garments among the elite group of private school girls who attended these classes. I hated going but looked and listened intently to the ways of these very different girls.

Puberty and becoming a bluestocking.

At the age of eleven I grew. Suddenly I was the same size I am as an adult. Ungainly, I moved into retreat with my books. I decided to become an archaeologist and endlessly read how people lived in other times and places. For birthdays, school friends gave me books like The Windy Walls of Troy and From Ape to Angel. As my passion for reading developed and I devoured everything in the house and then the Perth Public Library, much of the content of my reading was about the Second World War, the holocaust and the terrible aftermath of racism and ethnocentrism. I grew to be intolerant of my kin's racism and ethnocentrism and their lack of wonder about how people lived in other places.

I came to hate visiting relatives and having to be nice about their teasing of my looks and reading. I spent endless hours on the telephone with other girls sorting out the meaning of life and the terrors of family expectations and inadequacies. Our old house had been rented out to a German/Bulgarian family, who had one child, Christina, three years older than myself. This house became the sanctuary to which I retreated at every opportunity. In this quiet, ordered and welcoming place, the family listened to classical music, drank coffee, ate apple strudel and read bought books and magazines.[61] Returning to the mess and noise at our house was never done willingly. School continued to be not an affirming experience. I could not spell, always failed in handwriting, and regularly ruined the sewing exercises we were set.

Perth Modern School is the meritocratic high school which has produced many of the famous sons of Perth such as Bob Hawke, ex-prime minister. The final year in which scholarship exams were held for entry to this school was 1960. Miss Owen, an English women with long crimson fingernails and fingers orange from smoking, asked our seventh grade class, "Who is not sitting these exams?" A few of us struggled to our feet. Miss Owen rushed over to me, tapped me on the head with one of her fingernails and said; "You stupid girl, sit down. Of course you are sitting for the exam."

When I was one of three to win the scholarship I suddenly realized I was clever, which wasn't the best for a girl to be but better than nothing. The monetary prize was three pounds a year for books. In celebration I went to a dress shop in town where my mother spent not three but seven pounds on my

first store-bought dress. In the full length mirror I held out the skirt of the Swiss-cotton shirtmaker I had chosen and gloried in my achievement.

I didn't actually go to Modern School however. Christina, epitomizing all the culture and cosmopolitanism I saw as missing from my own family, went to Tuart Hill High School. It seemed much more glamorous to bus to Tuart Hill High School with Christina than walk alone to Modern School, which happened to be just a short distance from home.[62] My parents left the decision up to me so I chose Tuart Hill High School, then the biggest public high school in the state, located in an area booming with post-war babies.

In the first year there I was in the top class of many classes and half the class were girls. By fourth year, this class, now called the science stream, consisted of four girls and forty boys. In the intervening years I had acquired a bad case of acne, which was to structure the nature of my interactions throughout my teenage years. I was aware there was no benefit in me following other girls out of the science class. Instead I could make the best of being good at the sciences; I was usually in the top of the class. Staying at school only if I could win scholarships to pay my way was another incentive to do well. My father had been persuaded by some middle-class teacher friends of my mother's that if I was clever enough to win a scholarship he should let me stay at school. I could be sure of benefiting with a well-paid job at the end.

Mr. Stewart, my chemistry and physics teacher, and a West Indian migrant at a time when non-whites were unusual, provided me my most supportive and encouraging relationship at this time. He would celebrate my achievements and push me on to do more. He used to call me Florence, saying I reminded him of Florence Nightingale. When he was around I felt like Florence Nightingale, able to sail forth and do whatever I wanted.

Mr. Smallman, in contrast, came to be my mathematics teacher in the fourth and fifth years. On one memorable day in fourth year, there was a hard problem set. We were asked to put our hands up if we thought we had the answer. Mr. Smallman went over to each desk to check the answer. A few had tried and failed when I ventured to put my hand up. He came over, long and lean with exquisitely smooth olive skin. He leaned over, gave me a tick and smiled down at me, saying, "Are you sure you're female? Girls aren't supposed to be good at this sort of thing."

I still remember the hot flush and the memory of a recent "Woman's Day" issue flashing through my mind. Reading everything about acne, this particular article explained that acne could be caused by an excess of male hormones. After that class I was never sure of my answers in mathematics. At the Leaving exams I received distinctions for everything but math and history. No-one could have done well in history because our teacher taught a different curriculum to that examined. My math results, however, I trace directly to Mr. Smallman's paralyzing comment.

Entering university.

With another scholarship, based on the Leaving results, it was agreed I could go on to University. Dad's taxable income was so low that I received the maximum possible in this means-

tested government scholarship system. This was introduced in the sixties to encourage more people to send their children to university--obviously my family were not alone among Australians at the time in their disdain for education. In 1963 the first system was introduced to recruit university graduates to the federal bureaucracy. The Martin Report of 1964 had recommended a significant expansion of university education to this and other ends (Hancock, 1993). In the culture then operating this required significant and widely available subsidies to induce students to enroll.

<u>Family politicking.</u>

My coming of age coincided with the period of Liberal dominance (1949-1972) in the nation. Australia had entered the Second World War to help Britain in Europe but finished it with a heightened awareness of their vulnerable location with regard to Asian expansionary interests. This "marked a shift from dependence on the UK to dependence upon the USA" (Hancock, 1993, p. 71). In the widespread awareness of global realities that came with the war, Australians were forced:

> to acknowledge that Asia, rather than Europe, would determine their future. Yet the war also confirmed the historic fear of the "yellow peril," and for that reason, its role in ending isolation was double-edged: the acceptance of Australia's location on the perimeter of Asia was accompanied by a tendency to regard the region as a potential battleground, to identify Asian nationalists as "communists" and to rely upon defensive alliances with "safe" Asian regimes. (Hancock, 1993, p. 72)

Robert Menzies, Prime Minister for much of this time, was an artist in playing up this fear in tandem with other emerging images of reality to ensure that his party ruled free of any effective opposition. The economy entered a period of sustained prosperity with massive post-war immigration and burgeoning global markets for agricultural and mineral production. The Labor party, always the stronghold of predominately working class Catholics, tried to portray itself as secular at the same time as an organized Catholic section within it, tried to rid the party of what they saw as communist influences. The result was a split, with the avowedly anti-communist and predominately Catholic section becoming the Democratic Labor Party in 1955.

My parents, like many other Australians, being neither Catholic nor communist and considering themselves prospering, were highly satisfied with the relations of ruling that prevailed during the Menzies era. The only case of poverty I can remember from my childhood was the Pumphries family who lived in a derelict house that we passed on the way to school. The children lived in rags and had matted hair that fell over their eyes. On the few cold days of the year their feet remained bare and blue. I asked my mother why they were so poor. It was because they were Catholic and had too many children while the father drank. When they moved on, the house was bull-dozed.

When Menzies retired in 1966 there was no successor with his power of control over the political discourse. All those left out of this reign of prosperity found the space to speak their disquiet. Labor strategized to coordinate and represent this growing constituency of educated urban radicals, women, Aborigines, migrants, and the poor. Labor's slogan for change on which it won the 1972 election was: "It's time!" Through my own teenage years I played out this same sense of disquiet and

sentiment for change at home with my father. Involvement in the Vietnam war was debated furiously many times around the dinner table. My parents did not see any need to change a status quo that had served them so well, and, while still democratic in sentiment, their own experience told them that anyone could get on if they really wanted to. This thinking differently about politics was a major means by which an emerging sense of differentiated self became apparent to me. What I wanted to do was learn more about how the world worked so I could make up my own mind about politics and what sort of a place the world should be. I was no longer certain that the world that had been so warm and secure in my childhood had a place for me on coming of age.

For my parents' generation the reign of the Liberal party, meant the continuation of a way of life in which it wasn't necessary to think about how the world "really" worked, because it worked for them. To quote Morris (1992):

> For all of its modern history, Australia has been governed by the . . . assumption: "laborism," a social contract upheld in various forms since 1904, exchanged trade protection and currency controls for a state-regulated wage fixing system and compulsory arbitration; as a capital/labor deal for redistributing national income primarily between white men, laborism was sustained by a massive immmigration policy legitimated and administered on racist principles until the 1960s. (p. 26-27)

Choosing a field of study.

What could I do in finding out how the world worked? Archaeology was my first choice but not taught. A doctor seemed a noble idea but my mother said no daughter of hers was becoming a "woman doctor"--they smoked, drank, and were hard and bitter. Someone explained that anthropology was the closest course to archaeology available. So in 1966 I began an anthropology degree with no thinking on what paid work I would be doing upon completion.

The first year I attended from home which required two bus trips. I often missed class and only stayed on campus a minimal time. The second year I moved into St. Catherine's College on campus. At this place, to which I had access only because of my father's poverty, I found a world of daughters of the landed gentry, of rich professionals, and of the solid middle-class. Sue Newman, daughter of a leading Country Party Member of Parliament and rich farming family, shared a late night cup of tea with me. Fresh from St. Hilda's and knowing everything there was to know, she was explaining to me how families organized partners for the balls. I murmured I couldn't imagine my family doing that for me. She answered forcefully that anyone could tell just by looking at me that I didn't have a "family." This was scary but fascinating to me as I had no consciousness of the riverside private schools and the lifeways that ruled there. It was an assault on my sense of self but also an adventure to find out more about these strange cultures.

Invited to spend an extra year in the course doing honors, I needed to select a topic for my thesis. During the course I had come to take very seriously the humanitarian anthropological message of the relativism of culture and what Jane Addams calls "the solidarity of the human race no matter what" (1990/1910, p. 75). Absorbing the taught wisdom that Aboriginal people had all but ceased to

signify in the Australian setting, I still took very seriously W. E. B. Du Bois' pronouncement that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line (Du Bois, 1945). Analyzing why I made this response, I can only think my own problematic experiences with acne caused an identification with the unfairness of being judged on appearances. The mask of acne I wore set me up to relate to the mask of blackness of others. At that time I did not connect my position with that of other white women, especially those with clear skins and marriageability. There was also my relationship with Mr. Stewart, because it was the film To Sir With Love that decided my honors topic, West Indian Migration to Britain.

In the context of these pre-Australian Studies times, most of my anthropological reading up until this time had been American and on the issue of color, particularly what was happening with American civil rights. These evoked in me a strong passion for justice and humanity but ensured a continuing blindness as to the existence of Aboriginal people. As I sat in the library researching, the federal referendum of 1967 was passed allowing that Aborigines could now be counted as citizens for the first time in the census.

Gender issues too were something of which I remained unconscious. I clearly recall my puzzlement when I came across analogies drawn between the race issue and the woman issue in my reading. My inadequacies as a fragile, spontaneous and feminine specimen of womanhood I saw as purely personal. In contrast racism I saw as a clearly structural issue of oppression.

So I wrote my thesis exploring the meanings of "integration," "assimilation," "xenophobia," and the conceptualization of race and culture in the West Indian story of traveling to "Mother England." Still I didn't think about what to "do" with my life. Doctoral scholarships were offered but I knew it was time to quit university life because of the dangers involved in committing to life as a female, unmarried academic. With first class honors I reasoned I ought to be able to find a paying position somewhere.

Looking for a working life.

Again I became aware of my lack of cultural knowledge on the intricacies of middle-class individualism. Applications for all the interesting positions had been made months ago. The man at the Western Australian Native Welfare Department had the looks of a white-haired British colonial colonel and was graciously charming about my application. I hurried to assure him that I could see there was nothing he would have like better than to appoint me as a government anthropologist. The Aboriginal elders just wouldn't accept a woman in such a position. I laugh now at the idea of elders having such power on this question, when in all other areas of their lives their words were so ineffective. At the time, however, it was reassuring evidence of how well the government was doing its job of supporting/saving/ looking-after Aboriginal people.

My next move was to join the Commonwealth Public Service and move to Canberra to join the soon-to-become defunct Department of External Territories on the understanding that they were

sending anthropologists to New Guinea. But on arrival, it was, "I'm afraid it is now policy not to send female anthropologists to New Guinea and policy not to discuss the reason for this policy."

So stuck in Canberra at the very bottom of the bureaucratic heap, not having any inkling of the rituals of this esoteric culture, I sat in an office with a young man from Queensland who had second class, division B honors. He was off every day traveling all over the country and receiving special training because his public servant father had known about applying for cadetships. I was trapped with a box of Cumberland colored pencils shading off-shore oil claims on maps of New Guinea.

After a while I got tired of this and went to Sydney to live with a friend, finding a position on my first day with the Colonial Sugar Refinery as a market researcher--their first anthropologist. They had wanted a psychologist but they were impressed with my skills at open-ended questions for consumers. They were looking for public reaction to embossed vinyl tiles and other innovative building materials they wanted to introduce to the Australian market. They also flew me all over Australia to research the amount and type of building materials required for the Pilbara region in Western Australia, where huge mining developments were resulting in a massive building program. Travel, expense account, and after a few months a pay raise of twenty-five percent: everything and more that Canberra had failed to deliver. But here my own cultural knowledge held me back. When they promised me a guarenteed career path it struck me that I wasn't here to build a career but to save money to visit London, that mythical center that even my ancestors hadn't seen. What girl of twenty-two would want to settle for a necessarily dull career in business in a place full of strangers? Better I go off to London to do the standard Australian working holiday as a temporary typist.[63] My sisters wanted to join me and later the whole family was to get together and take a trip to Scotland.

My year in Europe done it was time to return home. I returned in 1972 on the same weekend that Labor came to power federally. Our old house had been sold off while I was away. Mum had winkled Dad out of his beloved but now changed North Perth and selected a property right on the river in the southern suburbs. We all complained at this disruption to our lives but soon settled to enjoying the joys of riverside living. I was sitting in the sun, looking out over the water and enjoying being home, when I looked in the paper for work. The first position I saw, for which I qualified, was in the state welfare department.

It was easy enough to gain entry to the public service. The question they asked at the focus group selection process was, "What is the difference between integration and assimilation?" It was shocking then to be told I was appointed to serve in Kalgoorlie. I fled in tears at the idea. Part of the culture I had acquired by now was that only second-rate people ended up with country postings.[64] The idea of going to New Guinea was exotic but the idea of going to Kalgoorlie meant all the world would know I could not do any better for myself.

The recruitment officer rang to say a mistake had been made. Would I please start at the East Perth Office of Community Welfare in January, 1973. This Department had been created the year before from the amalgamation of the Native Welfare Department and the Child Welfare Department. I

entered the world of welfare in an office just two miles from the place I grew up. The office I was located in had been the old Native Welfare office and was still much used by Aboriginal people.

With my anthropology degree I was held to have special knowledge about Aboriginal people and my main task was to act as escort and support person to all country Aborigines coming to Perth for medical attention. This I found an endlessly fascinating task as I listened to stories from all over the state on Aboriginal life. Waiting for hours in public hospitals for appointments with a diversity of people opened a door for me into actualities I had no idea existed. Some patients did not speak English and we had to hunt an interpreter to include in our party. Because there was no official recognition at this time that Aboriginal people could need an interpreter, paying for these services required creativity.

Mothers artful at getting maximum value out of welfare; stockmen who had never been to Perth before; an old man from the desert at Jigalong who squatted on his haunches on the waiting room chairs were all people I met in the course of work. There were children and adults fitted out with glasses and wheelchairs that they were never going to be able to use in their home conditions. I had the good fortune to listen to the tales of Albert Barunga, a poet from Mowanjum. Then there was the anxious uncertainty in accompanying mothers trying to make contact with their institutionalized children. I loved the endless kaleidoscope of work and it being such low-status, routine work, I was left to decide how to best accomplish the set tasks.

Then with an office shift, the assumption of many of my tasks by a new health department and an increasing case load of mainstream welfare cases, I came to realize that an anthropology degree was worth little in this more general setting. Long-standing status differences emerged in the newly amalgamated department between those allied with "natives" and those allied with "children." I was classed with those knowing only about Aboriginals, which was not highly valued knowledge. When it came to welfare, social workers were the ones with the knowledge and if I expected to do my work effectively I had better become a social worker. At one case conference, I gave my report and recommendations and the Chair said, "Ah yes, Miss Crawford. But you're not a social worker are you?"

In 1974, I gained leave from work and with another generous government scholarship returned to the University of Western Australia to complete a Masters degree in Social Work. Reflecting on this process of being absorbed into a suitable occupation for women, I remark on what a cooperative participant I was in many of the moves. The gender impartiality by which I gained all my awards for studying was never matched by gender impartial contexts in which to apply the knowledge gained with this governmental subsidization. I had a strong sense of fairness when it came to being stopped from what I wanted to do, but what I wanted to do was itself delimited by my socialization into cultural notions about gender specific behavior. I try to imagine who I would be today if I'd accepted the Colonial Sugar Refinery's offer of a career in their research department, if I'd ignored my mother's advice against being a woman doctor. What I insist on resisting is any notion that such choices are evidence of personal pathology.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Like Jane Addams I was forty-four years old when I set out on this project of reflecting on my social work practice. In this chapter, I have, like her tried to set up a picture of the subjective experiences that shaped my sense of self on beginning to prepare for the conscious practice of social work. I have painted a picture of a childhood self secure in the ongoing processes of kin and community relationships that grew into an adolescent self questioning the permanence of this security. At the same time I came to young adulthood with a humanitarian conviction that such security should be the rightful expectation of all. In the next chapter I will explore the process of entering social work, using Denzin's (1989b, 1989c) method of identifying and interpreting the social dynamics at play in an epiphanic moment of insight.

<u>Notes</u>

CHAPTER FIVE

Becoming a Social Worker in Broome

Men (sic) are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they
take of them.   Epicetetus, 1 A.D.

There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.
Hamlet.

This chapter is a description of the paths and processes by which I came to practice social work in Broome. In it I seek to render my lived experiences into a textual account by organizing my reflections around two key epiphanic moments of insight. The first insight came with my gazing upon Aboriginal people living in, what seemed to me, abject circumstances. This is what moved me to decide that in my social work, I needed to take a special interest in "helping" Aboriginal people. The second moment of learning came with the demonstration by an Aboriginal person that in "helping" I wasn't so removed from negatively constructing the ongoing nature of Aboriginal lives as I liked to think. This second epiphanic moment marks the beginning of consciously encountering another culture--of connecting in ways that made me emotionally and intellectually alive to how I look through the assumptive bases of my own cultural frameworks. Michelle Rosaldo (1984) has argued that "emotions are about the ways in which the social world is one in which *we* are involved" (p. 143). I had learned about cultural differences in my anthropology course. In this chapter I describe some of the visceral ways I learned to seek to understand and respond to cultural differences in keeping with the social work value of all people being of equal worth.

<u>Viewing Aboriginal People</u>

In January, 1974 between taking two years leave from the welfare department and starting my social work course I flew to stay with friends from the anthropology course, Kim and Ann-Clare, now living at Derby in the Kimberley. Kim was a government anthropologist, while Ann-Clare having added library and teaching qualifications to her anthropology degree, was working at the local high school. On what was to become my first epiphanic day, the entertainment planned was a trip to Fitzroy Crossing with Kim and Sam, the local Community Health doctor.

It was a two-hundred mile drive from Derby and this was the height of the humid wet season. Though there was nothing to be seen at Fitzroy Crossing, they promised that Sam's brand new Toyota Landcruiser with its unheard of air-conditioning and sprung, plush upholstery would take me through majestic scenery and we could finish with a picnic at Windjina Gorge. The site of Jandamarra's rebellion against the early white settlers,[65] Windjina now offered the pleasures of swimming and the chance to spot a crocodile.

So it was I came to be perched up on the front passenger seat of this four wheel drive 'tank' when Sam pulled up at Middle Camp to complete some of their day's work. He explained that Middle Camp was one of three "reserves" in Fitzroy Crossing on the way but that meant nothing at the time. The Reserve Bank of Australia, a water reserve, a park reserve, the army reserve; reserve was a common enough English word. Accepting that it also had something to do with Aboriginal people, I had not thought to interrogate Sam on just what a reserve in this context meant.

It was raining steadily when we arrived and it took me a while to tune in to what I was seeing. The landscape was gray, flat, and desolate in stark contrast to the green of the wet all around. Now I know this was because all the wood within walking distance had been used for cooking fires and the heavy human and dog churning of the pindan[66] kept any new plants from taking root.

I detected shades of gray and dark. There were men, women, children and their dogs huddling out of the rain against corrugated iron shelters and bits of hessian.[67] Scattered across the ground were soaked debris such as bed frames, food packages, and muddied cloth. This mess of rubbish, steeped in dirt, appeared to be beyond human use. The frame provided by the steadily moving windscreen wiper gave the scene a filmic quality but my guts were telling me that this was not about someplace else, this was here. This was Australia--the lucky country with a fair go for all. On the radio coming out, we had heard how the Labor-initiated federal Aboriginal Affairs Department was to become more financially accountable because of the luxury Aboriginal people were enjoying around the country on government largesse.

What was this then? Kim and Sam did not get out of their car. They just nodded through the window to some of the elder men and explained to me that it was not the time to make a call. Sam was there to check on what could be done to prevent the spread of hookworm in the camp. There were 350 people at this camp site and much the same at the other two sites. The wet season was always the worst for the health department Sam explained. There was only one water tap[68] at this camp, no

toilets, no showers, no laundries, no telephone, and no vehicle. It was at least a mile across the flats to any of the town offices or store. Health instructions were hard for nurses to convey because so few of the people spoke English.

Kim painted another part of the story. There were 350 people here where only about ten people used to live, because of the after-effects of the 1968 Equal Pay Award for Pastoral Workers. It was only since 1950 that the Pastoralist's Association had agreed that Aboriginal workers on Kimberley stations should be paid anything at all. Before that it was just keep--food, clothes and tobacco--and some sort of shelter (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989). When the standard pastoral award became applicable to Aboriginal station hands in 1969, Kimberley station owners found the increase more than they were willing to pay.

This progressive move to include Aboriginal workers in the rights of "laborism" had unintended consequences. Previously, with station owners not paying individual workers at the market rate applicable to white workers, a system had evolved where clan groups had been able to live on station properties, in many cases on land they regarded as "homelands." In the years since 1969, in a move analogous to the Highland Clearances referred to in Chapter Four, the cattle stations of the Fitzroy Valley had moved to rid themselves of their station mobs and the attached responsibilities. Station mobs were replaced with contract male labor, both black and white. Whole clans had had to leave their home with no choice but to camp on these woefully inadequate government reserves.

The "trickle-down" effect of governmental politicking.

Meanwhile there had been a shift of governmental responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs from state to federal level in the previous few years. This followed the recognition, by the federal Liberal government during the sixties, that Australia's standing overseas in negotiating trade agreements was being adversely affected by perceptions of a continuing white Australia policy and appalling treatment of Aboriginal people. The Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) referendum of 1967, allowing Aboriginal people to be automatically counted as citizens, was the means by which the federal government was able to assume responsibility for policy-making on Aboriginal issues. One of the reasons Western Australians had been reluctant to join the Federation back in 1901 was the suspicion that the more Aboriginal-free states of the east might try and dictate the way Western Australians should handle their "native problem." The outcome of the 1967 referendum was threatening to those rural interests vested in keeping the status quo as regards Aboriginal conditions.

The strength of these interests in the politics of Western Australia is measured in a curious move the state government engineered to retain some control over Aboriginal Affairs policy. The Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority was created with the amalgamation of the Native Welfare and Child Welfare departments into Community Welfare in 1972. As a policy and co-ordinating agency, this Authority had no funded base from which to address issues of Aboriginal welfare. Instead it was to monitor the efforts of others in this direction. The director of this agency was also to be the director of the State branch of the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs, created by the Whitlam Labor

government in 1972. At the time of my visit to Fitzroy Crossing in 1974, the bureaucratic plays of all these new agencies were still being choreographed. Reserves, such as the one I saw, were a state institution and the federal bureaucracy had no intention of perpetuating what they saw as an abhorrent practice with apartheid overtones. In turn the States, especially Western Australia which had long fought federal interference in its Aboriginal policies, were now determined that all resources for Aboriginal people would be paid for by the federal government.

So it came to pass that there was Aboriginal Affairs money from the federal government to fund the State Community Health Department which paid Sam's lucrative salary (it was hard to recruit doctors to work in the outback), supplied his Landcruiser so that nothing might impede him in the performance of his duties and paid for airborne medical evacuation to Perth, 1,600 miles away, for any patient needing it.

It was not the brief of the Community Health Department to install a water supply, toilets and showers and with the demise of the Native Welfare Department in 1972, it was not clear that this was any authority's brief. Remembering the me that tried to digest all this information it is striking to note how much such bureaucratic considerations have become a natural language to me now, yet how quickly I lose touch with the particulars of any issue when not immersed in that cultural world of bureaucrats.

Lunching with the locals.

We backed away from Middle Camp and went to the Fitzroy Crossing pub for steak sandwiches and a chat with some of the "locals" over a beer. Fitzroy Crossing in 1974 had a white population of less than 100 residents. Primarily it served as the administrative outpost for the central Kimberley area. The combined pub and store was the key private business in town and white residents were likely to be employed in the post office, the police station, welfare, the school, the nursing post, or the fundamentalist Protestant mission. Public servants usually stayed a maximum of two years, while some of the missionaries were long time residents. Another part of the picture, as to the situation I had seen at Middle Camp, emerged talking to some of these white residents as we relaxed in the lounge bar looking over at the black bar.

The 350 people at Middle Camp were not one group but a number of diverse language groups who were not comfortable living so close together. Many were traditional enemies now forced to live in squalor together for the sake of a water tap and the fact that they would be quickly removed from any other site at which they tried to set up camp. With the introduction of drinking rights[69] to this area just two years before, the tensions attached to this forced propinquity were often resolved after a night of drinking. Now there were many more deaths and injuries in Fitzroy Crossing than at any time previously.[70] The infant mortality rate was up, life expectancy was down, the juvenile delinquency rate up, educational achievements down, child neglect rates and the unemployment rate up. However you measured it, the Aboriginal population of Fitzroy Crossing did not measure up too well except with regard to other Aboriginal people; here they were only somewhat below the norm.[71]

<u>Losing certainty about living in the lucky country.</u>

While we never made it to Windjana Gorge--it was too wet--this day stays in my mind so clearly as the day I began to realize many things. The first was the assault on my complacent acceptance that in Australia we did indeed live in the "Lucky Country." Donald Horne (1968) wrote his classic of this title in the late sixties lamenting the philistinism of his countrymen but the phrase entered the language celebrating what he had tried to critique. In my year of temporary typing in London, I had learned about class and how importantly it can weigh. Back here in the Lucky Country, we didn't suffer from such outmoded ideas. Like Morris, (1992) I accepted that:

> We . . . live in a society where, for almost a century, the right of all citizens (a concept slowly wrested from the proprietary control of white men) to a decent living wage, and the duty of the state to ensure it, were *imagined* as fundamental. (p. 44)

This day at Fitzroy I lost my impregnable assurance on this point. Until now, the "them" who didn't enjoy these rights were of some place else and only to be apprehended through film, books, or by me going "overseas." This day in Fitzroy deeply disturbed my understanding of what "reality for us" was in ways that I continue to struggle with. What I saw at Fitzroy that day did not connect with what I had learned about Aboriginal people while studying anthropology.

<u>Western Australian anthropology 1960-1980.</u>

Anthropology at the University of Western Australia at the time I had completed the course, and for many years before and after, had been headed by Professor Ronald Berndt and his wife, Dr. Catherine, world experts on Aborigines and their culture. Students of my era believed that the days of studying Aborigines were coming to an end. The Berndts' delivered lectures of great beauty and intricacy, conveying a palpable sense of the sophisticated legacy of understanding developed within Aboriginal culture. The frames within which these portraits of Aboriginality were painted is captured in the title of their classic text, <u>The World of the First Australians</u> (Berndt & Berndt, 1965). First published in 1952 and reissued many times over the next thirty years, the text presents a coherent and totalizing picture of the society of Australian Aborigines.

The book gave the reader an introduction to the nature of the traditional life of Australian Aborigines, prior to contact with whites. Apart from the husband and wife co-authorship, it was an anthropological text native to its times and in that sense written, as Bruner (1993) describes, with "the traditional stance of the ethnographer as an objective, authoritative, politically neutral, usually white male observer standing somehow above and outside the text" (p. 1).

The Berndts in their early fieldwork career did battle with the Vestey family empire of England over conditions for Aboriginals on Vestey properties in the Northern Territory (Hardy, 1968). During and after the Noonkanbah tragedy (see Chapter Seven) in the early eighties they also did battle with the Western Australian government over land rights (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989). At the time I was attending university however, their knowledge and that of most other faculty was presented in the

terms Bruner describes. Their postivist functional-structuralism frame aimed to describe the entire culture and social structure of the discrete Aboriginal social entities in which they did fieldwork. To most of us students, the Berndts seemed "other-worldly" in their activities and it was hard to imagine what relevance their research had to our everyday lived experience. They themselves fed this image by speaking and writing as if the Age of Bureaucracy had never come for the Aboriginal people.

I graduated with a very unclear notion of Aboriginal realities though to many a degree in anthropology equaled an expert knowledge on Aboriginals. In the nineteen sixties when I finished I think it is fair to say that anthropology students like the rest of Australia took it for granted that Aboriginal issues were being absorbed by progress and the work of the Berndts was of historic not current importance. My friends, Kim and Anne-Clare were exceptions in this. Anne-Clare came from a pastoral property in Queensland where she knew many Aboriginal people. Kim brought Aboriginal spears to throw on the university quad and was already acquiring the skills in stone-ax chipping that would later make him an expert in this field. He traveled to the outback and spent time with Aboriginal people, involving himself in the sixties in one of the first Aboriginal protests over mining activities in the Goldfields.

I thought of this interest as their "thing" but took-for-granted that overall progress was attending to the needs of Aboriginal people. That day at Middle Camp brought home to me just how much history, power, money, and self-interests continue to construct Aboriginal lives in inhuman ways even while we congratulated ourselves for having stopped putting strychnine in the flour.[72] Further how easy it was to blame the Aboriginal people for their failures if you truly believed Australia was the country of the "fair go." When you didn't have the time, eyes or ears to collect a full picture how obvious that research projects should identify Aboriginality as a core factor linking diverse studies of poverty and social problems. Anthropology while speaking against this logic tended to speak what was heard as "dreamtime" language. It was so exotic it tended to be discounted when considering the here and now.

Differing ways of seeing.

Return now to my day at Fitzroy Crossing in the rain and the people huddled against the elements. It is possible to trace in the stories I collected about them some of the ways in which consideration of the ongoing, dynamic social construction of Aboriginal realities became lost. Reflecting from where I am now, I have to remind myself that at the time, I too was convinced that there was a right answer to be found on how to best help Aboriginal people.

The doctor lamenting how hard work was for the Community Health Department in the wet season and how hard for his nurses when people did not speak English, reflected a widespread faith that the technological expertise was readily available to help. The problem was contaminating variables that needed to be removed so the experts could get on with their work. Knowing Sam over many years now, I figure his conception of his role was akin to the surgical expert with precise skills to apply once the path has been cleared for him. He still works in the field of Aboriginal health and is

now a senior bureaucrat. One of his research interests is to track down the gene that makes Aboriginals so susceptible to alcoholism. He speaks in the dominant voice of positivism.

Kim's task as anthropologist was for Sam, and the many like him, primarily that of a path clearer. As they were expert on technical matters of health, so Kim was expert on matters Aboriginal. He would tell them what they needed to know to make their technology work. Kim saw things differently: It took a long time for the decision-makers in the Health Department to realize that no matter how much time they gave Kim he was never going to deliver the path clearing they thought they'd bought. Kim painted pictures of understanding Aboriginal lived experience. He offered an interpretation that delivering health services was not about technical expertise but about starting in Aboriginal actualities.

As a Western Australian anthropologist trained in the sixties by the Berndt's he also had a strong strain of cultural preservationism, where culture was conceived as a thing that could be preserved. For him the Middle Camp plight was caused by the coming of westernization. The imposition of union politics and the 1968 Equal Pay Award was just the latest in an ongoing series of blows to Aboriginal integrity. He spoke with the voice of those who wished western civilization would stop contaminating the way things were meant to be. The community he spoke from within was described by Kenelm Burridge (1973) in Encountering aborigines; a case study: Anthropology and the Australian Aboriginal. This book was written after Burridge's stay as Visiting Scholar to the Anthropology Department when Kim, Ann-Clare and I were all students there. A precursor to the interpretive turn in anthropology later persuasively argued by Geertz (1973), this book of turning the gaze on the researchers, was not favorably received by Western Australian anthropologists at the time. However his likening the anthropological picturing of Aboriginal cultures to the pinning of butterflies in a drawer stays with me as a moment of consciousness-raising. The use of the word "encounter" in the title, signified Burridge's argument as to the inevitability of the knower shaping what is known. This stood against the almost complete lack of reflexivity then current in anthropological writings about Aboriginal culture.

Kim is now a museum curator and of world renown in his knowledge of pre-contact Aboriginal technology. In the Kimberleys, he was most often dismissed by bureaucrats for the "sin" of going native: He wore a red head band everywhere (the sign of manhood in desert Aboriginal tribes) and went as far as being subincised.[73] In this he disrupted the required objectivity and distance required of anthropological experts. In the progress/preservation bind that bedeviled debate about helping Aboriginal people throughout the seventies,[74] the two voices of Kim and Sam represented sides of the divide in the scholarly debate. Both were sincerely interested in helping and researching for answers. What is striking now is how both were white men, who talk today much as they did then, and who are both entrenched in well paying senior jobs in the Aboriginal industry. It is my guess that in the seventies they hardly noticed they were not speaking the same language because they were in that delightful limbo land waiting for the research to come in. No one was holding them responsible

for the outcomes of putting thought into action. The story of how to help Aborigines in the post-Menzies era had just begun.

A third set of voices on that wet day were those of the locals in the pub. In the seventies there was not much room for the voice of the local though Rowley (1970a) in designing the structure to implement his Aboriginal policy did try to invert the bureaucratic triangle so decision-making power was focused at the local level. This lasted a very short time before Canberra mandarins set things right again (Sommerlad, 1973). Yet those pub voices shifting, highlighting, contradicting and confirming what Sam and Kim had told me were important to my own search for meaning. They brought home the complexity of meaning embedded in the one briefly caught scene and the conflict of interpretations to be made of the same scene. They demonstrated the to-and-fro of arguments that locals can have when they have no claim to be expert: the engaged dialogue that can take a long time but pull in all sorts of considerations ruled out in scholarly discourse.

I did not appreciate at the time but at the pub in Fitzroy Crossing in 1974, not just any black could sit in the lounge and drink cold beer out of a glass. The one black man who joined us and explained how the plight of the Aborigines was their own doing was then a powerful voice. Could he be right--any Aboriginal could be a success like him if only they wanted to behave properly? Now I know some of who that man is and "how come" he would say these words. I know now some of the fraught, historically structured, relationships between half-castes (yellafellas) and fullbloods. I also know that it will never be enough to listen to a local voice if the context surrounding it is not explicated. That same black man speaks other words nowadays because Aboriginal people like all of us, have the capacity to be astute ethnographers and read cultural scenes for their own ends.

I came back from that day in Fitzroy Crossing overloaded with images, facts, emotions, and stories. I was clear on one point only: That it was not right that the people of Middle Camp should be expected to live without water, shelter, and the means to care for their health.

Social work and ethnographic understandings.

I resolved to return to the Kimberley to complete field studies for my Master's thesis in social work and unravel this mystery a little further. I know that on entering the social work course we were told to regard anthropology as nothing but "inspired fiction" and focus ourselves on building the measuring skills that would lead us to be taken seriously in the world of science.[75] All through the course I kept bringing in the situation of Aboriginal people and querying how a particular theory we were being taught applied to them. "Oh well, they're different" was the constant dismissive answer. From anthropology I had acquired the humanist message of the universality of cultural beingness, so I silently insisted that they were not and tested any theory presented as applicable to "clients" over whether it was able to include Aboriginal realities. In Twenty Years at Hull House I find an ethnographic passage about Chicago of 1890 that closely reflects the situation I became aware of that day in Fitzroy Crossing if I substitute the word "country" for "city:"

> The social organism has broken down through large districts of our great cities. Many of the people living there are very poor, the majority of them without leisure or energy for anything but the gain of subsistence.
>
> They live for the moment side by side, many of them without knowledge of one another, without fellowship, without local tradition or public spirit, without social organization of any kind. Practically nothing is done to remedy this. The people who might do it . . . live in other parts of the city . . . The chaos is . . . great . . . Their ideas and resources are cramped . . . when all social advantages are persistently withheld, it may be for years, the result itself is pointed to as a reason and is used as an argument for the continued withholding. (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 211-212)

My trip to the Kimberley then marked the moment in my life that I found myself eager to do what bright young women of my day should do if not married, nursing or teaching. It also marked a conscious commitment I made as to who I should be helping if social work was about helping people. Helping Aborigines was a newly articulated idea but it seemed in 1974 that there was no-one of public standing who did not support this aim. The debate was over how it should best be achieved. The following quotes are from the Labor Party's policy statement on Aboriginal Affairs issued in 1974 by James Cavanagh (1974) Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

> We still don't know what is best for Aboriginals. This must be studied . . . I think within our Department we have many dedicated men who do take an interest in the question. (p. 9)

The white man has done much to kill the culture of the Aboriginal but it is worth preserving. (p. 10)

We want them to take their rightful place in Australian society with their rights to self-determination restored as equal citizens in word and deed and opportunity, entitled to the same respect and dignity that we as a community should accord each other and indeed all fellow human beings. (p. 22)

Our aim quite simply is to restore to the Aboriginal people their lost rights of self-determination and to close the social, economic and political gap between our two communities. (p. 51)

Starting a social work degree in 1974 with the aim of helping Aborigines resonated strongly with the mood of the times. C.D. Rowley (1970b), the architect of much of the policy and a brilliant scholar, was well aware of the dangers and final impossibility of attempts at social engineering. His action perspective stressed interaction, belief systems and starting where Aborigines were at. Inevitably perhaps, this focus became lost in the transfer to bureaucratic, practical guidelines and their interpretation.

Though supported in my ambition to focus in the social work course on Aboriginal issues, especially for my research project, it was something of a shock to discover that in the course material covered I was often one of those students who "just don't get it." The language and framing of human behavior and the social environment were so different from my anthropological training that I found it very difficult to take in the material covered in the curriculum.[76]

Reassuring and affirming though the cultural studies movement in Australian social work was to be later in my career (Healy, Rimmer & Ife, 1986), it came too late in its public form to help me articulate my intense rejection of the notion taught in the course that social work knowledge could and should be framed through the social theory of structural-functionalism. For most of the course I felt much as Dorothy Smith (1987) describes her beginning rejection of received knowledge, "This . . . was something I resisted without knowing how to resist. But that rebellion at an earlier time had no ground to stand on, no rightful means of expression, and thus no authority for me" (p. 51).

Struggling to hold a view.

Then came the moment of confrontation that led to a partial resolution of some of these issues for me. During my study the course became a post-graduate bachelor's degree rather than the master's for which we had enrolled. This was in response to funding pressure on the university from the Australian government. Most students elected to do the bachelors because it saved them from the unpopular research component of the course. I, however, was attending on a postgraduate scholarship from the Australian government which had been awarded on the understanding that I was completing a master's degree: Further, I liked the idea of research. Ever since my trip to Fitzroy Crossing, I had been thinking on how I could return to research issues involved in helping Aboriginal people. I had already decided I wanted to do a community study of a particular remote Aboriginal township. This

was Looma, some eighty miles from Derby, which I had also visited with Kim. In stark contrast to the Fitzroy scene this was an energized group of people who had been granted land on their homelands by the collaborative actions of both state and federal labor governments. The core group of residents were formerly the Liveringa Station mob who had walked off the station when new American owners and management had treated them very roughly in the early seventies. They shifted down the road and camped at Camballin, company town for the Australian Land and Cattle Company, an American-owned enterprise. Town management were not particularly Aboriginal friendly: In fact the extremity of some of their actions in excluding Aboriginals from town had served to advance the Looma drive for land in government circles. Now with their land grant, excised by the state government from a stock route, they were full of plans for the future of their community. I had begun negotiating about doing my research project with some of the community leaders who were keen at the chance to "get their story out."

I came to be one of two students who would be completing the research required for a master's degree. We had to reflect positively on the school and serve to enhance its reputation as a center for serious research. This meant that my ideas of doing what was seen as an anthropological community study were dismissed out of hand. Such was after all "nothing but inspired fiction." An Aboriginal topic could be accommodated because this was clearly an issue of the times and one in which professional social work had hardly participated to date. However, the research question would have to be cast in "proper" terms. I could even go to my remote community but not to do a qualitative study. There needed to be a hypothesis, measurable and testable in quantitative terms. I could look at the relationship between level of education and employment or ascertain levels of adequate housing and their relationship to the health of the children in the community. There was no shortage of suitable topics, aimed at measuring social problems among Aboriginal people.

Discovering the Meaning of the Term "Positivism."

I was dismayed at this turn of events. All the talks I had with the Looma community had been about their view that if the Australian people could listen to and understand their story, we could work together. White and black together could meet and talk out plans for the future that would have a chance of being effective. The Looma people had a long list of past policy mishaps to recite but would say, "Those Canberra people, they just can't understand." This was because the Aboriginal people hadn't been able to get their story out properly yet. While I hadn't hoped my efforts as mediator would change this in any final sense, I had seen it as part of a process of building different perspectives on what was then commonly cast as "The Aboriginal Problem."

Now I was being pushed to research in a way that would inevitably add to the mountainous data serving to make concrete in people's minds that it was indeed "The Aboriginal Problem." To research in a way that implied we would with with the right methods unveil the right answer: whether this be housing, schooling, health, employment, or some particular combination of these needs would be revealed by the scientific process. These functional categories of housing through health by which

social problems could be grasped and addressed, were well understood by social workers and most other non-Aboriginal stakeholders in the Problem. They served to reassure those wanting to know what was being done about the problem. For the government to say they were conducting research into the social needs of Aboriginal people indicated their willingness to provide whatever was found by objective research to be the needs of Aboriginal people. It dampened the possibility of hearing from Aboriginal people on their own terms.

Ground to stand on.

The ground I came to stand on in resisting the pressure to complete an empiricist research project was a combination of Peter Berger's (1963) social construction of reality ideas and the support of Margaret Stockbridge. Mrs. Stockbridge, a doughty English ex-Communist was the original Head of the School of Social Work. She had been replaced by a younger male Head about the time I entered the program. The new Head came equipped with a prized doctorate in psychology from overseas. His special mission was to lift scholarship in this remote outpost to global standards. Few of us students thought to question or critique such "progress" in our professional training.

There was no student dismay that I am aware of in the replacement of Mrs. Stockbridge. In a scenario that resonates strongly with those painted by both Deegan (1988a) and Smith (1987), it was easy enough for a woman's knowledge to be seen as marginal--as a fill-in to be replaced with progress. Immersed in the Freudian tenor of much of the course, we students "knew" that Mrs. Stockbridge's stringent teaching style and humorless demeanor were to be explained by psychoanalytic theory. Though she was not as pitiable as someone who had never married, she was divorced and childless. Intense student analyses would be conducted on the lawns of the campus, where we escaped after yet another class in which we felt we had been cut to ribbons for what "she" termed our ignorance. We would feel kind and compassionate and like real social workers when we pronounced ourselves tolerant of her "unwillingness to accept [her] feminity [sic], [her] secret desire to castrate men" (Smith, 1987).

I was an accepting participant in these sessions. To remember now is a chilling yet salutary reminder of our human capacity to think anew. When Margaret Stockbridge came forward and offered to supervise my unacceptable project she became my mentor. I came to know this woman's complex history of pioneering and effective social work practice in both England and Australia, prior to creating and initially heading the first school of social work in the state. Not surprising then that Stockbridge should question the take-over of the nature and direction of this school by a much younger man with no field experience in social work, little knowledge of Australian issues and practice and a doctorate in narrowly positivistic psychology. Fortunately for me, part of this questioning was as to the lack of Australian studies in the material being taught. Her own doctoral research work was on the Pilbara developments of mining towns and the way Australian and migrant workers were living in the very different contexts of the newly created company towns. Studying these well-funded and well-equipped constructions located in remote areas adjacent to ore sites, she was aware of how difficult it was to

engineer community cohesion and integration in advance of any knowledge of the actuality of community residents and their interactional patterns. The mining companies had invested large sums of money attempting to achieve this end, yet unconsidered factors beset the smooth operation of company towns. Margaret Stockbridge in her own research had come to value the importance of a community studies approach in understanding the ongoing flow of community life.

Secure in her support I was free to follow up a remembering of Peter Berger's ideas which had been covered in my undergraduate degree. This led me to unearthing his classic, The Social Construction of Reality, written with Luckmann(1966). Haunting the library also connected me with some of the ideas of the early ethnomethodologists. A memorable concept was that of the "cultural dope" (Garfinkel, 1967). This to me perfectly described the prevalent stereotype of Aboriginal people as prisoners and puppets of their "culture" that came through in much research. I came to have a name for what I was struggling against--positivism. In addition to the structural functionalism of American sociology which blended so well with an acultural psychologizing trend in social work, this naming of positivism also covered the Marxism of radical structuralism. This I found equally alienating in any attempt to follow the social work dictum and "start where the client was at." I recall the amount of energy I poured into the theoretical chapter of my proposal. I argued against the usefulness of positivistically-framed research in seeking to develop effective social work services for clearly oppressed groups of people such as Aboriginals:

> The concept of Aboriginality rests on ontological fictions which are rarely made explicit but which are the hidden premise behind much talk of the Aboriginal culture. The key to Aboriginals becoming non-deviant is to become white. In the absence of such a possibility they remain understood in their totality by the master status of Aboriginal . . . This designation tends to release social forces likely to make them into a mirrored image of their socially defined character. Women's Liberation Movements have stressed how far being a woman is a social and not a fixed reality--a social reality dependent on ontological fictions that went unchallenged until recently. More importantly, women's movements show how once the reality is questioned, it is changeable through fighting back techniques on the part of the labeled. It is changeable through meaningful acts of people in interaction. (Crawford, 1976, p. 33-34)

I developed from library research and my emotional connection to the holiday experience of "seeing" Aboriginal people in the Kimberleys a proposal that I would research a grounded community study of the actualities of Aboriginal lives at Looma and their connection to the implementation of the federal policy of community development for such remote Aboriginal communities. Then I drove to Derby to stay again with Ann-Clare and Kim and complete the final social work placement of my degree before moving out to Looma to conduct field work.

My father on helping.

Mum and Dad visited while I was staying with Kim and Ann-Clare in Derby. We had a dinner party for them and it just happened that the guests were part of the Aboriginal Affairs industry and all were white. There were the three academics from Chicago studying the languages at

Mowanjum community; a young Irish couple, the husband of which was about to become the social work director of the Kimberley region, and the Eastern States doctor and his wife, keen to read all they could about Aboriginal culture in their short tour of duty. Good food, good wine, good company--I enjoyed myself. With my father's Parkinson's Disease it was difficult for him to participate but I assumed he had enjoyed the conviviality.

He set me straight the next morning alone over breakfast. The breakfast table looked out across the garden and a dusty road to the Derby Aboriginal Reserve.[77] A tumble of corrugated iron huts strung across the sun-baked mud flats and a shared ablution block for the breeding of hook worm. At this hour, with the sun already hot, a lot of people had left for the attractions of hanging around town. Dad gestured at this view and asked where did we "young experts" get the arrogance to think we were really going to help the situation. He'd sat there the night before listening to the assured analyses of what was to be done. He'd calculated the money from government sources going to support our existence in this site. There were government cars, increasingly with air-conditioning; there was subsidized housing with free air-conditioning; there were wage loadings to compensate for the hardship of the posting; there were tax breaks; and there were travel allowances. Lots of the conversation the night before had been about how not to cheat yourself on any of these entitlements.

Speaking with the authority of having lived his life enacting a belief that all people are of equal worth, he wanted to know how we thought we could get alongside people from a mountain of privilege. I could only say that I'd never thought to see it that way before and remind him I was only an unpaid student. Besides if we weren't here it would only be much worse: We all knew from our studies how bad things used to be for Aboriginals and with that knowledge we would make a difference.

To myself I said, "He doesn't understand. His sickness leaves him grouchy and of course he never had a chance to go to university." His comment however has returned many times to my consciousness in my years as a helping professional.

 Getting the word out for Looma.

Looma is an Aboriginal community of over three hundred people some eighty miles inland from Derby.[78] Its existence was an early success story of Aboriginal initiative in response to the federal policy of supporting Aboriginal self-determination introduced by the Labor Party in 1972. However the leaders of this community because of their experiences with gadeya[79] ways were conscious of the instability of their newfound independence and land base. My offer then to write the story of their community was seen as a way to convey a fuller picture of their needs and intentions to the vaguely understood but clearly powerful government people in Perth and Canberra.

"So they would know and understand," what Looma was about is how Killer,[80] a key community figure explained his invitation to me. They wanted someone to listen and take down *their* story. My introduction to the community was sponsored both by Kim and by Don Gordon, my social work supervisor during my placement with the welfare department at Derby. Don was a chief

submission writer and advocate in assisting the Looma people achieve their land ambitions. A social worker who centered the importance of the value base of social work and the importance of listening to the client, whether individual, group, or community, before taking any action, Don strategised his submissions around the argument that it would be cheaper to pay for the development of a settlement at Looma than to meet the later welfare costs of the community disruption that would accompany a shift to Derby or Fitzroy Crossing.

In setting up how and when I would complete my work, I was invited to stay at the community itself. I had to double-check on this knowing that one of the purposes in setting up Looma had been to have a gadeya-free community. But no, they said I would get lonely over in Camballin[81] by myself, there was an empty State Housing Commission caravan for visitors and I could be company for Joy, the white linguist with the Summer Institute of Linguistics.[82] Two State Housing Commission building supervisors (white males) stayed three nights a week but had their families based in Derby.

Then there was the family who filled that special gadeya role that has evolved to be part of independent Aboriginal communities throughout remote regions. The official title of the husband was Community Development Officer and while the pay came from the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the family was supposedly selected and employed by the community. In this case Jim and his family had accommodated to Aboriginal demands so that he and his wife attended to all the whitefella business like running the store, doing the banking, keeping the bureaucratic paperwork, and letting the community get on with their affairs. Here as elsewhere the borderlands between whitefella and blackfella business were filled with seductive opportunities for power.

The announcement of my research became just such an opportunity. When you are in such a position taking a holiday can be risky. Jim was well aware that if he took leave in Perth, another whitefella would be needed to keep things going. The danger was that the new person could well have a different way of organizing things and might even persuade the community that they were not being well-served by Jim and his wife. I was just a young woman, naive and eager to please: who better to ask to take over while the family headed south for a blow-out.[83] As Jim explained to me, it would help my research because I would have access to all the paper work and act as secretary at all the Community Council meetings.

So, with community agreement, I became the community whitefella as well as officially collecting "The Story of Looma" from the male community leaders. The community was located at the base of what appeared as the Grant Ranges on official maps but were known to community members as the spot where the Blue Tongued Lizard "Looma" during the dreamtime flood, managed to reach and place her babies in safety at the top of the range before collapsing exhausted to drown. Her body is to be seen today as a large rock on the plain while her three children are clearly silhouetted at the top of the hills. The littlest one is facing a different way. "He's like that see. He don't want to see his mother drown see."[84]

The gadeya cluster of buildings was placed between the old camp and the new village. Midway into the building project, many were still camped in bush shelters while others had already moved into modern housing. In my first week an article in "The West Australian" announced that Camballin just down the road had replaced Marble Bar as the hottest place in Australia. This explained why every night I woke and quaffed a container of water straight from the fridge. Being dry heat it allowed lots of activity - the main physical discomfort was dusty winds. The long-term effect of the climate was evidenced in the prevalence of trachoma in this place. For me, with only six weeks to collect as much information as possible about this community, all my energies were focused on listening and making meaning. When I wasn't doing official duties as Looma gadeya or collecting formal information from the men and the few women "workers,"[85] I spent my time with women of the community: I quickly learned these were not just any women.

Learning about skin.

Personal pronouns are not gendered in Looma Kriol. Himfella could well refer to a woman and I needed to be extra careful at checking out just who was being referred to in conversations. I often went off at a tangent in listening to stories because I followed the gender of personal pronouns when they had no such significance. What did have high significance were the eight skin groups into which the community were divided. Actually we are now entering complex territory. There were three language groups at Looma: Walmatjiri, Mangala and Nyginya. The most dominant were the Walmatjiri and Mangala, both migrants to this area from the desert to the south and very strong in their law.[86] Each had eight skin groups and what structuralists would call a sub-section system of classificatory kinship. The Nyginya, indigenous to the territory but weakened by bearing the onslaught of white contact, had four skin groups and a section system but they could work in with the more complex system. Overall it was a moiety system well illustrating Levi-Strauss' (1969/1949) argument for the necessity of difference.

Each individual was born into a specific skin group and a specific set of relationships to all other community members. Because of the taken-for-granted way this organized interactions, even gadeyas were placed within skin groups for ease of community interaction. Many gadeyas could be unaware they were so placed while others could assume a "special" relationship that was not intended-- we find it very hard to operate in a system where *all* relationships are kin-based. Big community concerns at the time of my research were "wrong way" marriages which disrupted the logic of community interaction and the increasing contact with whitefellas in all sorts of fragmentary roles. Polygamy was still common among older men and many of the women continued to be married at a very young age. Young literate women were likely to be both workers in the store or in other gadeya operations and wives of the traditional male elders. Seven babies had been born at Looma since it was established and the aim was to have many more as soon as possible to firm up the community claim to this site.

So I became Napijarri[87] and now had a specific group of women who I called "mother," another set "daughters," then there were my "brothers" towards whom I should observe avoidance, and my "mother's brothers" who should look out for me. There were eight classes of relationships with a gender variation within each and an age grading cutting across so that the grannies--grandparent and grandchildren levels of the skin system--had a specially reciprocal, egalitarian, and supportive relationship which was not the same style as that between parents and children. Allowing for gender, each person played across the range of kinship roles because each was in all those relationships to some in this and neighboring communities.

I took seriously the task of turning a slight insight into the meaning of this system into a solid grasp of its everyday workings. It was, however, like learning a foreign language and very difficult.

Being sensitive to imposing my white power.

I also took seriously the fact that I was a guest of the community and that my task was to try and appreciate Aboriginal terms of reference in this situation. Yet as a white person I had enormous power at my disposal, the taken-for-granted use of which could undermine my very purpose in being here to listen and learn. The different and difficult space I had entered was brought home one night when Eddy, the son of one of the community elders, came to visit his parents on release from jail. His father, a Nyginya man, had been invited out from Derby to take leadership in the community because he had lived a long time in town, worked for Native Welfare, and knew how to talk to government.

The son came to my caravan after dark and asked if I had any "Playboy" magazines--he liked to look at the pictures.[88] With his two hands up resting on the door as he smiled at me in a drunken leer I became very conscious of how there is only one door to a caravan. I had to duck quick under his arm and say I'd see if Joy had anything to read. Then I stayed with her until we were sure Eddy had gone.

The next morning I learned Eddy had been sent back to Derby and was in "big shame" over the fact that he had brought alcohol into the community. The idea of Joy and I being vulnerable faded again. I remember my relief at not needing to mention the "Playboy" incident to any of the community. I could have called for assistance from white authorities to ensure that Eddy didn't harass Joy and I at any time in the future, but this would seem to have undermined the idea of Looma as the self-determining, self-governing community that I was there to study. On the other hand, if I had asked the Looma community to address the issue of Eddy for me, I would have highlighted the demands I could make of the community simply by virtue of being a white person.

Kenneth Liberman (1985) in his ethnomethodological study of the interactional styles of Aboriginal people, of a similar desert culture to the people of Looma, has captured some of the considerations I was sensitive to at this early stage of my fieldwork. Having depicted the overriding Aboriginal concern in everyday interaction with establishing and maintaining congeniality and consensus, Liberman draws attention to the way Aboriginal people view whitefells:

> Many Aboriginal people consider white people to be "hard blokes." . . .   "I know *those* whitefellas, them hard blokes, *bad*" (italics indicate use of Aboriginal language).
>
> While there are "goodfellas" as well as "hard blokes" among Anglo-Australians, one of the "whitefella ways" acknowledged by Aboriginal people is the exercise of an authoritarian attitude . . . In fact "whitefella" is as much a category which defines a variety of social roles and personality characteristics, one of which is having an authoritarian personality, as it is an indication of race. One Sri Lankan community adviser was introduced by an Aboriginal to his fellows as "whitefella new one." (p. 135)

While at that time, I would not have considered myself as an authoritarian, authoritative person, I had heard enough Aboriginal stories of hard whitefellas, to know there was no easy division of whites into hard and goodfellas by gender. Often the "Missus Boss[89]" would be figured as the hard one on the grounds that the Boss had been good enough about fitting in with Aboriginal ways until her arrival. I had also witnessed gentle, supporting white nurses display and impose startling chauvenism in their interactions with Aboriginal people. I strived to be as conscious as possible about the pre-judgements with which I entered this field and to remain open and accessible as a listener to Aboriginal and other perspectives on this story of Looma (Gadamer, 1984).

I now contrast my sensitivity to not imposing my authority as a white person to Bateson's (1958)'s frank admission in Naven to having his cookboy kill the pig of a man who brought back pollutants of modernity from his time away as a laborer. He declares himself certain that there would be no difficulty in having the District Officer at the subsequent court case see the facts in their proper light. Some fifty years later, I had taken on board both the anthropological and social work lessons about being careful not to unthinkingly inflict your own definition of the situation on others. In this particular case, I was thankful that community processes of control operated to free me from insisting on my own right to protection from the behavior of a drunken man. I was still to learn that such intentions of not being an authoritarian whitefella are not always easily operationalized.

Nancy Nangala.

A Walmatjiri woman of some seventy years, she first knew gadeyas as a young girl when she was trained to be a stockwoman. The area was sheep and cattle country in gadeya eyes and she learned along with the rest of the Liveringa mob how to work for keep. In the early days they didn't always realize they were also working for the chance to stay on their land. Now with the 1968 Equal Pay Award and the subsequent displacement of mobs from stations, Nancy was a woman closely involved in the political fight to ensure a place for their mob to stay free of harassment of station managers. Childless,[90] like many women of her generation, she was the first wife of a village elder but lived an independent life style. She was a key leader of the women's ceremonies and a strong advocate with Killer, of getting the word out about Looma so they could circumvent the bad intentions of local whites. Pensions and many other government benefits had recently arrived and this helped convince Nancy and others of the basic good will of the government. She felt they would support what was necessary for the people if only they understood.

Fishing.

Her relationship with me was part of this political process and she became my mother, taking responsibility for teaching me what I needed to know and protecting me from the consequences of my actions. I had a mustard yellow, Datsun sedan and this highly valued commodity became the vehicle for many of my lessons. We went fishing--off by ourselves, all women--as many as could fit in. Stopping at a creek along the way to catch cherrabun[91] by holding bad meat between our toes in the water. These were later used to catch catfish in the Liveringa Billabong. An abiding memory for me is of Nancy, with her mane of pindan stained white hair thrown back, laughing with all her bulk as she pulled another fish out of the water. If there was enough we might take some home but usually we cooked and ate them right then. On the way home we would always load up with firewood. Through it all would be a constant stream of stories and lessons about Looma life and a constant reciprocal questioning about life in Perth.

Swimming.

Because it was so hot and the Fitzroy River was not far away I liked to go swimming towards sundown. Nancy and most older women were not interested in swimming. She was Walmatjiri, born in the desert where they didn't know rivers and had lots of stories about the dangers of the water serpent, who was known to live in the river. Despite this, swimming excursions too were woven into the fabric of Looma life. Again not just anyone came but this time it was my sisters and children to whom I was seen to have some obligation. This would all be organized for me and try as I might I only ever achieved a beginner's skill at understanding all the complexities of these relationships. The tangibles were easy enough--teach people to swim, to drive a car and any of the other gadeya skills that were deemed of interest and to swap stories about our lives. I was immersed in a world in which local Aboriginal definitions of appropriate interactional patterns shaped my lived experiences in ways of which I was only peripherally aware. I actively sought to sharpen my awareness of these processes without impinging on them.

Leaving.

I stayed until nearly Christmas and though the Community Development Officer and his wife still weren't back from Perth, I had to leave then to get my car back south before the wet closed the road and to get back home for Christmas. Fieldwork had been a joy and I had learned such a lot. Now to make others understand seemed to be the hill to climb.

Solomon Spinifex, second-hand clothes, and my sensitivity.

Cleaning up the caravan on the last day and packing my car for the almost two thousand mile trip home, some of my sisters came to help. First all the field notes and tapes were carefully packed in

boxes and then came the clothes, a sorry collection as we realized the pindan stains that impregnated everything would never come out. It seemed little enough to give them to people who lived permanently where everything was pindan stained. But then word got out and soon the caravan was surrounded by women wanting clothes. I kept giving to all who asked. I clearly remember my high heel cork wedge shoes going and feeling slightly guilty because I had never been able to wear them in this stony rough place.

That was as nothing to what I felt when Solomon Spinifex, Killer's son-in-law, came and shouted at me. I was just like all the gadeyas turning Aboriginal people into rubbish people, into beggar people with our handouts. The shame: I could have wept but I had to stand up and be humble. When Solomon finished his tirade I had to say he was right and apologize.

I had come to get knowledge and now that I had finished and packed it up in my boxes, I was acting as if I didn't know at all the value of relationships in this context. I was acting as if my value of treating all the same took precedence over Looma values of kin-based interaction. I was showing that I knew but didn't understand. I'd seen but I hadn't heard. I was doing all this naturally, without conciousness or reflexivity--it was a display of the arrogance of power. It would have been so easy for me to ask one of my sisters to tell me to whom I should give clothes or to leave them for Nancy to distribute but such an idea never occurred to me. With one action I had demonstrated just what difference people knowing about Looma could make.

In anthropology Brady (1993) highlights that one of the consequences of the interpretive turn in conceptualizing ethnographically is"consciousness of what we are thinking *with* as well as what we are thinking *about*"(p. 254). In feminism, the relationship between the knower and the known have been long identified as central to the nature of knowing (Reinharz, 1992, Smith, 1987). Going right back to the early years of both pragmatists and feminists, an emphasis has been placed on freeing ourselves from epistemologically centered ways of knowing (West, 1989). "Starting where the client is at" is, to me, a social work phrase that stresses the importance of trying to tune in with client realities rather than accepting that the right method will lead us to relevant knowledge about our clients.

Reflecting on this clothes incident, it seems to me that social work has stressed this relationship between what we are thinking about and what we are thinking with. The social work emphasis on the importance of learning by doing, can be traced in lessons about social work being a value-based profession and about the chief instrument of the social worker being the reflective self. It can be traced too in the long-standing incorporation of practicums into social work courses, where the principle of supervision as a mentoring process is to encourage the development of reflexivity in each practitioner. Jane Addams gives many examples of such learning by doing and learning from mistakes in her reflections on practice. There is the cameo on the clerk dying after she refused him charity because she was trying out the effectiveness of the rules of scientific philanthropy. From this she learned that "life cannot be administered by definite rules and regulations" (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 97). Rather, the practitioner needs to be immersed in the context within which the client operates and

aware of their habits of daily life rather than try to judge one isolated request for assistance from abstract rules.

It seems, however, recalling current debates on empiricism in social work that the lesson is resistant to being textualized but needs to be experientially learned. Such awareness can't be made to happen and worse, if you have enough power, can be impossible to raise to awareness. It is the existential lesson at the heart of social work that is in this era highly susceptible to the dominance of epistemologically-centered ways of knowing.

<u>Dealing with Jim's anger.</u>

There was anger of a different sort to that of Solomon's to be dealt with a few months later when I was appointed social worker to the state welfare office in Broome, some two hundred miles from Looma. When Jim and his family had returned some time after Christmas they found a few changes instituted in their absence. Like many people with a long term involvement in Aboriginal Affairs, he and his wife did not believe that Aboriginals were capable of learning or changing in line with policy expectations. They heard most government talk about development and self-determination as just that. The fact that people of such views were the ones at the everyday grounded actuality level interpreting and implementing policy was a core of the research question framing my Looma research. Federal policies of self-determination for remote Aboriginal communities seemed to have little chance of success when those who implemented it at the local level and interpreted its meaning to the Aboriginal community were not at all convinced of nor committed to the premises driving the community development program.

With my knowledge of the local politics likely to be operating in remote Aboriginal communities between gadeya residents, Aboriginal residents, and representatives of social planning intentions, I perhaps had no right to feel personally assaulted when I learned on arrival in Broome, through the Kimberley gossip machine, that I had stolen $700 from the Looma store building fund when I left.

What better way for a returning community whitefella to re-establish his authority and negate any changes that occurred during his absence. What was I to do with this knowledge beyond despairing that people could believe such a thing of me. Through the Looma State Housing builder's wife, who also worked for welfare, I sent a message that I would be coming out to visit Nancy and go fishing the next weekend. To give Jim credit he had not calculated on my returning to a place so close and he had consigned me to that void where all students of Aboriginality he had met over the years disappeared, while people with common-sense like himself stayed forever.

Within a week the message came back. Jim had announced to a community meeting that he had found the missing $700. It had slipped behind a panel in the caravan and his wife found it while cleaning.

<u>Dinner with Dr. Miller.</u>

A few months later I was established in Broome. Only a short distance from Looma it was a completely different cultural world. More Aboriginals lived in Broome than in Looma but the town was dominated by white power and institutions. It had not taken me long to become aware of my low class status as one who worked with Aborigines. A dinner invitation from the father of a university friend was an attractive offer in this setting. He was a well-known scientific expert held in high regard locally for his pioneering research in agriculture. How pleasant to be taken away from the grim realities of my workaday world to a silver service dinner in the tourist hotel overlooking Roebuck Bay. How politic to display my powerful connections to local bigots.

Dr. Miller had a tale he knew would amuse me because it was about Looma. He'd gone there for some consultancy work on land development. He was surprised at how traditional and primitive they were. It seemed there were some kind of women's ceremonies going on. As he was walking down to inspect a soil test, a large old women had rushed at him, shaking a stick and jabbering gibberish. Musing and reflecting, Dr. Miller finished with, "The funny thing is, I think she really expected me to take her seriously." I knew it was Nancy he was describing.

I think up until that point, Dr. Miller and the many like him I knew, academic and cultured, inhabited a high ground that enabled them to do what was right once they were aware of the situation. It was the petty bureaucrats and local bigotry and selfishness that got in the way of effective action:

> I think that up to this time I was still fitted in the sense . . . that somewhere in Church or State are a body of authoritative people who will put things to rights as soon as they really know what is wrong. (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 49)

<u>The finding out what's to be done never really stops.</u>

Though it took me some ten years it was this lesson on reflecting on the voices of the locals that day with Solomon that took me on from wanting simply to help Aborigines. First it was struggling to paint my own picture of the complexities of Aboriginal realities as I wrote up my research project while living in Broome. The thesis was called "The Story of Looma." My mentor had become Dr. Stockbridge and she saw the thesis through the marking process in the last days of her terminal cancer. The thesis failed with its presumption of being the definitive tale of Looma but succeeded in being a social work thesis of 1976 that had story in the title at all. Being a social work thesis it had little interest for anthropologists and being about Aboriginals of little interest to social workers. Written in the days before the subjects of my research generally read, I was conscious as I finished at Looma of my engagement in community issues as they had been conveyed and my sense of needing to reciprocate for all the hospitality that had been extended.

Seeking help in social control.

The most problematic issue for the leaders of Looma was controlling the behavior of those residents who wanted to bring alcohol into the community. Looma had been set up to provide a place of sanctuary and safety away from all the gadeya troubles of places like Fitzroy Crossing. There were several elders very strong in traditional Aboriginal law whose powers were known and revered throughout the Kimberley (Crawford, 1976). These powers, however, were not such that they could be invoked immediately to control the behavior of drunks. The community had collectively decided that the best way around this problem was for them to select two men to act as community policemen, gadeya-way. A government police aide scheme had recently started in Kimberley police stations and the Looma people felt if their nominees could be given "medals from the Queen" under this scheme, they would then have the authority to control drunks.

One night during my stay there had been a particularly troublesome drunk. Some of the community leaders asked me to drive one of the nominated policemen, Manko, into Derby to enlist the aid of the police there. We drove safely there, with Manko telling me all the way where to watch out for cattle. When we entered the Derby police station, a young man in uniform was sprawled on a chair in the main area reading. He jumped up and retreated behind the heavy counter saying something about a foul smell in the air. I realized then how he saw us--a black "bush" man and white woman coming into a police station late at night. Manko tried to explain the reason for our visit but the policeman couldn't follow. The policeman wanted to know the name of the man we were complaining about. Manko didn't know. Whitefella bureaucratic names are known to their holders but others use skin names in talking about an individual. Manko not knowing the name served to confirm the policeman's knowledge that there were no depths to the stupidity of Aboriginal people. When I tried to explain why Manko didn't know the policeman cut me short saying that a man was entitled to drink booze in the privacy of his own home and there was no way in the world he was coming out to Looma at such an hour for such a minor matter.

Dispirited, Manko and I called at the home of the regional director of Aboriginal Affairs. Here we were welcomed politely and promises made that the matter would be looked into. Over time it became apparent to me that this issue of pressing concern to the Looma people did not actually fit the briefs of the many committees that sat to consider the future planning needs of Looma. Like the Looma community, I imagined that there were a few insensitive policemen stationed at Derby at this time but if the supervisors in Perth could understand the issue, dialogue and resolution of the problem might come about. So on leaving Looma, I undertook to make a visit on their behalf to police headquarters in Perth.

At my appointment with a senior police officer I was ushered into his high level office overlooking the Swan River. He made much of being flattered to have such an attractive young woman with the time to speak to him. Approving of my impulse to "do-good," he nevertheless knew all the fellows at Looma that I seemed to think of so highly. Like most senior officers, he had served

his time in the Kimberley. "Con artists, nothing but con artists all these Aboriginals." They had made the most of an opportunity to bend the ear of a gullible young girl. He could tell me a thing or two about what they were really like but he wouldn't because he had too much respect for my womanhood. There could not be police authority located in Aboriginal communities because Aboriginal police aides must at all times work under the control of a full member of the Western Australian police force and be attached to a police station.

On this salutary lesson on the difficulties of putting thought into action, knowing into doing, I finished my formal involvement with the Looma community. I kept in touch over the years from Broome as people visited me there or I returned to Looma occasionally. Now more than twenty years since my first visit there are community members who do read my thesis. As I become aware of this I realize how little thought I gave to such changes happening so quickly. Despite the thesis being a critique of positivism, I did have a very positivistic idea of the Looma I captured during my brief stay being in some sense a timeless Looma.

At the same time, writing that thesis was when I first became acutely aware of social constructionism as a theoretical framing of "reality" and Peter Berger (1963) was my hero. His writings offered a way for me to understand and make sense of the confusion of logics and practices I found myself entangled in, both with regard to my fieldwork at Looma and now with regard to practicing as a social worker in Broome. After being in Broome a short while I took on the task of tutoring some Aboriginal governmental workers for a course they were completing. Berger's Invitation to Sociology (1963) seemed appropriate preparatory reading. One of the students, married to a white businessman, took the book to the golf club with the sentence "What is doesn't have to be" underlined in red. That's when "they"[92] knew for sure that welfare were "commies" and that's when I found out that thought and action, theory and practice, writing and doing, might not be easily and effectively connected but are not so safely separate as much of my life till then had led me to believe.[93]

This experience of being labeled a Marxist when I knew I wasn't in a small country town full of anti-intellectuals, forced/allowed me to struggle to the stage where I could begin to comprehend what Dorothy Smith has expressed: "The only way of knowing a socially constructed world is knowing it from within" (1974, p. 11).

I could even begin to hear what Aboriginal social worker, Lilla Watson was saying:

If you've come to help me, you're wasting your time.

But if you've come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. (quoted in Wadsworth 1992, p. 11)

In the next chapter I reflect on some of the ways in which I continued to learn how to work with people in my five years practicing social work as a resident of Broome.

Notes

CHAPTER SIX

Learning in Broome(people) make their own history, but not . . . under conditions they have chosen
for themselves; rather on terms immediately existing, given and
handed down to them. (Marx, 1852/1983, p. 287)

When I reported back for duty to the welfare department in March 1976, I was asked whether I would be willing to serve in the country: in fact, would I be willing to work in the Kimberley? They had a vacancy at the Broome office and were keen to fill it with a female social worker--the first permanent posting of a social worker to the town. The dormitory at Beagle Bay Mission had ceased operation in December 1975 and there was an identified need for professionalism in the processes of child protection.

Broome was at this time still a relatively well-kept secret from most Western Australians. I had been there on my way to and from Derby. The blue, blue waters of Roebuck Bay, the beaches, the fishing, the open-air Chinese restaurant run by the irascible Mrs. Kim, and the weather so much milder than the rest of the Kimberley. I had not learned enough public service behavior to be guarded in my response but smiled my eagerness to accept this appointment.

Within weeks I was on my way to Broome after an intensive training course in all aspects of the department's workings in Perth. Unlike city officers, country officers were required to cover the full gamut of departmental services with only limited access to back-up from specialists. What I did not receive in this training course was any historical understanding of the nature of Broome and the issues involved in delivering welfare services there. The closure of Beagle Bay Mission dormitories came after more than seventy years of collaboration between church and state to gather children of mixed blood from throughout the Kimberley and provide them with an upbringing that would equip them for a life better than that of "natives." This policy was now changed with the creation of the Community Welfare Department to ensure that all received the same entitlement to welfare services in the interests of equity. How equity might in fact require different treatment was not considered in the orientation program. It was expected that I would apply the services of the department in Broome in the same way as anywhere else. The politics, history, and emotions involved in implementing governmental policy was something I was left to find out for myself.

Beginnings in Broome

Arriving

I walked off the plane after a three hour flight from Perth and gasped: I was walking in a warm, wet blanket of air. Broome, just a day's drive from the desert climate of Looma was reaching the end of the wet season and lush jungle green was everywhere. Mangoes, poincianas, palms, giant gums, bloated boabs, and blazing bougainvilleas broke up the brilliant tropic light that made the otherwise tired and dusty streets a pleasure to drive along. The green even extended like fingers into

the turquoise water of the bay. We had flown in low over the mud flats and seen the pattern of the mangrove tentacles and now from the ground they added another dimension to the greens of Broome. Such a contrast to the desert landscape that lay between here and the more fertile south-west of the state.

My fellow welfare officer, Michael Dwyer, three years later to become my husband, was an old Kimberley hand who had already served some ten years in remote areas of the state. That first day, he took me for a cup of tea at the Catholic presbytery. Raised as a Catholic, he was quite at ease in this to me unfamiliar setting. Welfare and the Catholic church were the sites of helping in the town. Between them these places offered the public points of access for people seeking help with personal troubles. An office of Social Security, a federal department, had just opened in town but as yet had not become a key player in the local welfare industry. It made good sense then that Michael should bring me to meet Father Mac. It struck me at the time how little I had ever had to do with Catholics in all my then twenty-seven years. I had always imagined priests and nuns to be other-worldly beings who had attained that state of godliness for which Presbyterians strive.

At the presbytery was a priest from an outback mission waiting for my plane to return from Kununurra and take him down to Perth and back home to Melbourne. Over the raucous conversation taking place between the men, I pieced together that Father McGinty was being transferred to a city parish where he could seek help for his alcoholism. Father McGinty was pleased about this, he said, because it would give him a chance to attend racing meets, betting on horses being his other favorite activity. I learned that this priest had been a pioneer developer of one of the most remote Catholic missions in the state, but his special skills seemed to lie in building, stock work, road making and not the spiritual areas I would expect. This was my first glimmerings of understanding the different way the Catholic religion integrated with everyday life compared with the Presbyterian religion I knew so peripherally.

Father Mac, the Broome parish priest, I quickly learned was called the Red Vicar--a play on his red hair and the nature of his politics. These last were in contrast to those of the Bishop of the Kimberley, Bishop Jobst, who I only ever met rarely in all my years in this small town, though he lived there. A second world war veteran from the German Army, this austere and ascetic man did not publicly argue the welfare needs of Aboriginal people as Father Mac did, but oversaw the running of the regional Catholic bureaucracy which was much bigger and more powerful than anything I had imagined. In the Looma area the message of Christianity was spread by non-conformist, fundamentalist Protestant sects, and Aboriginal people themselves. Here in contrast I was quickly aware of local mission activities being part of the global strength of Catholicism. All the priests in the region were Pallottines, originally a German order, but the younger ones were Australian. Father Francis, out at Beagle Bay and in his eighties, was German and had spent the second world war interned out at Balgo Hills Mission, where his nationality was unlikely to incite locals to high chauvinism.

Then there were the brothers. Again many of the older members were German and the younger Australian. In this very hierarchically-ordered set of relationships, the nuns were separate but subsidiary, operating out of their own convent in town, except for one, Sr. Michael, who operated a children's home independently of the convent with funding from the welfare department and backing from the town community. The nuns tended to be a mix of Irish and Irish-Australians and artful at using their subsidiary position to great effect in their work of helping and being with people. The lowest members of the hierarchy were the lay missionaries, mainly young people, recruited by the Bishop in the Eastern States from church volunteers, wishing to demonstrate their commitment to God by spending at least a year in the uncomfortable conditions of the Kimberley helping Aboriginal people. There were also paid lay-teachers required to staff the schools who were placed uneasily both inside and outside the church system, especially as the difficulty in attracting qualified teachers meant many were not Catholic.

Education was the area in which most church staff were involved and Broome already had a state-wide reputation for its success in graduating Aboriginal students able to compete in an open economy. One indication of their success lies in the fact that Jimmy Chi (1991), whose text Bran Nue Dae will be examined in Chapter Nine, was the first Aboriginal student to be accepted into the University of Western Australia in the mid-sixties. The Pallottine's success was accentuated by the fact that in the rest of the state Aboriginal students did not have a right to education in state schools until 1948 (Haebich, 1988).

In 1976, children from all over the Kimberley were completing their post-primary education at the Ngulungu High School in Broome, funded with money from the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and administered by the Catholic church. In contrast to public service officers, church workers tended to live long-term in the Kimberley and the local knowledge of the church bureaucracy and the nature of collaborative relationships within it meant that they were a powerful force. The mission lands the church controlled was another factor in this strength. Well over a thousand Aboriginal people lived on this land which had been granted to the Church by the State government for the welfare of Aboriginal people. These lands were to become an issue of contestation as the move for Aboriginal land rights developed locally throughout the seventies.

This early cup of tea then proved a learning experience for me on one dimension of the nature of this very different world I had entered. My official location was just down the road at the Community Welfare office. This tired, government building was of the same size and architecture as a three bedroomed State House in town. The three bedrooms were offices and conversions had been made to allow for male and female washrooms, a file room and a waiting area where Mussie, the office worker sat. Mussie, also known as Colleen Masuda[94] had just finished school, and together with Bev, our female Aboriginal welfare aide, formed our "local" contingent of office staff. In addition there were five female homemakers[95] --two white and three Aboriginal--part-time workers who worked an average of fifteen hours per week.

The office had seen many years service as the Native Welfare Department before the erection of a sign in 1972 evidenced that this was now the Community Welfare Department, able to address the welfare needs of all the people of town. White residents, however, preferred to access welfare services by telephone or through an intermediary such as the priest because of the stigma that was felt to attach to publicly entering the "welfare" that was still seen to be for "natives."

When I think back to the nature of the Broome economy at this time, it is striking how much of the town's infrastructure was dependent on the activities of providing services to Aboriginal people. Broome had been declared a town site in 1883 and developed as the port for a lucrative pearling industry. After an early use of Aboriginal labor for shallow diving, indentured teams had been brought in to crew the deep sea diving fleets. Japanese, Koepangers, Phillipinos, Malays and Chinese and their descendants still lived in Broome, but the heyday of pearling had passed. A cultured pearl industry survived but did not employ a lot of people locally nor use much local resourcing. There was a seasonal meatworks which brought a lot of temporary residents to the town's caravan parks and boosted the economy. Tourism was important to the town, but compared with later developments still in its infancy. The black-top road still wasn't through from the south so there were relatively few tourists or rich people in town as yet.

Many people worked in the town hospital, the Community Health Department, the schools, and for the local council. The 1981 census recorded 3,666 residents for Broome, up from the 1976 figure of 2,920 residents (source: Australian Bureau of Statistics). I know that in 1976 the non-white population was 51% of the total because Michael and Father Mac often used to comment that when universal suffrage was introduced for local government elections, Broome non-white locals would have the numbers to elect a representative local council rather than the white male businessmen who had always run the town. When universal suffrage was introduced in 1985 by the Labor state government, the non-white proportion of the total population had fallen below fifty percent. Several local Aboriginal people are now on the council but do not have the numbers to control policy directions. Yet the intricacies of race relations in town are such that I doubt voting would resolve into a split between non-white and white voters. Some of these intricacies I became aware of in my first weeks of duty as a Broome "welfare".

Kennedy Hill Reserve

With my government issue Holden station wagon that came with the position, one of my first tasks was to drive to Kennedy Hill Reserve and deliver a message to a resident there. This place, otherwise known as Indian Territory, was straight along the road from the welfare office, past the police station and as the road curved down to Chinatown, was what one came to if kept going straight on the gravel road up over the hill. Cresting the hill, there lay the Reserve. Clustered around an ablution block were some ten Type Three Native Welfare huts ("anti-savage, anti-ravage" was the unofficial departmental term for them). The ablution block was necessary because there was no running water or toilets in the huts. Relieved by some lush tropical trees, the wooden frame three-

room huts of corrugated iron were nonetheless a depressing, squalid sight. Accumulated rubbish, deep sand, and an absence of paths, fences or grass made for an unattractive living environment. My own government issue ramshackle duplex, that had so recently shocked me, now looked very homey in contrast.

The Reserve had been built in 1958 on a prime location left for development by the Native Welfare Department after a cyclone and white ants had destroyed the substantial homes built along this glorious view of Roebuck Bay in the early years of settlement. Some two hundred people were living here at this time. The overflow from the houses were left to cope in makeshift shelters. On my arrival, asking for the resident I sought, I immediately became involved. People called out my name, saying, "The new welfare is here, what are you going to do for us--you're welfare aren't you? Well how you going to help me? I got a lot of problems. Let me tell you about them. Shit, not another one. How long you staying? Do you want a beer? I got plenty. Yes, missus, she's lives over there but she's not here now, she's gone up to Lombadina for a holiday. Don't worry about them fellas, they're drunk. I need a ration order, true as God. I got no rice for the children. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, it's God's truth I speak."[96]

It turned out, that apart from the car giving away my identity as welfare, everyone knew my name because there had been an article that week in the News of the North section of The West Australian newspaper. Captioned "First social worker for Broome" it had a photo of me taken in Perth during my orientation and described the difference it was going to make for the welfare of Aborigines now that a professional social worker had been appointed to the town. What I was struck by was the fact that all these Aboriginal people, living in conditions worse than those of Looma, were educated and read the daily newspaper. In Looma, only very few of the young adults were literate and even fewer literate enough to read a daily newspaper. Here most of the adults were educated by the Catholics to compete on an open employment market. Unfortunately, in Broome the employment market was neither extensive nor open. What little work there was tended not to go to poor Aboriginals living in reserve conditions. Those who thought education might be the answer to the Aboriginal problem would obviously have to think twice after a visit to the Hill Reserve.

A well-trod path snaked its way down the side of the Hill to the Roebuck Bay Hotel and there were those residents who confided to me that all their troubles were the result of drinkers bringing grog onto the reserve. Another resident wanted to know what I was going to do about fixing the septic tank system. It was broken yet again and three children had been admitted to hospital that morning sick with gastro, which the Community Health nurse was sure came from the leaking sewage. And what was I going to do about this old lady? She needed a proper place to stay. She was too old to be camping rough like this anymore. I ended up backing into the car promising to do what I could to follow up the issues raised. On return to the office, I became aware for the first time that one of our welfare duties was to oversee the conditions on the three state government Aboriginal reserves in town, inherited by Community Welfare from Native Welfare. Because of the politics involved between federal and state bureaucracies over funding Aboriginal welfare, I could incur any expense to keep the

toilets maintained by town plumbers, but there was no money at all for improvements of any sort on present facilities.

I could be in the double-bind position of taking action against a family neglecting the material needs of their children by living on Hill Reserve, while at the same time I was the agent of the landlord responsible for those substandard conditions. Since a crucial aspect of my appointment here had been attending to issues of child protection, this expectation of role diversity was challenging.

The Town Caravan Park

I hardly had time to digest the fact that my social work duties included knowing what a septic tank was and keeping it working when a phone-call came from the police station, asking for my help in talking a distressed teenage girl down from a roof. This seemed a straight-forward task and so it proved. It took me to another part of town--the caravan park where the meatworkers and other transient workers stayed. Also sharing a common ablution block, this park was not luxurious, but very different from the conditions of Hill Reserve: grassed areas, plentiful lidded rubbish bins, ordered and bordered sites. This could have been in Perth and the case itself was of a sort bounded and contained: all that was expected of me was to talk the young girl off the roof and join with the family in some sort of resolution to the girl's distress. The family was actually very partly Aboriginal, but this wasn't noteworthy to the police who had called me in. Rather, they had heard a Broome rumor[97] that the girl in distress was a sister of a famous television model and were impressed that their duties took them this close to fame. This is when I first learned how the borderlands between black and white in Broome were not rigidly defined, but how the definitions played out on any particular occasion could have very real consequences for the people involved. A few months later, I saw these same policemen treated two blond models from Perth with utter disdain and contempt, because they were staying with their cousin on the Hill Reserve.

Visiting the New Housing Area

Another early task was to respond to a phoned complaint of child abuse. A young child was being left alone after school while both parents worked. They were English migrants, tradespeople in a government service which welfare staff regularly used. I called at dusk on their new brick house in the small privately developed area of town where home ownership was the norm. At this time in Broome most residents lived in government-built and owned housing. Administered by the State Housing Department, state housing was rented to eligible residents, while most government workers lived in Government Employee Housing Authority accommodation. The two types of housing were intermingled throughout town and, while the G.E.H.A. housing came with extras like air-conditioning, neither was of a luxurious nature. In this context there was some commitment and status involved in actually building and owning your own home. Both parents were working long hours to meet the mortgage payments. When I introduced myself and explained why I had come, the husband, quite a

short man with a thick northern English accent, folded his arms very aggressively across his chest and leaning towards me, said, "Look around you. You don't see any niggers here do you? You've no business coming here. There's the door. I want you out now!"

I can still feel the "who does he think he is talking to me like that?" rushing through me. I came back very authoritatively that investigating complaints of child abuse was indeed my business and if they didn't want to cooperate, I would need to pursue the investigation in another way. Then the wife intervened to calm her husband and we were able to talk about the care of their daughter.

This was just one of many incidents by which I came to appreciate my local status in being seen as one whose mandate was to help Aboriginal people. I was a university graduate and a public servant. This couple were blue collar government workers--well-paid but not of public servant standing. Yet in their eyes, I could not possibly have any authority by which to come into their lives. They were just one of the many whites in town unaware that the Native Welfare office had been the Community Welfare office for more than three years.

I was also seen as the junior officer in town because, until the amalgamation, the female welfare officer was always the subordinate of the male district officer. Now that was not the case but Broome was not a context in which to announce this with vigor. Many times mothers brought daughters to see me saying this was their last chance to sort it out quietly: if we couldn't come to a solution, next time it would be straight to see Mr. Dwyer, the big boss. That could have been another factor in the English migrants refusing to take my visit seriously at first: not only had Native Welfare come to their home, but the women officer at that.

Out to Beagle Bay Mission

I took the four-wheel-drive vehicle and drove the eighty miles of corrugated road to Beagle Bay. It took me hours because I had no idea how to drive on gravel and dirt corrugations. I was also a bit cautious about driving on my own on such a lonely road. When I got there utterly exhausted I was grateful for the mission hospitality. Recovering, I went about the village to speak to a number of people on welfare issues and found the letters posted advising of my visit had not been delivered to the people concerned. Mission staff opened incoming mail and decided how to deal with it. I hardly knew how to go back to the administration office to collect my things at the end of the day and leave. The stories and complaints I heard were so thorough-going and against basic principles of Australian law. I had no idea how to begin to process them. Their main thrust was that in this total institution the residents were not deemed to have the rights of citizenship (Goffman, 1961).

Driving back to Broome, I was totally absorbed in thinking how I would go about being a professional social worker in this situation and wanting to talk my dilemma through with someone more knowledgeable. Arriving in town in little over an hour, I realized that I now knew how to drive over corrugations--drive fast. I considered going to the police to complain of the tampering with Her Majesty's Mail but it was soon pointed out that this might be impolitic behavior.

Settling In

This kaleidoscope of images, assaulting my senses and highlighting my sense of powerlessness in a situation I did not fully understand, continued for quite some time. Slowly, out of my everyday immersion in the complexities of the place, I came to develop and order a picture of the community as it related to my actions in the world. I returned to ideas from both anthropological fieldwork methods and community work practice, of taking the time to develop a clear picture of the whole before developing a plan of action. This involved just talking to people and addressing everyday matters of concern, while mapping a community profile, very much in the style of Dorothy Smith's (1987) critical ethnography. It involved spending as much time out of the office as possible and seeking to form relationships with people in as many contexts as possible. Particularly, I spent time on the three reserves in town--Kennedy Hill, One Mile and Anne St. One Mile Reserve was the oldest reserve in town and dated from the days when there was a curfew on Aboriginals coming into town after dark. The least resourced site it was one mile out on the main road into town. It mainly served as a camping ground for the more traditionally-oriented desert Aboriginals, many transients. Anne St. was the newest reserve in town, predominately occupied by Aboriginals from the Dampierland Peninsula--Beagle Bay Mission, Lombardina Mission, and the One Arm Point Bardi community[98]. Residents here frequently had employment and sometimes cars. It was the most settled and stable of all three reserves.

As I spent time with people, I became embroiled in a seemingly endless stream of personal troubles. There women battered and bruised by drunken partners and police who said there was nothing to be done because there was no evidence. The women's black eyes and swollen heads, the policemen told me repeatedly did not count for anything in laying charges because the woman would always change her story in court. There were drunken parents abandoning their children to self-care; families of children who never made it to school but were frequently in hospital with diseases of neglect; women who on discharge from hospital went straight to the Roebuck Bay pub with their new babies and teenage boys in police custody bent on committing suicide. An old leper through her drunken tears told me she didn't want me to look at her like she was just a poor native: she wanted me to know she was an educated woman who had been a settled wife to the best of the pearl divers until leprosy caused her confinement and the loss of her children.

As I listened to these stories, they played against the story of one of my predecessors in welfare. A young, university graduate, she had arrived in Broome full of hope at being able to help. Sitting in her office listening to yet another story of despair, she had excused herself quietly and gone out the back to just weep. Shortly after she boarded the plane back to Perth and the known. I knew I did not want to end like that, but many times it was hard to imagine other endings. Head office was a long way away. I kept thinking back to what I had been taught, but so many times these teachings didn't seem to cover the situation I was in.

Gradually, as I formed relationships with others around me, I came to realize the importance of intersubjectivity and dialogue in making sense of my action possibilities in this community. Collaboration with others involved in the welfare industry, both locally and at the state level, became vital.

Help at Helping

Kimberley welfare conferences.

Broome welfare staff helped orient me to the history and current actualities of the town with regard to welfare activities. However, it wasn't until I met the regional staff that I became aware of how many issues the whole region shared in common and how, in many ways, Broome was the most privileged site. Tents, tanks, and toilets were constant topics at our conferences, where the struggle was to address survival needs like clean water and shelter in the wet.

I became aware of some of the political realities we were operating within. The conservative State Liberal-Country party was in power again, replacing the Labor government that had initiated some improvements in Aboriginal welfare, such as the grant of land and housing project for the Looma people. The member for Kimberley, Alan Ridge, was also the Minister for Community Welfare. The Kimberley was a gerrymandered seat in a state notorious for electoral boundaries that upheld the privileges of Western Australian farmers and pastoralists (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989). Awareness was growing, however, among all stakeholders in the situation, that if the Aboriginal residents of the region took up their newly won rights to register and vote, they had the numbers to decide the outcome for this seat at the next election. Ridge then had a vested interest in overseeing the workings of welfare to see that "unreal" and political expectations were not engendered in the Aboriginal populace. His own words indicate how little inclined he was to engage with Aboriginal people to extend the base of his political support. They are taken from a letter he wrote to a constituent and later used as evidence in the Court of Disputed Returns after the 1977 State election:

> It was a degrading experience to have to campaign amongst the Aborigines to the extent I did and it offended me to know that whilst I was concentrating my efforts on these simple people . . . I was neglecting a more informed and intelligent section of the community . . . It is indeed a travesty of justice that a comparative handful of such ill-informed people who can be used like pawns in a game by unscrupulous opportunists, should have the right or power to determine the future of our State. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 93)

This quote evokes the hegemonic climate of white Kimberley opinion within which we "welfares" were to implement our mandate to attend to the welfare needs of all Western Australians. The unscrupulous opportunists he refers to covered all us welfares who helped Aboriginal people enroll for their democratic right to vote and in other ways disrupted the status quo. White residents of the Kimberley were disquieted by changes such as the extension of social security rights to Aboriginal people, the introduction to the area of the Aboriginal Legal Service which defended Aboriginal people in court and the granting of relatively generous federal educational subsidies to all Aboriginal

secondary students. In looking for the agents of all these changes, welfare officers were the only governmental representatives on the ground. In small country towns among a relatively unschooled white population, it was not difficult to conclude that welfare officers were conspiring to bring about rising expectations and an uncalled for assertiveness among Aboriginal people. Many white locals, like Ridge, knew from experience that Aboriginal people were simple and passive and unable to resist the inevitability of progress. This logic led to a belief that no one would willingly choose to work with degraded Aboriginal people unless they couldn't hold a job anywhere else or they had a fanatic commitment to some ideology like communism.

"Kicking the Commie can" was a powerful code in Australian political discourse--a left-over from the days of Menzies. It was laid to rest in 1984 when the conservative leader of the opposition, Malcolm Fraser, suggested people hide their money under the bed from the Labor government. The Prime Minister, Bob Hawke came back with, "They can't. That's where the commies are." Morris (1993), reflecting on this public interplay, observed that "never again would that deadly fantasy . . . have the power to shape Australian political culture as it had since I was born" (p. 32). Hawke's use of humor however came too late to save me and all the other Kimberley welfares in the seventies from being labelled communist if white locals notions of what should be for Aboriginal people were disturbed in any way.

I, who had a most undeveloped political consciousness at this time, found it more than a little disconcerting to find that it was unacceptable among Kimberley powerholders to extend the rights of Australian citizenship to Aboriginal people. I was not alone in this culture shock. The welfare staff at this time were predominately young, from the south of the state with many selected in the post-Native Welfare era. Most had a commitment to doing something about Aboriginal welfare that went beyond a bureaucratic administration of rules. There were several ex-priests and ministers among our number, together with those like me: the first generation with a liberal arts degree obtained with the support of a government scholarship. Most of us were caught up in the romantic humanism of the Whitlam Labor era of 1972-75 and had a moral commitment to the idea that Australia could indeed be the Lucky Country for all. Cut free from the anglophiliac blindness of the past, we believed we could be part of the work to make Australia fitted to the needs of Australians. As a group, our everyday practice brought us into contact with Aboriginal people as a living, diverse and participatory part of this vision.

Frow and Morris (1993) capture some of the ethos and ideas in which we welfares set about our work:

> Australia moved very rapidly in the late 60's and early 70's from attributing to itself a unitary culture and tradition, and indeed conceiving these as directly based in its cultural and even racial inheritance from Britain, to a recognition at the level of official government policy of the diversity of its ethnic make-up . . . At roughly the same time Australia moved . . . away from its assimilationist and paternalist policies toward Aboriginal people. What followed was in many ways of little practical significance, as . . . governments failed to legislate land rights and self government for Aborigines. The symbolic step nevertheless had its own force. It defined Aboriginal people rather than government institutions as the ones to decide on their future, and it thereby created its own demand for political empowerment. (p. ix)

The symbolic gesture of government recognizing the importance of self-determination for Aboriginal people was in fact of great practical significance in the Kimberley.

> By the second half of the 1970s Aboriginal people all over the Kimberley were beginning to emerge from the trough of despondency that had followed the dislocations of the previous ten years. New ideas, new influences and new attitudes were at work. More importantly, there was a greater preparedness to challenge accepted wisdoms and practices. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 92)

Into this new scenario of Aboriginals articulating their wishes and goals, we welfares were prepared to listen and facilitate action plans. In this, Ridge was quite right to see us as opportunists. We were looking in Jane Addams' terms for the opportunity to put our belief in the truth of democracy and humanism to the test of action (Addams, 1990/1910). Such modest aims were highly threatening to the local powerholders and in the overkill employed to eradicate them, they actually created a coherent, committed community of Aborigines and welfares working for Aboriginal empowerment. The resident pastoralists, like my own relatives, had no time for book learning and useless ideas about Aborigines being equal human beings. A favored bit of advice to new welfares was:

> I'll tell you what to do about the Aboriginal problem. Just round them up, put them on an island and supply them with as much grog as they like. That way they can take care of themselves and we won't have to keep wasting taxes on these useless rock apes. (Memories of a conversation with a white Kimberleyite in the Roebuck Hotel.)

Such advice served mainly to re-energize our commitment to supporting and helping Aborigines.

The phenomenon of public servants actually listening to Aboriginal people and taking their ideas and claims seriously was intensely irritating to local whites. The file of Ministerials[99] to the local member grew and much time in each office was spent answering these in a satisfactory manner. Though Ridge had plenty of these Ministerials to keep him informed as to what his constituents expected of him, the nuisance was that state politicians were not free to clear up this mess as they would like. The federal government, led by conservative, Malcolm Fraser, wished to be seen as fostering the self-development of Aboriginal people, while erasing the last vestiges of a history of oppression. The strong fiscal powers of the federal government then acted as an effective if delimited restraint on state action.

Keith Maine and a policy of community development.

Keith Maine, Director of the Community Welfare Department, came to play an important part in shaping room for Kimberley welfares to enact their belief in humanism despite strong local opposition. The Western Australian public service followed a Westminster style of administration. The Community Welfare Department was charged with the implementation of the Community Welfare Act of 1972. Written when Labor was in power at both the state and federal levels, this was the mandate by which the previous Child Welfare and Native Welfare departments were amalgamated. The Child Welfare Act remained in force and the Native Welfare Act was replaced with provisions in

the Community Welfare Act to authorize the provision of services to disadvantaged persons (i.e.,
Aboriginal people). This was in keeping with the recognition that while Aboriginal people should not
be subjugated by continuing their categorical labelling as being in need of the care and protection of
government, the actuality of their historically structured disadvantage vis-a-vis the white population
needed to be addressed. Three particular provisions of Section 10 of the new Act were the bases for
the Department's charge to maintain responsibility for the welfare of Aboriginal people in particular,
along with a general welfare responsibility for the broad community. The relevant sub-sections of
Section 10 were:

> b)   To prevent the disruption of the welfare of individuals and families in the community and
> to mitigate the effects of any disruption.
>
> f)   To consider and initiate, or to assist in, the provision and development of new or
> additional welfare services, whether of a general or specific nature, for the individuals or
> groups within the community who are needy or disadvantaged.
>
> g)   To encourage the development of the greatest possible degree of service and
> administration at the local level and to emphasize the value of preventive measures. (The
> Western Australian Community Welfare Act of 1972)

Keith Maine, a professional clinical psychologist, was a native of that group of educated
Australians who had processed the intellectual shift to conceiving of Aboriginals as an integral part of
the Australian community. As such Aboriginals were entitled to the same standard of service as the
rest of the population. The hope was that with a changeover to professionalism in addressing
Aboriginal issues, the mistakes of the past would be corrected. Maine quickly became aware that this
smooth changeover to professionalism was not easily achieved, especially in remote areas such as the
Kimberley. In 1972 it had been taken-for-granted by many of the new welfare hierarchy,
predominantly from the former Child Welfare Department, that welfare aims could be reached by
treating all clients equally, regardless of color. There was a lot of energy and commitment inspired by
the belief that the old days of ignorance on race had passed and a new order of social justice was
possible through scientific planning and professionalism.

Maine's regular visits to the Kimberley allowed him to see first-hand the complex and
political difficulties of delivering welfare services to Aboriginal people here. Traditional welfare
measures of removing children from unacceptable environments were no longer politically acceptable
in a situation where whole communities of Aboriginal people had had their life disrupted by changes in
the pastoral industry. Maine came to feel that a way forward in addressing Kimberley welfare needs
might lie outside the prevailing knowledge base of his departmental professionals. In this he was
supported by the Department's Homemaker Unit and their development of a style of starting from local
knowledge to work with clients in a developmental and community-based manner. In this they drew
on the work of the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence in Victoria and their poverty programs, which worked
from a definition of poverty as powerlessness. Poverty was conceptualized as a lack of power over
resources, a lack of power in decision-making, a lack of power in relationships, and a lack of power
over information (Liffman, 1978). With regard to disrupted Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley

such poverty was seen to be as much a condition of the group as of individuals. Intervention would then have to start from an historical understanding of this state of powerlessness relative to mainstream society. It would also accept that there can be different ways of organizing to meet the welfare needs of members and not posit that people have to become like the norm to achieve a state of well-being. Intervention based on this understanding of poverty assumes that, given power, people can organize to provide for the well-being of their own community.

Such an intervention approach tied in with the federal policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people. To quote from one of the architects of this federal policy, Charles Rowley(1970b):

> No imposed system of education or administration . . . will produce predictable attitudes and goals. In itself such a system cannot be the driving force in change, but an external structure to which the society which is the object of concern will respond in accordance with its own laws. Essentially then, the problem is one of how to maintain within Australian society as a whole, areas of security within which Aboriginal groups can make their own adaptations to the hard facts which surround them. No program can adapt or change the Aboriginal to any blueprint. (p. 351-352)

The federal government's weakness in implementing their policy of community development was a lack of personnel on the ground in remote areas to respond to the everyday personal troubles Aboriginal people identified in their lived existence. The state welfare department in contrast did have such a network of service positions throughout the Kimberley.

Stan Davey and Jan Richardson.

In 1975 Keith Maine invited Stan Davey and Jan Richardson to shift to Fitzroy Crossing and address the departmental mandate there from a community development perspective. In this he acknowledged that none of the established service delivery styles of the department worked in this particular context. This husband and wife team had worked independently in the Kimberley at the time of Native Welfare, when their activities in joining with Aboriginal people to organize for better conditions had been a source of great irritation to many. Stan had been an Anglican minister in Victoria and closely involved in the fight for Aboriginal rights in that state in an earlier era. He still had a powerful network of allies throughout the country and no one had been able to dislodge them from their independent base of working with Aboriginal people.

In the changeover to Community Welfare they had been coopted to work for the new department in Wyndham, a small and declining port town in the very northeast of the Kimberley. They had worked particularly with the Oombulgurri people. These people of the Forest River area had been dislocated from their homelands when the Anglican church had decided to close its mission operations. Many of them ended up camped in the deplorable conditions of the Wyndham Reserve where the welfare statistics of infant mortality and committal rates for child neglect and delinquency told the common story of despair and destruction. The pair had been involved in the reopening and reservicing of the Oombulgurri site so people could choose to stay on their homelands.

Maine's thinking was that Davey and Richardson could replicate some of their ideas in the context of the Fitzroy Crossing described in the last chapter. Both Stan and Jan had strong theoretical grounding in the writings of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. They emphasized the power of people to develop their own solutions and rejected the notion that humanity could be understood out of context in an abstractly scientific manner. They emphasized the importance of time and place. Rather than focus on social planning in response to surveys and statistics on the problem, their approach was to accept that Aboriginal people, like other humans, had a vested interest in seeing to their own welfare. The welfare worker's role was as an enabler and facilitator in this process.

I traveled to Fitzroy Crossing in the first months of my time in Broome. The difference from what I saw in 1974 at Middle Camp was remarkable. People had organized community kitchens by skin groups and were feeding school children, the aged, and any neglected children in accord with traditional lines of kinship responsibility. Money had been obtained through the Homemaker Service to buy stoves and cooking equipment. The men were organizing into clan and language groups to pursue their interest in returning to homelands. People were involved in establishing community controlled schools where children would be taught in their own language as well as English. Perhaps the most notorious achievement was helping local people acquire Noonkanbah, later to become the site of a key drama in the Aboriginal Land Rights tragedy. Steve Hawke has written in his text Noonkanbah on this early work at Fitzroy Crossing:

> In October 1974 the Federal and State Ministers with responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh and Norman Baxter[100], and their departmental heads, visited Fitzroy Crossing during a tour of the Kimberley. It appears that they were genuinely shocked at the conditions they encountered, and impressed by what the people had to say to them, including the demand for land that was articulated most strongly by the Karjunna leaders. Undertakings were given to take action to improve conditions in the town camps and to see what could be done about the land claims.
>   The response of the State's Department for Community Welfare was to produce startling results. By early 1975 a team of community development workers employed by the Department was at work in Fitzroy Crossing. The brief for the team was broad in its scope; with the blessing of the Department Head they took on the task of establishing a close working relationship with the people in the fringe camps, assisting them to identify goals and develop programs, and working as activists to help them achieve their goals and implement the programs. This was a radically different concept to that of the traditional welfare officer employed to that time by the Department and its predecessor, Native Welfare. The approach drew an immediate and enthusiastic response from the people; 1975 proved to be a watershed year in the lives of the Fitzroy Crossing people, the Noonkanbah mob included.
>   Within a few months four of the Fitzroy Crossing groups had become legally incorporated.[101] A range of small-scale social, economic and self-help projects were underway with new ideas constantly coming up. Particularly successful were the homemaker programs, which helped the women of the camps organize all sorts of self-help projects. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 81)

Knowledge of the effectiveness of this community development approach soon spread to the rest of the Kimberley. By and large, officers became convinced that this was the only approach able to make sense of the turmoil and tragedies daily confronting welfare officers. Keith Maine's invitation and encouragement that we all endeavor to use community development approaches in our work was accepted with enthusiasm. The idea of looking-acting and reflecting in our particular contexts with

people on what could be done to improve their well-being seemed an obvious way to do something about Aboriginal welfare.

<u>Reflexivity.</u>

Reading descriptions of the long, noisy argumentative suppers at Hull House brought to mind the similar atmosphere that prevailed any time welfare officers got together in the Kimberley during these years (Addams, 1990/1910). We were out to do good and we spent a lot of time discussing just how that could be done. We didn't want to be called "do-gooders" but at the same time we would not back away from the moral stance that our aim was to do good even while we were not at all sure how to do this. We received criticisms from all directions. Urban blacks were by now insisting that all Aboriginals must be in charge of their own solutions. The image of government officials working with Aboriginal people was one they found hard to credit. This theme was picked up by many of the urban welfare professionals, many of whom felt it was not the business of social work to interfere in Aboriginal lives: Enough harm had already come from such interference. Also, since most of the Kimberley welfares were not professionally-trained social workers, there was a general feeling that good intentions were a poor substitute for professional knowledge. Many social workers were glad to dissociate themselves from the inept practice so vociferously complained of by conservative politicians. White locals and conservative state politicians both regularly described us as a group as "white stirrers" (on the grounds that Aboriginals were satisfied with their lot in life unless stirred up) and "communists from Moscow" (always a politically effective, evocative kick of the commie can). I think it took me a long time to realize that this is what all these people really believed and instead of responding in their terms, I had to be really clear about what I believed and act on that: Simultaneously I had to understand where other people, including local Aboriginal people, were coming from.

The Premier[102] of Western Australia at this time was Sir Charles Court. A conservative politician, without much formal schooling in political ideologies, he rode to political prominence as the Minister for Industrial Development during the sixties Pilbara mining boom in Western Australia. With the evidence of the success of his policies all about him, as Perth grew and prospered in ways unimaginable during the depression years to people like him and my parents, he truly believed in human progress through economic development:

> Economic development had been Court's ticket to political prominence and power and it also formed his personal faith. Indeed, he spoke of development with a zeal which betrayed an almost religious conviction about the future direction of Western Australia. (Reece, 1980, p. 3)

Court, along with many others in Western Australia, had no difficulty in believing we should be kinder to Aboriginals than we had been. What was difficult for him and many others, however, was to imagine Aboriginal people as active players in life, living by a different ideology and wanting to dialogue about whose ideological definition of reality ought to prevail in particular circumstances. Social Darwinism might have been discredited within academic circles at this stage, but was still

inscribed in the minds of many Western Australians when they came to understand Aboriginal people.[103] In the Comtean hierarchy of the peoples of the world, by which westerners came to understand the globe and their place within it, Aboriginals were at the very bottom of the ladder of human development. Much talk of helping Aboriginals is posited on this "reaching down to uplift" stance towards Aboriginal people--to help them become like us.

I too was socialized into such a mind-set and had to consciously work at erasing such an understanding in my own practice. My best lessons in this direction came from Aboriginal people themselves. A teacher I remember clearly in this was a Broome Aboriginal called Paddy Roe.

Paddy Roe.

In my early days in Broome, while I struggled to make sense of the situation in which I found myself, a frequent visitor to the welfare office was an old man called Paddy Roe. He would come into my office, lifting his dusty felt hat from his head and sit down, twirling the cap in his hat and talk around many things. His name on the old Native Welfare file was Butcher Paddy, because he had worked in earlier years for the butcher in town. He was a Nyginya man, the tribal group having traditional claims to the land on which Broome was developing. The patriarch of an extended family, he was working hard and successfully to obtain land for his clan. His fair complexion indicated a biological white father, yet Paddy was illiterate, unlike many other Broome people of his age. When he was an infant and the police came to search for half-castes in his family's camp, his life-long friend, Butcher Joe, rolled him in ashes from the fire and hid him in a hessian bag. After the success of that maneuver Paddy grew to adulthood without ever coming under the control of mission authorities. He became a master ethnographer, carefully acquiring a close knowledge of the intricacies of white culture and the divisions within it, in order to work this knowledge to his own advantage and that of his people.

As he told me stories he was learning as much about me as I was learning about him. I came to know this is what he did with all the new welfares, to research the understanding that would be helpful to him in his purposes. The more I got to know Paddy and his achievements the more impressed I was with his intellectual skills. In a mediating move reminiscent of the social worker who introduced "Doc" to William Foote Whyte,[104] I later introduced Paddy to Steven Muecke, an Australian cultural studies researcher who came to town in the seventies looking to collect Aboriginal stories. There are now two published volumes of Paddy Roe's stories and insights (Benterrak, Muecke & Roe, 1984; Roe & Muecke, 1983). The written format of these has allowed Paddy Roe's voice to be transcribed in a manner singularly missing in many other Western transcriptions of Aboriginal understandings.

As I reflect on the importance of my relationship with particular Aboriginal people in shaping my knowledge of what I was to do in practice, I also recall all the other relationships that were important to the nature of my practice. These cut across a number of dimensions--the local townspeople in all their diversity, peer welfares, occupants of the hierarchical positions in welfare

supervising our everyday practice and the kaleidoscope of often transient players in the welfare industry: visiting lawyers, academics, newspaper reporters, politicians both state and federal, and family and friends. Among all these there is one relationship that stands out as particularly important to me in developing a sense of competence at practicing a community development approach.

Pat Grimoldby--one of Flexner's disdained mediators.

Born in 1924 and raised on a sheep station in the Pilbara, Pat belonged to the pastoral elite of Western Australia. She grew up on Warrawagine Station, 90 miles from Marble Bar. Her prime growing up community consisted of her brother and parents, a governess, some dozen white stock workers and approximately 70 Aboriginals who belonged to this country. Her brother and the Aboriginal children were her childhood companions and she learned to speak Nyangomarda, the local language. Two of these Aboriginal children completed correspondence classes with Pat and her brother under the guidance of Pat's mother and the station governess. At the age of twelve Pat was sent to complete her education at boarding school in Perth. (This section of the thesis draws on information provided to me by Pat Grimoldby for the purposes of this project in a personal communication dated 30th March, 1993.)

Returning home at the age of sixteen, she completed a shorthand-typing course by correspondence before obtaining a position with the Commonwealth Bank in Perth. Pat then lived in a middle-class riverside suburb of Perth as opposed to the more working class suburb of North Perth I know so well. She recollects that in the forties few women attended the University of Western Australia but it was the site of much of her social life until she married at the age of twenty-one and went to live in Geraldton.

Her grandfather was the first Public Service Commissioner in Western Australia and her mother a trained teacher, but she had no ideas of a career for herself, until at the age of thirty-nine, a friend persuaded her to take the mature age matriculation entry route into university. Her epiphanic moment was coming in contact with the ideas of philosophy and anthropology. In philosophy she learned to "question what was written and how things were said" (personal communication, 30th March, 1993). Anthropology "opened my eyes to other cultures and gave me a deeper appreciation of Aboriginal culture, of which I'd been familiar with as a child" (personal communication, 30th March, 1993).

Pat remembers Professor Ronald and Dr. Catherine Berndt of the Anthropology Department as having a great influence on her, through both their personal relationship with her and their writings. They shaped her entry into working at helping, particularly with Aboriginal people. She finished her anthropology honors degree two years after I did. We applied at the same time for positions with the Department of Community Welfare. Unlike me, Pat was keen to accept a posting to the country--back to Port Hedland in the Pilbara region she knew well. While waiting for her accommodation in Port Hedland to be finished she spent several weeks working with me at Perth Division where we shared lots of fun and anxiety coming to terms with what working for welfare meant.

My next memories of Pat are of meeting her at Fitzroy Crossing in 1976. As a member of the Head Office Homemaker Service she was spending several months on the ground with the community development team there to learn how her support service could best operate to back up these field initiatives. Not a trained social worker, she nonetheless engaged herself fully in learning all she could about working the social in this particular context. She did the "hands-on" work to be done while at the same time researching the literature on community work. She shared her readings, such as Freire's (1970) <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u>, and engaged in dialogue with all the players in the field. In a style that is now reminiscent of Jane Addams' approach, Pat was able to mediate across hierarchies and contexts to engender in others more holistic understandings of the contexts in which we operated. She was one of the few senior bureaucrats I knew with an insider's knowledge of everyday life in outback Australia and an intimate knowledge of the workings of the upper reaches of bureaucracy. This dual local knowledge was vital to effective welfare work, yet many of us lacked detailed ethnographic understanding of both and how they connected.

Like Jane Addams, she was "ready to perform the humblest neighborhood services" (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 65). I learned a lot watching Pat at such tasks as obtaining good and cheap meat for the homemaker meals program as a result of developing a friendly relationship with a local station owner. I learned how such projects, as well as addressing the tasks at hand, are part of the process of building the relationships on which the success of any community development approach depends. She modelled for all of us the importance of humility in work style. This allowed for the development of dialogue among all parties. Her expertise did not lie in foundational knowledge, but in the praxis skills of group process for the collaborative definition of issues to be addressed. Like Jane Addams' rural background, I am sure Pat's knowledge of working to make the community that station life depends on, was part of these skills. At the same time, unlike many others from a station background, she had developed a thorough-going commitment to the equal worth of all humans.

Things started falling into place for me when Pat came and spent time with us in Broome. Between us in the office we had a rich profile to share on the nature of Broome. Out of that, we sat together and drew up a number of plans and possibilities from which to continue the process of look-act-reflect. Things started to happen. One of our first projects was a joint one between Michael Dwyer and Paddy Roe in which the issue of juvenile delinquency was addressed. There had been a sudden upsurge in juvenile crime in town, especially among those teenage boys whose parents had recently shifted from the reserves into town housing. Perhaps it was the result of moving from a situation of absolute to relative deprivation, but these boys began stealing from tourists in hotels and other larceny. The magistrate was obliged to commit them to periods of detention in Perth correctional institutions because of the lack of any local facilities. Michael and Paddy came up with an idea in collaboration with the boys and their parents: they could serve detention under Paddy's care on his out-of-town block.[105] The fact that this would cost much less than incarceration in Perth made the scheme particularly attractive to Head Office administration. Now, when I visit Broome and see many of these

same boys grown men with families, some with work, I wonder what might have been the outcome of an education in a Perth correctional institution compared to the education they received from Paddy.

What did we do in Broome With a Community Development Approach?

Following the lead of the Fitzroy Crossing office, one of our first moves was to remove the heavy wooden counter from Native Welfare days that had kept clients and office staff at a distance. Comfortable lounge furniture was installed in what now became the waiting room area instead of the place where most business was transacted. The Department was already the agent for most government services not represented in town, but we actively strove to make ourselves as multi-purpose as possible by keeping information on the full gamut of human services available to Aboriginal people and more generally. There was a notice board to pin relevant news articles and information posters. There were voting registration cards on display and people who asked were assisted to enroll.

I started regular community planning meetings on the reserves, first at Anne St. Reserve and then later at the others. Our first big success out of this approach was when the Anne St. residents sent a telegram inviting the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ian Viner, to come and have a beer with them on the Reserve. They wanted to show him their accommodation and explain what a difference it would make to their lives if each residence were provided with a toilet, shower, and kitchen area. He came and shortly after there was the necessary grant of money to have the work done.[106] That engendered a lot of enthusiasm in town about other possibilities. We were able to appoint one of the Anne St. residents as a full-time caretaker to work on developing lawn and other facilities at this reserve and later at the others.

I was particularly involved in working with the homemakers. As well as working with individual families, they ran a drop-in center, much in the style of Hull House, though on a much smaller scale. Women met twice weekly to sew, chat, and plan. There were car driving lessons for Aboriginal women, which I started but were later delivered by the Adult Education Service of Western Australia.

One particular community project eventuated after Broome resident, Mary Albert, precipitated a town meeting on the question of there being no treatment available for alcoholism. She was concerned about the health of her two brothers, both of whom lived on Hill Reserve, while Mrs. Albert, married to an Asian man, lived in a town house. Thinking of this, I am reminded of a conversation between Michael and Bev, the Aboriginal Welfare Aide, in my first months in Broome. Bev started the conversation with, "Have you ever wondered why it is that in so many families one of the children makes it in adulthood and the others don't?" Of about twenty examples she listed, Michael said, "Do you notice any pattern in all the names you've mentioned?"

The emergent pattern centered on that fact that the successful siblings were all women who married non-Aboriginal spouses and the unsuccessful tended to be male Aboriginals. Ending up at the Hill drinking was a prevailing career path for male Aboriginal children of Broome. In a demographic

situation where there was a consistent shortage of same-race female partners for the white and Asian men of Broome, Aboriginal women married across racial lines. The same did not happen with Aboriginal men; at this time there were very few Aboriginal men in town married to non-Aboriginal wives. Beyond demographics, it had been a goal of Beagle Bay mission policy to prepare female charges for life in domestic service: For the lucky, there was the chance of becoming wife to a white male worker in a remote area, who would otherwise not have a chance at family life. This opportunity only applied to part-Aboriginal female charges and as allowed by laws against miscegenation. The "scientific" understanding was that Aboriginal genes were so recessive that they could be bred out within four generations with no chance of throwback (Crawford, 1989). Aboriginals themselves were socialized to believe this. In the seventies, it was not uncommon for the first comment on a new baby's appearance to be, "You're lucky, she's so fair."

The comely, fair women of Broome and Beagle Bay were highly prized as marriage partners, usually (especially with white men) on the understanding that they left their ethnic identity behind. There is the famous story of a Broome wife who cooked her husband dugong[107] steak. He was enjoying it until he thought to ask what it was. Then he hurled it against the wall with the grim comment, "There'll be no coon food in here. Is that understood?"

So Mary Albert's concern for her brothers was one which reflected cultural actualities of the Broome situation. She expressed it approximately seven years after drinking rights were introduced into the Broome area. Casualties and deaths associated with alcoholism were beginning to mount. Her call to action resonated very strongly with many other people in town. At the first meeting, people from across the community turned up to express their commitment to doing something about the issue. An organization was formed and called Milliya Rumurra, a local language translation of the title of Jimmy Chi's song/poem Bran Nue Dae, which more than ten years later was to form the title of his musical.

The lyrics of the song were held to capture some of the need for and hopes in having a local organization to address the issue of treatment for alcoholism:

> Here I live in this tin shack
> Nothing here worth coming back
> To drunken fight and awful sights
> People drunk most every night
> On the way to a "Bran Nue Dae"
>
> Everybody everybody say. (Chi, 1991, p. 114)

Over the next three months a student on placement with me worked with the elected committee and interested supporters in town to write submissions for seeding grants and to connect through the Royal Flying Doctor Service with an alcohol treatment program in the south-west of the state, ready to take all those keen to enroll. When this first batch of clients came back to Broome, several of them started working as counselors among the population, following the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous with some adaptation for local conditions.

I can't say I actually did much about this program at all, but that was the way it was with a lot of different initiatives. Given a little bit of room to move, Aboriginal people came up with all sorts of ideas and actions to make their lives more satisfying. As far as I know, Milliya Rumurra still operates in Broome along with a range of other Aboriginal-operated human services, together with a much wider gamut of governmental services than obtained in 1976. With a lack of many professionals in town to define problems, it was striking how willing people were to become involved in defining their own problems and planning the actions to be taken. Much of the freedom we had in the welfare office to support such initiatives came with the overwhelming nature of the problems to be addressed for which the bureaucracy had no ready answers. Yet the bureaucracy was under considerable public pressure to be seen to be doing something. There was an openness and dialogue operating at all levels of welfare intervention around a common interest of looking for ways to address what were agreed to be *in extremis* welfare needs.

Linking With the Work of Hull House

Reflecting on what we did do in Broome and more generally in the Kimberley from 1976-1981, I link it directly to the eight themes of work style identified by Brieland (1990) in the work of Hull House residents. These all revolve around the three principles of living with the people, working out of relationships with people, and using methods according to the moral purpose of intervention. The eight themes are settling, esthetics, personal acquaintance, no moral means test, environment, use or research, accessible multiple services, and emerging leadership. I will address each of these themes with regard to the Broome situation before addressing the functions of the Broome welfare office.

Settling.

To be both in and of the neighborhood, not nine to five or Monday through Friday or for a two-year demonstration project. The commitment was to settle amid the people who were one's concern. (Brieland, 1990, p. 134)

To work anywhere in the Kimberley required this as a condition of entry. There were few places of retreat. In a small town of less than four thousand people, it was inevitable that workers came to know their clients in settings other than a welfare office. Once we made a conscious commitment to engage with community life as part of the ongoing flow of community work, it was striking how much we learned that came to shape actions we would take in regard to our statutory work. Instead of depending on departmental resources, immersion in community life allowed for an accessing of community resources, including relationships to address community issues. Part of "settling" is that the people come to know and judge you as much you can know and judge them. Control over the helping relationship in such circumstances is then not guaranteed by virtue of expert knowledge.

<u>Esthetics.</u>

Brieland (1990, p. 135) describes this as the engagement of "the creative energy of adults and children in the community." Across the Kimberley this was evidenced in a support of Aboriginal cultural activities and the fostering of region-wide women's meetings through the Homemaker Service. More particularly in Broome it was evidenced in the children's activities run every school holiday: at these there were regular dances which employed the local bands not able to find work at the hotels.

Many of the Kimberley staff, including myself, acted as agents for an art enterprise in Perth, which was funded with federal Aboriginal Affairs money to develop markets for Aboriginal art. Throughout the seventies and eighties there was a tremendous boom in markets for Aboriginal art and the welfare office served as a contact point between local artists and the wider world.

I can't say we thought of a general activity called esthetics, but engaging the creative energy of adults and children in the community was central to the whole community development approach. Most often such engagement started with simply listening to people's stories which were esthetic in their own right. The oral traditions of Aboriginal life were evidenced in the moving, often funny tales people told of their lives in the style that Jimmy Chi (1991) captured and later transcribed into the text of his musical, <u>Bran Nue Dae</u>.

<u>Personal acquaintance.</u>

This relates to the settling point and Brieland (1990) interprets this point as relating to the maxim "People trust the people they know" (p. 135). I would amend this to read that knowing people leaves you in a better position to know who to trust. Certainly not everybody I knew trusted me. I resonate with Jane Addams' description of the dying Scottish women whose last words on earth were directed at Addams:

> "So you came in yourself this morning did you? . . . Don't try to warm my feet with anything but that old jacket that I've got there; it belonged to my boy who was drowned at sea nigh thirty years ago, but its warmer yet with human feelings than any of your damned charity hot-water bottles." Suddenly the harsh gasping voice was stilled in death. (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 94)

Addams describes herself as shaken by this experience. I was similarly shaken one day, arriving back at the office carrying a television I had just picked up in Derby for the holiday activities.[108] I was walking up the three wooden steps to the office, heavy television set precariously balanced, when suddenly I was physically attacked by an older woman. She accused me of spreading rumors around town that she was sleeping with her son-in-law. It turned out that when I had visited one of the reserves several months before, to do a demographic survey of occupants to argue for more facilities, I had asked this woman if she was still living with her son-in-law, meaning in the same house. She had been brooding on this insult for several months before coming to have it out with me. This in fact was both the benefit and cost of personal acquaintance; for the helper there was no

possibility of quick and clean involvement. People came to know you in all your complexity and faults as you did them. Certainly without the strength of personal relationships it would be impossible to pursue a community development course.

No moral means test.

> Let us take a neighborhood of poor people, and test their ethical standards by those of the charity visitor, who comes with the best desire in the world to help them out of their distress. A most striking incongruity, at once apparent, is the difference between the emotional kindness with which relief is given by one poor neighbor to another poor neighbor, and the guarded care with which relief is given by a charity visitor to a charity recipient. The neighborhood mind is at once confronted not only by the difference of method; but by an absolute clashing difference of two ethical standards. (Addams, 1902, p. 19-20)

Not many Aboriginal people came to welfare in the latter half of the seventies looking for welfare as in relief payments and ration orders. Native Welfare, in the days when Aboriginals were not entitled to the social services available to white Australians had been the gatekeepers over the relief in the form of rations that was available to Aboriginal people. Now, with a Social Security office in town, Aboriginal people were entitled to the same minimum income as all other Australians. Our office was involved in assisting locals to negotiate the manual of conditions by which entitlement to this assistance was established (see Chapter Eight for further detail on the workings of the Social Security office).

It was central to the whole style of operations that the Broome welfare office was open to whoever wanted to use it. This is never so simple. There were complaints by local white people, to head office and politicians, that the only people being helped in town were Aboriginals. Just having Aboriginals hanging around the office meant that it was unattractive to local whites and, as Broome started to grow, there were more whites in town wishing to apply for welfare services. At the same time, there was an influx of "hippies" into town as the completion of the black-top road drew closer, and word about Broome's magnificent untouched beaches and laid back life style spread. Hippies, Marijuana Annie and Slippery, are two of the key characters in Bran Nue Dae (Chi, 1991). For me at the welfare office, the presence of hippies meant that many times, in the middle of other work, I would return to the office to find a queue of ten or so glowingly healthy middle-class teenagers from Perth come to claim their entitlement to a ration order. At this relatively prosperous economic time in Western Australia, controls over applications for rations were loose and it was difficult to prove lack of entitlement. This was a major source of irritation to us in Broome and added to our burden of local antagonism, as we were seen to support the unwelcome long-term stay of hippies camped in sandhills around town. None of the other towns in the Kimberley had the attractions to suffer such consequences. I remember many times feeling like invoking a moral means test over hippie applications for assistance, but the simple rule that what was available to other Australians should be available to Aboriginals was the moral strength of our whole approach. We didn't think we could afford to undermine it by drafting out hippies for special consideration.

The other main category of applicants to ration relief from the office were transient whites, mainly young men, drifting through looking for work. So very few of them could complete their application form without help that I became aware of the major problem of adult illiteracy among whites in Australia, all of whom presumably had received the benefits of a formal education. In all our contacts with clients, we tried to follow the practice principle Jane Addams established of showing respect for the diverse cultural lived experiences brought to an engagement with welfare (Brieland, 1990).

Environment.

I resonate so strongly with Jane Addams' need to become a garbage inspector (Addams, 1990/1910). Social work teachings are that the concern is with the interplay between the person and the environment, but in modern texts it is taken-for-granted that the individual has access to the basic necessities of shelter and sanitation. Brieland in commenting on modern America and especially cities such as Chicago, states:

> The social work profession has not been able to deal successfully with housing the poor. It often settles for accommodation to grossly inadequate housing rather than participating in aggressive efforts for change. (1990, p. 135)

Beyond regularly inspecting broken sewerage systems, much of our energies were spent on researching, arguing, and lobbying for improved environmental living conditions for the people of Broome.

Use of research.

Hull House residents focused on neighborhood-based research which focused on gathering information to promote change. Departmental files are full of such research conducted in Broome over the years. Simple figures such as the number of dwellings counted in the census compared with the number of people in town were powerful arguments for the need for more housing and, at the time, when the state was looking for ways to access federal funds for Aboriginal welfare, were often effective.

Accessible multiple services.

As with Hull House, the Broome welfare office came to offer many services in one complex under a single authority. Not being driven by a statutory, categorical approach, although statutory services were part of our brief, the office was relatively free to tailor responses in accord with the nature of the presenting problem. We were also involved in facilitating and supporting the development of new Aboriginal-run services such as Milliya Rumurra.

Emerging leadership.

This is the theme in which I find the most difficulty in linking the work of Hull House and the Broome welfare office but much of this difficulty is I think the difference between American and Australian culture. "Cutting down tall poppies" is an Australian expression for what happens to those who stand too clearly above the crowd. Striving for success and exceptionality is not something encouraged by the culture and the American term "loser" sounds offensive to my Australian ear. I can't think of anyone who would have described themselves as developing their leadership qualities yet there were many who would have said they were taking a stand, doing what was necessary, or just seizing the initiative in the absence of anyone else. There was some ambiguity in this, however. While the Kimberley in the seventies was quite an egalitarian work place there were other dimensions operating which came to the fore in later years. In the next chapter I detail how the Labor Party came to power in the state in 1983. The leadership positions emerging then for the Kimberley Aboriginal/welfare network were filled from those amongst us who had the credentials of leadership: these being primarily whiteness, maleness, and professionalism. Those who had practised leadership most competently were excluded from consideration as leaders because in the wider relations of ruling leadership was considered the quality of a particular type of person and not the outcome of particular process skills.

Brieland (1990) talks specifically of female leadership at Hull House. The social construction of gender was different in Broome and the Kimberley. When I did my research at Looma, I was accepted as an honorary male because of the lack of a male to do the work. I have no doubt that a male would have been perceived as a better choice to "get the word out for Looma." Yet there were advantages for the community in having a female of which they were aware: women were better listeners and less likely to engage in polarizing exchanges with other gadiya. At this time I, like most other women then, did not have a highly developed feminist consciousness.

The Kimberley were still very much seen by whites as a man's country and this placed white women such as myself in an odd situation. It was easy to be accepted as a mate by other males, again meaning a sort of honorary male but that implied you knew how to fit in and weren't going to cause trouble by being a woman. The ethos prevailing is perhaps best captured in the way it silenced the voice of Aboriginal women even as consultations with Aboriginal people were stressed. Audrey Bolger (1985) has detailed how in the Kimberley, "The European male predilection for dealing only with other men tends to prevail, and at least some Aboriginal men are happy enough to allow this to continue" (p. 365). Highlighting the key role played by Aboriginal women in acting to ensure the wellbeing of their families, Bolger (1985) notes:

> Few non-Aboriginal male bureaucrats or mining officials even now consider including Aboriginal women in discussions. Nor have Aboriginal women been consulted by male anthropologists employed to compile reports for the mining companies[109] . . . But now, perhaps only over the last three years or so, there are signs that women are becoming more assertive and are pressing for their views to be heard. This new assertiveness may have been helped by the fact that there are now more non-Aboriginal women working in the north, some

of whom show keen interest in hearing the views of Aboriginal women. Whatever the reason, there are signs that women's silence is coming to an end, that they are demanding to be heard, to be taken notice of, and that in this they are more and more being supported by the men. (p. 365)

There was a development of female Aboriginal leadership during my time in the Kimberley, particularly coming out of the workings of the homemaker scheme in remote Aboriginal communities throughout the Kimberley. In Broome itself, many women took a leadership role from their position of being safely inside satisfactory living conditions, but driven by a moral obligation to see their kin similarly cared for. So Mary Albert, a key figure in setting up Milliya Rumurra, was just one of many women operating from such a standpoint on the welfare needs of the community. The difficulty in talking about it is that it was not often seen to count in the wider scheme of things. Steve Hawke in his introduction to Noonkanbah says:

> I am sure that many readers will notice the absence of women's voices and participation in the action. I mean no disrespect to the women of Noonkanbah . . . Due to the nature of the dispute, particularly some of the religious aspects involved, and the way the Community operated at the time, the women of the Community were directly involved only on rare occasions. And my work and contact with the Community . . . has been almost exclusively with the men. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 16)

Hawke later details how he had little to do with the religious male elders of Noonkanbah yet this does not prevent him seeing the vital role they played in the affair. This intersection of race/gender and culture is not one I fully understand even now. I am clear that Western interpretations of gender meaning were unthinkingly carried into interactions with Aboriginal people and shaped subsequent development. I am also clear that the Kimberley at this time was one area where there was powerful male Aboriginal leadership. In the rest of the state the despair, alienation, death, and incarceration among Aboriginal males was such that females were often left to carry on the struggle to survive.

Leaving gender aside for the moment and drawing an analogy between Hull House residents and Kimberley welfares, their similarities were a work approach that provided "both security and opportunity. As with most altruistic endeavors, gaining personal fulfillment was part of the opportunity to serve" (Brieland, 1990, p. 136).

Most welfares were men and many of us were the first generation of our families with a university degree. In these relatively prosperous times in Australia there would have been no difficulty obtaining work elsewhere but we chose to serve in the Kimberley out of a moral ideological commitment to the idea of Australia as a fair place for all. Leadership in this was not a very Australian quality to claim: One of the Kimberley staff's agreements with Head Office was that there should be no designated Officer-in-Charge of each office on the grounds we were working collaboratively. This ruling could be varied at the request of particular Kimberley officers.

Some among us were from a church background, with a clearly developed philosophy of enacting a Christian commitment in the ongoing mundaneness of ordinary people's everyday lives, without benefit of a church organizational backing. Stan Davey and Jan Richardson had a strong

knowledge of South American liberation theology and other participatory action research approaches. This connected with the literature many of us had read in University but they provided leadership in how we could enact such ideas in everyday life.

Leadership was never pyramidal in the style of Hull House, where Jane Addams was Head Resident (Brieland, 1990, p. 134). All took leadership roles depending on the context, from Keith Maine's position as Director of the Department to the reserve residents coming up with plans for the development of their environment. While Brieland (1990) speaks of the flourishing of female leadership at Hull House at a time when this was not supported in the broader context, Aboriginal leadership flourished in the Kimberley context at a time when many in Australian society considered this an unlikely phenomenon.

To give just one instance, Peter Yu, a young Chinese-Aboriginal man, whose family lived diagonally opposite the Broome welfare office, joined us as an Aboriginal welfare aide in 1977. He was just back from studying at the East-West Center in Hawaii, had worked at the Aboriginal Sites Department at the Western Australian Museum and was full of ideas on how things could be different for Aboriginal people. The only boy of nine siblings, Peter had a gentleness of manner combined with a determination to make a difference in the lived experience of Aboriginal people. He became a fully-fledged district officer with the Department before leaving to work with one of the new Aboriginal initiated agencies established with federal funds. Presently he is chairman of the Kimberley Land Council, embroiled in the politics of the implementation of the High Court Mabo decision of 1993. By this decision it has been legally recognized that Australia was not an empty land when the British landed and Aboriginal land claims now have some standing in the national legal system.

A final area in which I can identify leadership as emerging was in the steady arrival of other human service agencies. The dynamics involved in new agencies becoming part of the community are covered with regard to the Social Security office in Chapter Eight, as is the readiness by which Aboriginal people provided input to new agencies on how they could best serve community needs. Many Broome people became employed in these new agencies in tandem with an older pattern of transferring public service staff from the south for short term tours of duty.

<div align="center">The Functions of the Broome Welfare Office</div>

In addition to these eight themes of work style outlined above, Brieland (1990) describes three functions as integral to the operation of Hull House: direct service, urban education and recreation, and social reform. Again I feel I can connect with minor modifications, across time and place, to what we were doing at the Broome welfare office.

Direct service.

The Broome office responded to personal needs across a wide range. Though we were actively trying to move away from an era in which Aboriginal children were routinely removed from

their parents, we were still called upon to attend to reports of neglected children. With preventive work with the families and the backup of homemaker involvement, these rarely came to a neglect application in. It was our statutory duty to attend all sittings of the Children's Court though I usually left it to Michael--hating as I did the rigid format in which it was often conducted. There were battered wives, deserted wives, re-unification of children with parents, run-away children, suicidal children, and people in need of mental health services(for whom there were no local facilities). There was in fact a huge complex array of personal troubles for which help was likely to be sought from the welfare office. I used my clinical social work skills but most often:

> Direct services were usually short-term, based on a concept of health rather than pathology. Value judgments were avoided, and service from the residents included developing competence for self-help. (Brieland, 1990, p. 137)

Education and recreation.

What came to be called group work was the core of the Hull House program. In Broome, group work from a social goals model, where goals were defined by the group concerned and not assumed as fitting in with "normality," was also core to our activities. We worked with groups of children, teenagers, reserve residents, women, both black and white, alcoholics, the unemployed, and people looking for specific skills such as driving or literacy. Though the Community Welfare Department had a prime focus on children, we were very conscious in our work of the historical failures of policy that separated children from their parents as the locus of intervention and education (Haebich, 1988). In this I endorse Addams' (1990/1910) comment:

> We were very insistent that the settlement should not be primarily for the children. It was absurd to suppose that grown people would not respond to opportunities for education and social life . . . f it is natural to feed the hungry and care for the sick, it is certainly natural to give pleasure to the young, comfort to the aged, and to minister to the deep-seated craving for social intercourse that all men feel. (p. 64)

In these Broome and Kimberley group activities, the "working the social" was carried out mainly by people who were not professional social workers. As at Hull House, the controlling role of professionalism had not as yet inscribed itself on the situation.

Social reform.

Poverty and racism were certainly two issues Kimberley workers felt they had a mandate to address. The fact that to do so in any but an ameliorative manner became a political issue was the long-term limitation for the community development approach in the Kimberley as it was for the settlement work of Hull House. In this chapter I have focused on arriving in Broome and struggling to develop appropriate ways of addressing the personal troubles brought to my attention. In organizing my understanding of how I practised I found it useful to link to the themes of practice identified in the settlement house work of Hull House. I have briefly covered functions of direct service and, education

and recreation as they were addressed in the Broome context of the seventies. The function of social reform will be explored more fully in the next chapter. I want there to trace the ways in which realization of the social reform potential coming out of the Kimberley community development approach brought an end to my work and that of many other workers in the Kimberley as the welfare department retreated to a more strictly bureaucratic style of service delivery.

Notes

CHAPTER SEVEN

Leaving Broome

The enemy increaseth every day;
We, at the height, are ready to decline.
There is a tide in the affairs of men.
Julius Caesar

In this chapter I want to paint a picture of some of the social forces operating within my lived experience at Broome leading up to my ministerial transfer in July, 1981 and the turning away of the Department for Community Welfare from a community development approach in the Kimberley. I will draw on the community work writings of Kelly and Sewell (1988), which in the eighties I found useful in coming to an understanding of what I had lived through in Broome and of why the question of social reform became such a sticking point to our ongoing actions.

Community Work as Participatory Democracy

Community building is not a new task. It has long been a necessity for all peoples who have wanted to live together on this planet. It has depended on the efforts of many millions of "ordinary" men and women who have given their heads, their hearts and their hands to the task. It has rarely been easy or glamorous work, but community building is an immense and varied human tradition which each generation both inherits and carries forward. (Kelly & Sewell, 1988, p. 2)

The task of community building in any particular setting is always carried out within a logical framing of how the world is and should be. In this there are a number of different logics possible and it is also usual for humans to move between logics in the actions they take in the world. Any cultural setting tends to be a sea of contestation between different logics, between different ways of looking at the world. Among the Aboriginal people of Looma described in Chapter Five, a logic of dialogue and consensus decision-making was normal, together with a firm binary logic that this was their land, where their law prevailed. Among women such as Pat Grimoldby there was a logic of interdependence and attachment that was quite close in many ways to Aboriginal logics operating. Following the pattern described by Gilligan (1982) for American women, there was a sensitivity to the feelings of others, a feeling of responsibility for the well-being of others, a desire for solutions that meet the need of all involved and a concern for the network of human relationships operating in any particular community. In my experience, many of the men involved in community development also followed a logic close to this so it was not particular to gender, though gender patterns in Western socialization certainly made it more likely to be a woman's way of viewing the world.

Among the political powerholders of the State such as the Premier, Sir Charles Court, a logic of binarism held sway: the economic development of the state was either allowed to progress or brought to a halt by the interference of non-market considerations such as Aboriginal wishes. To Sir Charles Court:

Only in the hard trading of the open market are the realities decided with devastating impartiality. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 97)

At the same time, Sir Charles Court and his fellow state conservative politicians were also masters of the art of using evocative logic to explain why Aboriginal people did not bend before reality as they always had in the past. As Aboriginals were known to be passive dependents, it was easy to evoke outside forces to explain any change in their behavior. The style of ruling was one of patriarchy, which took-for-granted the need for control over those less able/powerful and for a hierarchical decision-making structure. Decision makers needed to be autonomous individuals able to stick to abstract principles of justice and progress. The tender-heartedness of women and "do-gooders" had a place only in support of and back-up to such activities.

Thinking and logics. Politics and principles. Space, place and base. It is in terms of these dimensions that we know ourselves and describe one another. Because they answer questions about how we think about the world, what values we hold and where we live, they begin to shape a recognizable context. What vitalizes this context are relationships, and it is from the nature, range and intensity of relationships that community building takes it life. (Kelly & Sewell, 1988, p. 55)

There is no doubt in my mind that the conservative politicians in power in Western Australia during my time in Broome were operating to build community. Of my parents' generation, they acted out of their interpretation of a lived experience that revolved around the theme of the fragility of the State of Western Australia. Western capitalism entered an era of multi-nationalism in the sixties and Western Australia profited immensely with the development of the iron ore deposits of the Pilbara by multinational companies such as Amax of Houston, Texas. Overall, the people of Western Australia prospered from this development. My parents often commented how glad they were that our community was in the hands of such a far-sighted and determined leader as Sir Charles. At the same time, they were aware of the close personal network of relationships between Sir Charles and his Ministers, captured tellingly one Anzac Day in a re-union picture which revealed some four Government Ministers had shared a tent in New Guinea during the war. Still, it was expected that there had to be some rewards to men willing to take on the burden of government. Overall, my parents, like many other Western Australians, had no doubt that Court would look after their interests. Some of the ethos of their thinking is captured by Denney (1957):

Australia leads the world in the degree to which its sports interests and sports organizations reflect the total social and political ideals of the nation. Sport in Australia is virtually the invisible government of an egalitarian semi-socialistic country based on generations of lower-middle class immigration from the old country . . . Any Australian in sport is believed by his countrymen to be a sort of gentleman to begin with, deserving all the support he can get from the rest of the gentleman, even if it amounts to providing him with a welfare state and fringe benefits. All this results in part from the ethnic and linguistic consistency of the Australian population, which in turn creates the image of a whole social group going up the scale together. (p. 127)

In the seventies, it became apparent that Sir Charles could pursue his vision of industrial development to the farthest reaches of the state, as multinational exploration companies found

evidence of promising oil and diamond deposits in the Kimberley, until then a region relatively untouched by mining. While the Court family owned a large transport company, and other members of his government were similarly likely to profit from development, that was seen as a minor issue. The state as a whole was suffering like America from the rural decline of the seventies. Old established families with the power of cultural capital even while their incomes were declining drastically, looked to their leaders to put things right again. Much of the pastoral land on which fortunes had been built was so overgrazed and otherwise degraded that it seemed unlikely to recover its importance even when agricultural markets improved. Without a manufacturing base Western Australia had always depended on agriculture and mining. Now mining seemed the only viable option to sustain the overall fortunes of the state's residents.

As powerholders worked to prepare the way for multinationals to enter the state with their huge resources for development, a clash of logics became inevitable in the field of Kimberley welfare. Aboriginals were still a long way from being considered one of the gentlemen and the gentlemen were still firmly in charge of the relations of ruling, with nothing forcing them to become aware of other realities, other ways of viewing the world. This clash of logics in terms of the processes and power considerations involved, simulates, I believe, that played out between Mary Richmond and Jane Addams in the market capitalist America of the early twentieth century. Before exploring the actualities of this clash in detail, I want to briefly outline the model of community work developed by Kelly & Sewell (1988). The model outlines five main ways of working with community that operate in different configurations according to context. All approaches bear some relationship in their logic of operation to an assumption of democracy.

Five Ways of Working

These patterns are not ones I was aware of as I was working, but on reflection they help me make sense of the field of actions in which I found myself as a social worker. I moved across all five ways of working, according to purpose and context, and each had its own difficulties and limits.

Community service.

This is by far the most common style of working in modern, western welfare states. It fits well with the positivism of modernism and the notion that the needs of others can be known and will be met within a democracy. The whole gamut of health, educational, and welfare service available in modern democracies tends to fit within this approach. Once a service need is identified and politically endorsed, the service itself is developed according to widely recognized and articulated principles. It is a top-down model of service delivery in which it is assumed that professionals will use their expert knowledge to meet the needs of the recipients. The Social Security systems in both America and Australia are forms of community service, as are local doctors, stores, and schools. Such services always reflect the overall political power and popularity of the recipients. It is a cruel but common fact

that the blind are perceived to be more needy than the deaf, and children more deserving than ex-prisoners. Within the harshness of this popularity contest there is some dynamism in the development of public perceptions about categories of need.

In the context of the Kimberley, the seventies was a time in the Australian community when the needs of Aboriginal people were politically recognized. There was an attendant commitment of funds[110] to address the need. What soon became clear in early efforts to develop community services to address these needs was their resistance to etic definition. This led to the development in the Kimberley of a second way of working--what Kelly and Sewell (1988) call community work or brokering.

Community work: brokering.

The broker works between the vertical structures of bureaucracy and the more horizontal structures of the disadvantaged the welfare system has been set up to serve. Such work requires a thorough knowledge of the people and relationships operating in both systems. It is only meaningfully endorsed by the bureaucracy when they wish to address problems that are clearly not "knowable" by the routine research methods of bureaucracy (Fuchs, 1993). Bureaucracy usually wishes to address such problems when under political pressure to be seen to be doing something in the area of concern. The difficulties in such work are many. The worker tries to serve allegiance to two sets of relationships and hold them in equitable tension without falling into the limbo land of pleasing neither side. The outcome can be as much a result of wider politics as of the worker's own skill. There is also the ever present seduction of profiting from the position of being gatekeeper of information between the two systems. This operates in concert with the broker's knowledge that if they do their work well in mediating between the two systems, the need for their skills disappears in that particular context. The vertical system tends to hold more power overall than the horizontal, yet the lived experience of the worker can often create a greater identity with the powerless and a commitment to their cause.

It is a difficult work style to sustain for any length of time, yet in many ways it is what I and other Kimberley welfares were invited to pursue unknowingly when Keith Maine invited us to follow a community development approach in our work. We were still public servants tied to bureaucratic expectations and regulations, yet invited to reach out and engage with Aboriginal people in their everyday lives, so as to be able to bring the message back up the bureaucratic line as to what was to be done. In this work there was considerable blurring with the next style of working which Kelly and Sewell (1988) call community development or restructuring.

Community development: restructuring.

This style of work occurs in those situations where local, grounded situations of diswelfare are so thorough-going that it is recognized that the bureaucracy needs to give away its resources and authority to people at the local level, so they can muster resources to address issues in their own terms.

This was the case with the Middle Camp situation I describe in Chapter Five: Federal and state politicians and bureaucrats agreed to allow a non-bureaucratic style of facilitation and enablement of community solutions to community problems. Out of this initiative came the creation of Noonkanbah, which was to prove a key drama in the unfolding of events.

> The sad truth is that most . . . community development programs are eventually wound up by the vertical structure. Vertical structures can tolerate giving jobs, resources and authority to communities only for relatively brief periods . . . The high energy work gets done early and quickly when the tensions are at their height . . . Workers in the vertical structure may be genuinely relieved to see the caseload drop and needs addressed appropriately and the pressures diminish, but they will also experience a sense of loss. They begin to feel isolated from the action, unimportant, and fearful for their jobs and status. Their instincts are accurate . . . The basic aim of these programs is to dismantle jobs in the large centralized systems and relocate them in the small and decentralized ones. The coalition of goodwill between giver and receiver, which characterizes the early moments of the community development program, can quickly break down when the giver gets frightened by the implicit competition and rapidly takes back authority, status, control and power. (Kelly & Sewell, 1988, p. 95)

I will argue later in this chapter that this is a meaningful interpretation of what happened in the Kimberley across a number of dimensions and levels of interaction with regard to the community development approach introduced and endorsed by the welfare bureaucracy in the mid-seventies.

Present even prior to the community development approach in the Kimberley was another style of working. This Kelly and Sewell (1988) term a community of intention.

Community of intention.

Learning about this as a style of working, it impressed on my consciousness that perhaps the most well-known epitome of a community of intention was the Pilgrims that settled America. They were seeking space in which to make a base for the living-out-the-logic of their cherished values and beliefs in community with like-minded others. Kelly and Sewell (1988) comment of such communities:

> Their founders have believed that, in order to live authentically, it is necessary to move away from mainstream society. This shift away from the mainstream has been, variously, to register a protest, to demonstrate a viable alternative, to preserve threatened human values, to live simply in cooperation with the environment--or combinations of these purposes. (p. 100)

This was in fact much of the story of Looma I was asked to convey to others when I spent time with the community in 1975. The people of Looma wanted a quiet place in the country where they could live their own lifestyle and come to accommodation with the presence of gadiya on their own terms and at their own pace. An interview I taped in 1975 with Michael Maundie, one of the community spokespeople, captures some of this intent:

> One day come when everybody, all this Killer mob, Killer and all this mob, they want to start to build a station. I joined with them. Killer. I was stopping in Liveringa Reserve. We was talking together--the mob that here in Looma now . . . Yep. We was talking about how to get this land. Talking, talking, talking, talking. Alright they keep talking. Alright one day come and they told me if I can take the job.[111] I just telling them fellas. I can't do much because I

don't know much. No they bin just keep on telling me that. You alright! . . . Derby, Broome, Fitzroy--they like Looma better. . . . Because it's a quiet place in the bush. Because they like parents where they are living. Other places--Derby, Broome, all that--too big. We like to sleep in a small place--bit off from other places . . . We want to be like--you know--some of them stations, good stations. Well, why can't we live alone? (Crawford, 1976, p. 225-227)

The Aboriginal people of Looma won their land quietly. Their kin at Noonkanbah, with the support of community development workers, also came to win land on which to build their community of intention. Emerging perceptions within the wider community as to the consequences of this win triggered a major Australian drama. Trying to hold onto their intention pushed the Noonkanbah people to engage in the final style of community building Kelly and Sewell (1988) describe: community action or campaigning.

Community action: campaigning.

Democracy is a term likely to be interpreted in practice according to ideological understandings. In a structuralist-functionalist view of society as a harmonious, interacting whole, it is assumed that all have democratic access to resources and the legitimated processes and functions of government work equally for all the *demos*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Greek roots of the English word translate as "the authority of the commons." Democracy is defined as :

> Government by the people; that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people as a whole, and is exercised either directly by them (as in the small republics of antiquity) or by officers elected by them. In modern use often more vaguely denoting a social state in which all have equal rights, without hereditary or arbitrary differences of rank or privilege. (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 442)

There is so much in such a small quote to deconstruct. The interpretation of what is involved in democracy lay at the heart of the Kimberley story, just as it lay at the heart of the American War of Independence. Community action and campaigning styles of practice assume that democracy is an ongoing process of contestation and conflict allowing the voices of the unheard to be heard. It is this assumption that has driven all the social movements for inclusion of the excluded since the Age of the Enlightenment. Yet, as Sheri Arnstein pointed out in her classic article on community participation, this process is never encouraged by those seeing themselves as potential losers in the outcome of change:

> The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the corner-stone of democracy--a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by virtually everyone. The applause is reduced to polite handclaps however, when this principle is advocated by the have-not blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos and whites. And when the have-nots define participation as redistribution of power, the American consensus on the fundamental principle explodes into many shades of outright racial, ethnic, ideological and political opposition. (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217)

I directly used aspects of campaigning in my own practice, but most often at a low key level. I joined with the women of La Grange Mission, or Bidyadanga Community as it came to be known, to

seize control of the distribution of the second-hand clothes donated to the mission: the lay-missionaries had considered this their work. With the support of the local priest in our actions and the transiency of lay-missionaries as actors in the field, this was an easily won campaign. The women went on to raise money from the sale of clothes for their own purposes: in particular, to buy a women's community car and obtain their driver's licenses at a time when mainly men drove and controlled access to community vehicles.

On the other hand, I became embroiled in major campaigns of confrontation and conflict which were not my creation, but which were at the moral heart of my practice. These were campaigns for and against Aboriginal voting, for and against Aboriginal land rights, for and against mining on Aboriginal land, and an associated campaign against "white stirrers" working with Aboriginal people and for neutral professionalism in administering community services to Aboriginal people.

I will weave the interplaying factors at work in the community by moving chronologically through key points that revealed the processes of power and interpretation at work. The story starts with the Noonkanbah people and the winning back of their land after ninety years of European occupation.

<u>Noonkanbah</u>

In 1971 the Noonkanbah mob walked off the station after conflict with the management led them to decide that further residence was untenable. While they left their country to join others in the rural slum of Fitzroy Crossing, their leaders immediately started working to get some land on which they could live as a community of intention. As in the Looma story, the original inhabitants of this region were strengthened in their resolve to stand up for land against the gadiya by an influx of Walmatjiri people from the desert through the first half of this century. The Walmatjiri came to find the white man already in charge of the station and did not experience the same annihilation as the indigenous Nyginya and Bunaba peoples. After the violence of conquest the local Aborigines adapted to the mob life of working cattle for gadiya in exchange for food. This left plenty of time and space to keep their own way of life and beliefs intact. There were no schools for the children until later and, by working in with the rhythm of the sheep and later cattle station, there was plenty of time to attend to the ceremonies necessary to looking after the land.

The shock for the mob came with the implementation of the pastoral award of 1968,[112] when for the first time they realized their whole way of life was under threat. What had happened to other Aboriginal people back in 1800 was happening to these Aboriginal people in 1970 and, like many Aboriginals before them, they fought against the change. They walked off the station but worked from Fitzroy Crossing to obtain land. Initially, many factors combined to make it appear their battle would be successful. After many letters and meetings, Erich Kolig, the anthropologist with the state Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, prepared a submission in January, 1973 representing and legitimating Aboriginal claim to land in this area for the ongoing pursuit of important ritual and

religious affairs. This was successful in engaging the support of many bureaucrats but the question remained as to what land was available.

Action progressed with the implementation of a community development approach and the arrival of Stan Davey and Jan Richardson in 1974. With their back-up, the group became more organized. Using a "chuck-in" system to raise money for community action from individual welfare checks, the group stepped up its lobbying activities and several local station purchases were considered by the federal government.

In January, 1976, Noonkanbah Station itself was advertised for purchase. Its very availability marked the end of an era for whites in the area. At the turn of the century, Noonkanbah, like Liveringa down river, had been a show place of pastoral endeavor. Then running sheep, it returned a massive profit and had attracted many distinguished visitors from the south to acclaim this victory of pioneers over the outback. Now times were hard: The only way the owners could profit from the sale was to sell to Aboriginal Affairs. Great bitterness was expressed that "our taxes" were being used to benefit "them," but pragmatics won out and the sale was completed.

On the 20th August, 1976 the federal government purchased the Noonkanbah for the community. In the Kimberley, as in the rest of Western Australia, station properties were crown land, owned by the Western Australian government but leased to their owners. These leases did not include any rights to the mineral wealth of the land, a fact which would have great bearing on future developments.

The state government only allowed the Noonkanbah sale to go through when the federal government agreed to the state Aboriginal Lands Trust holding the lease on behalf of the community. It was suggested at the time that in practice this would have no effect on the actual control of Noonkanbah by the Noonkanbah people. Because of the vast acreage involved, the state in seeking this control was expressing its usual concern about Canberra gaining access to state resources. Again this base for power and control by the state over the property was to have significant future consequences.

In September, 1976 there was much jubilation among Noonkanbah people as some two hundred people moved onto the station and the elders felt their vision had become an actuality.

Contesting Ideologies

> It has long been a truism that modernity is the "age of reason," but the quality of this "reason" must be specified. It is not necessarily the reason of philosophers and scientists; that antedated the modern period and is today, at best, the property of a small minority. The rationality of a modern society is "functional" rather than theoretical . . . Rationality here implies not great sweeps of theoretical reflection, but a certain attitude of calculation, classification, and manipulation of reality. (Berger, 1976, p. 190)

The reasoning the Noonkanbah people gave for their drive for land was quite simple from their perspective: Their land had been taken and now their rights were finally being recognized. They were glad but not grateful that justice had been done. They did not see their law as inferior to white

law but just different. They had great hopes that given space, the two ways of life could co-exist. Dicky Skinner, young and articulate in English, was selected as spokesperson for the group. He expressed some of their ideas in 1978, after the full realization that Noonkanbah was wide open to mineral development.

> White man law just comes over and is trying to put one over on Aboriginal law. But we want to get that Aboriginal law up, and make some people think what the Aborigine is, and what the tribal area is.
> Maybe that white man knows everything in this Kimberley, he's got it all in the map. But what about the Aboriginal map? This is the way. With the police; if he wants to arrest a man he fills the warrant and arrests a person. The same in the Aboriginal way, if we want to arrest a person we fill our own warrant. Same thing. A lot of these gudia[113] say that we just make up the story, but this thing been going on for a hundred thousand years back.
> Same thing with the pastoralist company. This land is owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust. Our question back to these people; why did they get this land when the white man came into this place. Did he say to the tribal people, "I'll buy these acres from you?" Maybe six or ten million acres or something like that. We didn't see that. We didn't hear about that. We never had the money in the finger. White man just come out and lay the concrete floor down, and Aborigines were just peeping out from the bush and wondering what that house was doing in his tribal area. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 26)

Skinner went on to explain why it had taken so long for the Noonkanbah people to take action for their Law and way of life. His statement makes it clear that from the subjugated position Aboriginals held, they were acutely aware of the politics of time and place in taking action and the crucial necessity of having their voices heard. Their aim was to be isolationist, to have no gadiya at all on the station, because of their belief that any white man living on the station would assume the position of "boss" and not be fully sensitive to Aboriginal ways:

> Gudia law is very strong. His law was standing up from that day as soon as the white man came in. They just don't believe in Aboriginal Law. Now this is the way we are thinking--to pull the white man from the ears[114] to listen to what the Aboriginal Law will say.
> For a long time Aboriginal people didn't mention this sort of thing, didn't put it through to the white man. They were frightened of the white man. If the people gave a white man a hiding the gudia used to come round with a gun and shoot Aboriginal people. This is why they were frightened and didn't talk about their own Law. Now this time we can say, "Why were you doing this before, shooting our people in this country? You must have thought you were settling wild Aboriginal people in this country." They were not wild. They were living as their own citizens.
> This is the time we want to pull this white man and put him on the right track. We want them to listen to Aborigines. We are looking for something to be changed. We can talk to people, make them understand what the Aborigine is. . . .
> Noonkanbah Station was bought by the Government for Aboriginal people and the same people say, "All right, we'll try and drill a hole in the Noonkanbah area."
> Some of our people just can't understand the white man. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 30)

The reasoning of the rulers of the state, in contrast, was of the modernist type Berger (1976) describes in his description of rationality. When they came to calculate that a way forward for the state's economic fortunes was in mineral exploration and development of the Kimberley region, they classified the Aboriginal presence there as easily manipulable to fall in with their plans. The classification of Aboriginals had moved on from a time when their demise was accepted as immanent.

Now it was right to be kind to them, but only as allowed by economic reality, which did not figure in the worth of Aboriginal existence and definitions of reality.

Babcock (1993) revisits the work of an early woman anthropologist, Elsie Clews Parsons, excluded from much of the discourse of this male dominated discipline because her feminism allowed her to be classified outside the realm of scientific endeavor, into the realm of propaganda and politics. In her critique of oppositional thinking and the binarism integral to hierarchical social control, Parsons concluded, with respect to the position of women in American society, that:

> Classification is 9/10ths of subjection and the more thoroughly a woman is classified the more easily she is controlled. The *new woman* means the woman not yet classified, perhaps not classifiable, the woman *new* not only to men, but to herself. (quoted in Babcock, 1993, p. 62)

Parsons published this work in 1916. Now postmodern feminism argues that gender identity is always provisional, positional, and strategic (Babcock, 1993). Yet modernism encouraged a belief in the fixed nature of identities, of gender and race if not so openly class. When it came to Aboriginal people in Western Australia, they had been so thoroughly classified as passive dependents of the welfare system that they were both generally controlled in their behavior and their controllers believed that this was their inherent nature. The taken-for-granted positivism of this ideology did not allow that there were competing models of truth and interpretation operating in the field. When it became obvious that people such as Dicky Skinner were speaking in a voice different to what rulers had heard from Aborigines before, it meant that Aborigines were being manipulated by those who did not share an understanding of the common good. Counter-manipulation would then soon put things right again.

The State Election of 1977

This was the event that served to clarify and harden ideological attitudes among all players. Some Aboriginal people had voted in the two previous State elections of 1968 and 1974, both of which Alan Ridge won comfortably. In 1977, Ernie Bridge, the president of the Halls Creek Shire Council, stood as a Labor Party candidate against Ridge. Bridge's mother had been an Aboriginal woman, married to a white man, in an era in which this was most uncommon, as well as often illegal. The family had successfully developed pastoral properties in the Halls Creek area and Ernie was now also a successful businessman with wider interests. Privileged by his half-caste and "boss" status, Bridge personally was not suffering as other Aboriginal people. He was however aware of injustices continuing to be perpetrated on Aboriginal people in outback areas. In 1975 a group of Goldfields Aboriginals suffered a violent encounter with police at Skull Creek, the site of an earlier Aboriginal massacre. Bridge served on the ensuing Royal Commission of inquiry into the incident and became cognizant of the thoroughgoing racism of the operations of government (Bolton, 1981). Shortly after this experience he committed himself to stand as the Labor candidate for the seat of Kimberley.

Aware of the increased enrollment by Aboriginal people[115] in the months leading up to the election, the government became worried that there was a chance that Ridge could lose his seat to Bridge. On the day of the election, the Liberal party flew in five white, male, Perth lawyers to act as

scrutineers at strategic polling booths and to instruct local members of the Party on how to minimize the Aboriginal vote: this at a time when the only lawyers in the Kimberley were "bush lawyers" apart from flying visits from Aboriginal Legal Service lawyers. I still remember the sense of shock as we realized just how calculated this plan to deprive people of their right to vote had been. The Liberal scrutineers had required polling booth officials to literally interpret the Electoral Act in determining eligibility to vote. People had been asked questions like "Have you sworn allegiance to the Queen?" and "Have you read the Constitution?" They were asked to state their full residential address when many people did not have a residence. Overall, the aim was bamboozlement.

An interesting phenomenon, that was to be used in the future as we became aware of it, was that most white women were just presumed to be on the side of the anti-Aboriginal forces. While great care was taken not to let any of the known male welfares find out what was going on, a homemaker at Derby, a respectable wife and mother, was able to ingratiate herself with a group of Liberal supporters celebrating the success of their strategy. The evidence she collected there as a passive observer became an important part of preparations for the subsequent court case.

Bridge challenged Ridge's 93 vote win in the Court of Disputed Returns. A network of supporters throughout the Kimberley helped the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Labor Party collect evidence and, following a hearing that sat throughout the region, the judge found for Bridge and declared the result invalid. The re-run became even more bitter: The Liberal party contacted people still on the roll who had moved out of the area permanently and tried in various ways to dampen Aboriginal enthusiasm for voting. Three dummy candidates, including an Aboriginal woman, stood in the hopes of confusing electors and splitting the Aboriginal vote. This time Ridge won by 205 votes and set the scene for increasing polarization of the electorate, which gave rise to alternative Aboriginal empowerment strategies.

The Kimberley Land Council 1978

Formally instituted on Noonkanbah Station in May, 1978, this Aboriginal organization was formed to lobby for Aboriginal land and political rights. Commitment to it by Aboriginal people from throughout the Kimberley was engendered by a combination of factors. Across the border in the Northern Territory, fellow Aboriginals were finally achieving their Land Rights through federal legislation. On the state scene, Premier Court was making it clear that he would demonstrate to multinational interests that they need have no fear of Aboriginal interference to their exploration or development plans in his "detribalized" state.

A Broome traditional elder, Tommy Edgar, expressed the mood of the Land Council meeting and his own entanglement with the forces of Catholicism when he said: "We have been saying "yes, Boss" and "yes Father" for too long" (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 91). The Noonkanbah meeting decided that as an organized umbrella group for regional communities, the Kimberley Land Council would lobby and take all possible action to address Aboriginal issues of land, mining, housing, drinking and community infrastructure needs. These last were issues like setting up community

schools and teaching in local Aboriginal languages rather than sending their children to English-only government schools. The main support for this initiative came from the more traditionally-oriented people so that the Broome Aboriginal community as a whole was not vitally involved in this early initiative.

State Government Initiatives

Voting.

Even before the Court of Disputed Returns had brought in its findings, the government had tried to change the electoral act to prevent the use of how-to-vote cards by illiterate voters. On that occasion some of their own Liberal party members crossed the floor against the legislation. In 1978 there was a government commissioned inquiry into the Electoral Act conducted by Judge Kay, which recommended that greater assistance be given to illiterate Aboriginal voters (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989). In the subsequent amendments the opposite occurred: No longer could I or any other elector witness the enrollment card for a voter. Now they had to be witnessed by a police officer, Justice of the Peace, Clerk of Courts, or an Electoral Officer. This effectively limited Aboriginal access to their voting rights. The second amendment made it an offense to persuade or induce an elector to make application for a postal vote. This would serve to limit the spread of information to Aboriginal people as to how they could vote in the absence of a local ballot box.[116]

An interesting Aboriginal response was the high enrollment in Adult Literacy Classes where the dual aims stated by students again and again were that they wanted to learn how to sign their name for the voting and for their check (meaning from Social Security).

Aboriginal land.

A considerable proportion of Western Australia, especially in the desert and the remote northern Kimberley, was in fact Aboriginal reserve land, dating from Native Welfare days and now vested in the Aboriginal Lands Trust. In 1978 the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Commissioner, a state bureaucrat, at the request of the Oombulgurri Community, denied entry permits to two diamond exploration companies to the Forest River reserve. The Government response to this misreading of their wishes was an immediate amendment to the relevant Act to vest the power to grant entry permits in the Minister for Community Welfare instead of his Commissioner. This put the administration of Aboriginal reserve lands more directly under the control of politicians sensitive to the priority being placed on mineral development over Aboriginal wishes.

Mining.

In a connected move in the same session of Parliament the government amended the Mining Act. Vesting enormous discretionary power in the Minister for Mines, it enabled this Minister to

authorize the holder of a miner's right to enter an Aboriginal reserve without an entry permit. Miners were thus exempted from abiding by the provisions of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Act. This obviated the need for any consultation by mineral explorers with, let alone approval from, the occupants of Aboriginal reserve land. Noonkanbah as a pastoral lease had never had even this limited legal protection from mining activity.

Pastoral leases for Aboriginal people.

A Western Australian member of the federal Liberal government, Ian Viner was appointed Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I can only imagine this was a strategy to dampen rabid Western Australian Liberal criticism of federal policy on Aboriginal issues. This Minister came under heavy public attack from Sir Charles Court for what was seen as his inept handling of this portfolio before there was an unannounced, "gentleman's agreement that there would be no further purchases of pastoral leases for Aboriginal groups in Western Australia" (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 99). Up to this time there had been relatively few such purchases and this move effectively limited the chances of Kimberley Aboriginal communities obtaining further land bases on which to develop communities of intention.

Other Players

The Broome Mining Warden's Court--November, 1978.

As the state government moved to tighten its control over the planned mineral exploration and development of the Kimberley, the Noonkanbah people took their own action in response to their realization that their community of intention was threatened by this mining development:

> By May, 1978, four hundred and ninety-seven claims had been pegged on Noonkanbah Station . . . The claims were held by about thirty different groups ranging from the largest mining houses in the world to small-time prospectors hoping to get lucky and cash in on the boom. These claims of one hundred and twenty hectares each covered a total of just under sixty thousand hectares, or thirty-five percent of the station, including all of the main topographical features so rich in meaning to the Noonkanbah people. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 103)

In June, 1978 the community asked the Aboriginal Legal Service to take any legal steps possible to stop further exploration on the station. The grounds of objection lodged before the Mining Warden revolved around the threat to sacred sites on the property, the threat to the newly created independent Aboriginal life style, and the threat to the pastoral activities of the station.

I well remember the day in November, 1978 when some forty Aboriginal lawmen and spokesmen trucked into Broome to take action via the law court. They came to the welfare office first thing to spruce up in true station style. This was signified in the splashing of water on hair and hand combing of unruly locks into some semblance of order. They then mustered under the tree outside the

office to gather courage before crossing the road into the threatening environment of the courthouse. It was a big thing for these bushmen to bring their issue into the white territory of Broome.

The magistrate hearing the case, David McCann, had formerly served in Hong Kong and was no stranger to the idea of a pluralistic legal system, in contrast to the legal dogma the government was beginning to circulate that there could only be "One Land, One Law." McCann, known to me through his work on the Broome Children's Court as a sensitive and reflective man, sat through two days of legal argument and evidence from Aboriginal people and an anthropologist. He could find no legal basis to support the objections but concluded:

> I have written at some length rather than summarily dismiss the matters raised by the Objectors. It would be insensitive not to recognize the sincere and deep interest of these Aboriginal people in the land they see as theirs. It is clear that they are worried and, to a degree, feel threatened by the mining development in the area. This concern and worry has manifested itself in the objections made to these claims. It is a matter of comfort that this manifestation has taken a lawful, as distinct from an illegal and hostile, form.
> If only as a matter of self-interest, the Government, the Mining Companies and the community at large would do well to look at the issues raised in these proceedings and take positive steps to attempt to abate the concern expressed by the Aboriginal people. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 23)

Such moderation was not to be. The legal action, funded by the federal government through the Aboriginal Legal Service, only served to escalate state determination to put a stop to such nonsense. On the Aboriginal side, a key figure now entered the unrolling drama. This was Steve Hawke, who was later to document the story in the text <u>Noonkanbah</u> on which I am heavily dependent in writing this chapter. A free lance journalist based in Darwin, Hawke came to Broome to cover the story of the court case for a national newspaper as a result of the Kimberley Land Council's lobbying efforts to engage the attention of the Australian media in the Noonkanbah story. I met him then as Steve Masterson, his mother's maiden name, because he did not want people to guess that he was the son of Bob Hawke, then head of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and in 1983 to become Prime Minister of Australia. Young and slight, Steve found himself irresistibly drawn into the tragedy being played out in the impressive and impassive, wooden paneled colonial Broome court house.

He returned to Noonkanbah with the people, spent some time there listening to their story, and committed himself to assisting in whatever way he could if requested. After a few days he returned to Darwin.

Amax.

The mining company Amax now took the lead in the unfolding story. The holder of the only oil exploration permit on Noonkanbah, it wrote to the community in 1978 of plans to cut 83 kilometers of seismic lines on the station. Then, in March, 1979, the company advised site works for drilling would commence in May or June. Amax had been a key player in the development of the Pilbara iron ore deposits, in partnership with the two Australian mining giants, Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd. and Colonial Sugar Refinery. Many of the executives of this huge American multinational had a close

personal relationship with Sir Charles Court. On the scale of their world activities, Noonkanbah was a very small operation, especially as preliminary seismic reports showed no great promise of a significant oil find (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989).

After fruitless negotiations with Amax representatives to prevent the drilling, the Noonkanbah people turned to the protection of the Aboriginal Heritage Act, which offered legal guards against the destruction of sites deemed by anthropologists to be of ritual and religious significance to Aboriginal people. The drilling site was near a point called Pea Hill--a site of significance in the local dreamtime stories explaining how the world was made. Pea Hill was one of the resting places for Looma, the blue-tongued lizard woman who journeyed to and finally died at Looma. The Western Australian Museum, which administered the Aboriginal Heritage Act dispatched an anthropologist to verify the authenticity of this claim.

Anthropology.

Suddenly anthropology, that most academic of disciplines, took center stage in the on-going debate. On their word might rest the outcome of this battle. It was not a situation in which its practitioners were experienced. Most often they wrote understandings of events after the facts. Applying anthropology to ongoing actualities brought with it all the seductions and threats of politics so well known to sociology and social work. The first report prepared by the Aboriginal Sites Department of the Museum advised that the preferred Amax drill site was not acceptable in terms of the Aboriginal Heritage Act. This was not a satisfactory finding for the state government.

A broken broker.

The community welfare team in Fitzroy Crossing was coming under increasing pressure, as were we all to a lesser extent. It was quite clear to Court and his Ministers that all this trouble was the direct result of our presence in the Kimberley. The officer working with the Noonkanbah people decided in May, 1979 to relinquish his now untenable role as a broker between the bureaucracy and the community. In his place, Steve Hawke was invited to come and live and work with the people. Employed by the community Hawke had no formal ties with either federal or state bureuacracy. One of his first tasks was to organize an intensive lobbying and media campaign to persuade the public that the anthropological decision of the Museum should be upheld. Dicky Skinner and other spokespeople flew to Perth to address public meetings and television audiences to get their word across.

On May 28th, at a Cabinet meeting, the redoubtable Court decided that the only way ahead was linearly forward. To this end it was necessary:

> to establish a benchmark--to discourage Noonkanbah and other similarly restless communities from believing that political agitation would be allowed to divert the Government or impede the mining boom. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 137)

The first move forward was to communicate to the Trustees of the Museum that unless they saw fit to consent to the Amax drilling, the Minister would direct them to do so. The determination of this continuously frustrated government heightened as Vice-President Arthur Reef of Amax warned "Court that the issue was beginning to attract widespread attention and could endanger the State's reputation as a safe locality for international investors" (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 143).

Public servants.

Warming to the task at hand, Court stepped up a style of interaction with public servants that saw the traditions of the Westminster style of administration fading. I reproduce here at length comments recorded by the Museum Director, John Bannister, on the 5th June, 1979. They capture some of the emotional climate in which many of us were now daily operating.

> Discussion in the Premier's office began with him explaining that while I might be offended by what he had to say I should realize that his government had to govern. It could not allow instrumentalities to put obstacles in the way, when he, the Premier, knew that such obstacles were the result of political pressures being applied. From his own knowledge of the Noonkanbah situation . . . it was obvious to him that the presence of sites and their significance was a "trumped up job" and had probably been engineered by political advisers to the Community. If these kind of problems were going to continue, and he could only see the situation worsening, then the Act would have to be changed. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 144)

Bannister moved to defend the integrity of his staff and of the anthropological procedures followed.

> The Premier made it quite clear that in his view this sequence of events was typical of the methods now being employed by the advisers to Aboriginal communities to advance their own political ends. He wanted to make it quite clear to me that the Museum would be increasingly used in this way for those ends and that his view of the Museum's activities would be colored by that knowledge. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 144)

Displaying considerable fortitude in the face of this open equation of knowledge with power, Bannister that same day formally advised his Minister of the outcome of the anthropologist's latest research trip to Noonkanbah:

> Mr. Bindon has, despite considerable effort expended in searching the zone and discussing its significance with the relevant Aboriginal people, been unable to discover any part of the zone which can be disturbed without giving offense to the local community. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 144)

Then in the face of considerable negative media coverage on the government's activities, there was a sudden backdown in government resolution as everybody prepared for the next state election to be held in March, 1980.

<u>First forced transfer of a welfare.</u>

The major event of the second half of 1979 so far as welfares in the Kimberley were concerned occurred in Fitzroy Crossing. The precipitating factor was a campaign by Aboriginal communities for the removal of Sgt. Malcolm Cole. Known to me as a cousin of my brother's wife, this man was known in Fitzroy Crossing as:

> "The Town Tamer," and a new one bestowed by the white drinkers at the local hotel, "Knockemdown." He had a history of taking on the roughest postings in the force and years earlier had been the subject of controversy in Broome. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 168)

The story I was told in Broome was that a local Aboriginal man, one of the Djiagween family, had been taken by Cole from a game of kuntz[117] and was next seen in hospital with substantial injuries. Following an investigation the Police Department undertook to ensure that, in future postings, Cole would not be appointed to areas with a substantial Aboriginal population. The Cole family came from the Bruce Rock area--a small wheatbelt town in the south-west which publicly boasted in earlier years of the effective steps it had taken to exclude all Aboriginal people from its boundaries. With regard to Cole's position at Fitzroy Crossing:

> The Aboriginal leaders alleged that he was responsible for a series of assaults and unduly rough treatment of Aboriginal prisoners. During his term in the town the meal money allowance[118] for the provision of meals to prisoners, which was paid direct to him as the local officer in charge, had increased by a factor of more than four; proving that if nothing else, the rate of arrests had risen dramatically. (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 168)

An internal police investigation recommended Cole's transfer, but then in a dramatic turnaround, the Police Commissioner, Owen Leitch, attended a town meeting dominated by Cole's white supporters. Overnight, it was not Cole who was to be forced to leave, but Stan Davey and his wife, the main creators of a community development approach in the area. At the time this happened, Michael and I were in Perth awaiting the birth of our first child. Emotionally, I had not been able to stay in Broome for the delivery, as the chief government doctor was a major antagonist in the battle developing between local business interests intent on developing Broome as a major tourist resort and Aboriginal people beginning to articulate their interests. So I was in the home of one of my relatives when extensive media coverage played of the clash between Cole and Davey. When I commented that it seemed most unreasonable to support a man known to bash Aboriginals, one of my close relatives commented, "Fran, when will you get it? A bit of two-by-four[119] is the only language they understand."

Brendan was born and we returned to Broome in the early months of 1980. I was to be on maternity leave for a full year and another social worker was replacing me, though I retained involvement with the homemakers. This marked a time of change in the welfare industry in the Kimberley. It seemed that new officers were not only chosen for their commitment to working within a community development approach. Depending on who made the final choice, it was just as likely

that they would be chosen for their capacity to keep out of trouble. In Broome, welfare moved out of the old ramshackle office into new luxurious, purpose built offices across the road. These were built by the Shire Council as a money-making project to accommodate the increasing number of both state and federal agencies that were locating in Broome. No longer were welfare and the church the only sites of helping in town and, in concert with the development of Aboriginal-run agencies in town, it became possible for welfare to retreat to a more controlled and focused interpretation of statutory responsibilities.

The new social worker commented soon after arrival that she had heard there was a lot of community development happening in town but she couldn't see any. I sympathized with her view. I well remember my own arrival in this dusty, quiet town. It was hard to imagine anything had ever happened from the look of it. It was only by talking to people that I came to learn of the rich history of community activities in this place. Though things had improved since my arrival in 1976, people were still living in bad conditions on the reserves, unemployed, and alcoholic. The social worker was quite clear that a professional focus on child protection was what was needed and that there was no need for political involvement. I could sympathize with that view too: I did not start out conceiving of myself as political but it did not take long to pick up that message from others.

The 1980 State Election

> Alan Ridge bin cheatem Ernie Bridge
> Now Ernie Bridge bin beatem Alan Ridge.

A small boy greeted me with this rhyme on my arrival at Bidyadanga Community, some ninety miles south of Broome, shortly after the 1980 election. It captures some of the local spirit of the time. The actual results were not, however, likely to move any resolution of the issues closer, but indeed only served to confirm the government's interpretation of what was happening in the Kimberley. The only two losses to the government were both in the Kimberley, where Ernie Bridge won the lower house seat of Kimberley and Peter Dowding, an Aboriginal Legal Service lawyer won the upper house seat of North Province.

Within a week, Court had resumed the offensive. In midnight raids four people were arrested by members of the Fraud Squad flown in from Perth. One was Steve Hawke and, more disquietening for me, another was the Jennifer Gardiner referred to in Chapter One. She was formerly the welfare in Kununurra, now on maternity leave with a son slightly older than Brendan. When I heard the news that Jenny had been taken to the police lock-up without her baby, all I could think of was the times I had been in court with arrested feeding mothers, whose milk overflowed in public as they were required to conform to police procedures. The four were arrested by the terms of the amended Electoral Act because it was believed they had given information to Aboriginal people on how to apply for a postal vote.

The following week, on 28th March, 1980, Premier Court and Police Commissioner Owen Leitch made speeches to the passing out parade of graduating police officers. They both told the

graduates that the greatest evil they would face in service were political and social activists determined to undermine the Australian way of life. Leitch went on to say that the recent electoral crimes of such activists were likely to force a rerun of the Kimberley election. This was quite an extraordinary statement as police in the Australian system are expected to act independently of their political masters. When the cases did come to court all charges were dismissed.

Court in a ministerial reshuffle following the election, appointed Bill Hassell, 35-year old lawyer to the joint portfolio of Police and Community Welfare. This unlikely pairing of responsibilities signaled the increasingly interventionist stance this government was taking to the supposedly apolitical workings of its administration. Just a few years older than myself, Hassell was a rising star of the right wing of the Liberal party.   He disconfirmed my hypothesis that intolerance towards Aboriginal aspirations were peculiar to the identity of older, uneducated Australians. The Hassell family had been one of the pioneering pastoral families in the state. A female ancestor, Ethel Hassell, living on the family's south coast pastoral property as it was cleared of indigenous inhabitants in the 1880's had written one of the first mediating texts sympathetically portraying the different language and culture of Aboriginal people. This was first published in 1975 under the title My Dusky Friends. Minister Hassell obviously considered such ideas of little interest. I found it disconcerting that a peer in age and educational background could be ethnocentrically rigid in constantly repeating his favorite dictum: One Land, One Law.

Hassell's patriarchal nature revealed itself when he instructed welfare officers in mining towns of the Pilbara region that they were no longer to render assistance to wives seeking to leave their husbands. Since many of these towns were company towns and housing was the entitlement of the worker, there was often nowhere for non-working wives to turn to with their personal troubles without such assistance. Hassell's interpretation of the welfare mandate was that it should do nothing to attack the integrity of the family. Hassell also made it clear that his prime attachment was to law and order issues, with welfare issues being of a subsidiary nature.

Noonkanbah Drilled

The focus now returned to having Amax drill for oil at all cost. The Museum finding that there were sacred sites involved was overturned. Over strong protest and with police protection, Amax moved its drilling equipment onto the site and set up protective fencing. On the 1st April, 1980 Professor Ronald Berndt, the dignified and respected father of anthropology in the state, went public with a demand that a halt be called to all drilling activity. As the media focused in on the scenario, the Noonkanbah community managed to evict Amax and their local contractors from the site. Union bans were in place to prevent other workers taking over and local non-union contractors decided it wasn't worth risking their continuing residence and business in the area. Then the oil rig had to be moved south for a contract and the community won two months reprieve. Court was furious and speaking of the community's eviction of Amax and police on the 2nd April, he had this to say:

> Today's incident at Noonkanbah deserves the strongest condemnation. It will have a devastating effect on the reputation and standing of Aborigines in the Western Australian community . . . In the future responsible Aborigines will look back with very deep regret on what has happened today and on the way they have been misled by outsiders to follow such a disastrous course. As far as the government is concerned--drilling will proceed whether by Amax or someone else. . . To avoid placing in jeopardy all they have gained in goodwill and in very material terms, responsible Aborigines throughout the State should be taking a special interest in persuading the group at Noonkanbah to come to their senses and get rid of the stirrers who have so changed their normal behavior.
>
> The Government will do what it has to do in this matter--let there be no mistake about that . . . As always we stand ready to talk to responsible Aborigines, but we will have no truck with the stirrers, and those who would subvert not only the Aborigines but the nation. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 222)

In this message, Court also threatened there would be no more pastoral leases transferred to Aboriginal communities unless reason prevailed. He make this statement knowing there would be no public circulation of the fact that he had already fixed this very outcome with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ian Viner. While these strong-arm tactics may have had the desired effect on some Aboriginals dependent on white patronage, their overall effect was to build links between the diversity of cultures operating among Aboriginal people. So Jack Davis, Nyoongah poet and playwright from Perth, responded to the issue in the following terms:

> I think every caring person both black and white realized what the Noonkanbah incident was about. Especially blacks in the south and in the cities. For years we had been demonstrating for Land Rights. I think to most blacks the call for Land Rights was slightly nebulous. They knew it was an important black issue but had difficulty in defining it. But what happened in Noonkanbah seemed to solidify their feelings. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 223)

For Broome man Pat Dodson, who the Catholic Church had hoped would be their first Aboriginal priest and who later became a Royal Commissioner in the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Inquiry at the end of the eighties, the issue was:

> Everything was focused in on Noonkanbah. The emotional struggle of these people standing up against the mining company, and the Government and its blatant use of force to break down the resistance of the people. Up to that point it was considered that there was no way of dealing with mining companies. Noonkanbah was a watershed in terms of standing up to the companies and trying to think of ways to influence them, and to protect Aboriginal interests in land and in particular sacred sites, instead of subordinating Aboriginal spirituality to financial gain. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 223)

One land, one law.

W. W. Mitchell, a public relations consultant in close relationship to Court was charged with mounting a media campaign that would smooth the way for the final assault on Pea Hill. Mitchell was also the father-in-law to Don Gordon, my social work supervisor during final placement at Derby. In his low key way Don was the facilitator of many Aboriginal initiatives and land acquisitions. He was the only male professional social worker I knew who resisted the seductions of promotion up the welfare hierarchy away from clients. He was now working in Kununurra. We couldn't resist teasing him about his father-in-law, who, in a never-ending stream of letters-to-the-editor, labeled us all

communists and socialists. We wanted to know if Mitchell really could see Don as a communist--gentle Don who always worked out of listening to the client first and foremost. "No," said Don. His father-in-law knew Don to be some sort of religious do-gooder; it was just the rest of us that were really communist.

Sir Charles Court betrayed much the same sort of logic when he met one of our number in an outback office. Previously an Anglican priest in the same parish as Sir Charles' residence, this officer met the premier when Court visited the town on an election campaign. He asked the premier if he really saw him as a communist. Sir Charles said he could see that this particular man wasn't, but it must be all those others out in the community--his subordinates. This also gave rise to great hilarity as there was no one out there and no subordinates to this officer.

Hilarity was needed to steel us for what lay ahead. Some of the virulence of Mitchell's public relations campaign is captured in one of the his many letters to the editor of the daily newspaper:

> In 40,000 years, Aborigines gave the land nothing; took what they could find; wandered from one eaten out place to another, leaving nature to repair the damage; created no arable culture; discovered no minerals and created no durable structures. (Mitchell, 1980)

When Amax became mediatory in interactions with the Noonkanbah people, Court was quick to correct them. In a telex to Vice-President Reef, Court advised:

> We were somewhat embarrassed when your man told the museum people Amax might be able to drill on Ellendale instead of Noonkanbah, and this at a time when we were prepared to take a stand about Noonkanbah. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 144)

Secure in the knowledge that the Aboriginal were the puppets of sinister forces, another part of the strategy became the despatch of government ministers to Noonkanbah so they could explain directly to the community what was going on and why mining should go ahead. The tapes of some of these meetings capture the cultural chasm in communication that was operating between the two groups. So Bill Grayden, Minister for Culture, explained how it was his task to protect Aboriginal culture:

> Under the protection of Culture we have things like Aboriginal culture which we want to see developed, such as drawings you have in various caves and in other places. They are of tremendous importance, and we've seen the designs, you have the dresses the women wear, you have the patterns on the curtains and other materials, and they are very popular throughout the world. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 176)

When this direct intervention did not have the desired effect Court visited Noonkanbah in person on the 30th May. A photo of the occasion, taken in the woolshed, shows Court heavy set and determined, with silver-haired head pugnaciously thrust forward and arms akimbo (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 248). He is standing over the chairs of five elders arranged in a semi-circle round him. Two of these are trying to hold a gaze[120] at the Premier but the rest have their heads drooped. The posture of all can be read as one of submission.

Olive Bieunderry, a key female mediating player, made a final plea to Sir Charles as he left the meeting:

> Can't these people be left alone? Isn't Barrow Island[121] and the rest of Australia enough? These people are out of their minds with tension. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 249)

It is doubtful if this Aboriginal woman's voice was heard. Sir Charles appears to have left the meeting confidant that these people had been told the facts. But the submission to be read in people's postures was rather a typical Aboriginal style of meeting behavior where all are expected to have the floor in turn for their say. A listening posture signals respect for the other's words. Nobody read Sir Charles' body language as indicating a willingness to hear their side of the story. The letter the community sent to Sir Charles following the meeting indicates as much:

> At the meeting on the 30th May, 1980, and in your letter dated 31st May, 1980, you assumed that we recognize the State Government's ownership of the Land. Instead of this you should have recognized us, the Elders who hold the Law for this country as the real owners of the Land.
> You are wrong thinking that the Museum and others know everything about our Law and Sacred Areas. Already the Museum has treated the maps they made of our area like a comic. Do you think we would be trying so hard to stop the drilling if the area was not so important to us? . . . To expect us to tell you everything in our Law in one day is arrogant. The State Government has not given us a proper hearing and you demonstrated this on Friday. Instead of talking you should have been listening; instead of assuming you had all the knowledge, you should have been trying to learn. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 250)

And so the tension escalated. In the next two months Court and his supporters took an increasingly hard line and personally attacked those seen as party to opposition to plans of economic development. The enemy included the obvious targets of the trade unionists now expressing support of the Noonkanbah people; church people and anthropologists arguing for tolerance and understanding and all the "white stirrers" working with Aboriginal people. It also extended to the federal Liberal government and in this two particular people suffered the full brunt of public vilification.

Federal Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs.

Senator Fred Chaney, a Perth lawyer turned politician had succeeded Ian Viner as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. A Catholic humanist, he was considered as a potential leader of the federal party when he was appointed to the sensitive position of Aboriginal Affairs. On appointment he fulfilled the requirement of being a Western Australian and so able to allay that state's fears of Canberra interference in their "Aboriginal problem." In the Western Australian state conference of the Liberal Party held in July, 1980, Chaney made the following comment:

> It has interested me that over the 16 months or so that I have held this portfolio, I have not had, that I can recall, any invitation to speak to a Liberal Party group on Aboriginal affairs. It has interested me that in a field in which there is a great deal of debate within the Liberal Party, you are totally uninterested in my taking part in the debate. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 256)

At the beginning of August, Chaney and Viner wrote a joint letter to the newpaper:

> In WA it has become fashionable to ridicule and condemn spiritual association with the land, to insult Aborigines to whom it is still of great importance, and to assert that sacred sites are found only after mineral exploration has uncovered promising finds on Aboriginal land. This attitude assumes that while the traditional culture of the Aboriginal people may be surviving in small pockets of isolated land in Central Australia and Arnhem Land, the invasion of the dominant white culture with its seductive trappings has effectively destroyed Aboriginal culture elsewhere.
>
> Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who espouse this view are effectively cutting off all common ground for negotiating a just settlement in both social and economical terms with Australia's Aboriginal people. In simple terms it is an unwillingness to be tolerant, or to accept that all people do not have the same ways of looking at things . . . It is ironic that the Noonkanbah issue, which has brought land rights into focus in Western Australia, should center on the question of equal rights after centuries of what can only be described as unequal rights. (Chaney & Viner, 1980, p. 5)

This mediating action served the purpose of sealing their political fates. Chaney was effectively denied his ambitions of increasing political power. The actions of Viner and Chaney showed they had been seduced by the sort of intellectual nonsense for which Canberra was renowned. They had lost contact with what Western Australian men of intelligence knew. Sir Charles Court's resolve to drill a hole on Noonkanbah to finish any claims to special consideration of Aboriginal beliefs was implacable. Some idea of Court's interpretation of Viner and Chaney's plea for conciliation can be read in a letter he later wrote to Chaney:

> I can hardly recall a statement which you have made which does not imply some criticism of the Western Australian Government. Perhaps if you have had a look at the overall situation and realized that we might have some capacity in these matters, and also some sensitivity in a deep and sensible Christian way, you might be able to reverse the situation which has developed. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 314)

The convoy.

On the 6th August, 1980 a convoy of over 50 trucks set off from the outskirts of Perth to transport the drilling rig to the Noonkanbah site. Planned with the exactitude and secrecy of a military operation, the scale of the scheme took people by surprise. Non-union truck drivers, lured by the promise of high pay were protected by a large force of police as the juggernaut made its way north on a six-day trip. Australian media were saturated with coverage of the event. Union picket lines in small towns along the way and an Aboriginal closure of a bridge in the Pilbara did little to halt the relentless move up the State. At the Broome turnoff twenty miles out of town, more than 200 people gathered along the highway to express their solidarity with the Noonkanbah people. Many were graduates of the Beagle Bay system, who had come to a realization of their connection with the people of the Fitzroy Valley through the hard line binary logic about Aboriginal people that had dominated discourse over the last few years.

> TV film of the convoy driving slowly yet inexorably through the protesters, led by police cars with sirens blaring and blue lights flashing against the orange sunset sky, made dramatic and disturbing footage.

When the convoy had passed, Tommy Edgar, a leading Elder of the Broome Community, tore off his shirt, and abused the police, shouting in his distress, "Kill me! Why don't you kill me?" (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 278)

The participation of Broome people in this futile attempt to sway state powers to a consideration of Aboriginal interests left a deep impression on the nature of racial interaction in Broome itself. As Jimmy Chi explains it:

Noonkanbah was the turning point in people's identification of themselves. They realized you couldn't be half this and half that. You had to make a stand about where you stood. I think it brought our own lot of people to realize that they were no different from every other Aboriginal in Australia. (Zubrycki, 1991)

On this day, Monday 11th August, I had driven past the demonstration on my way to a homemaker conference in Derby with a carload of Broome homemakers--both white and black. I remember we had car trouble and hailed down a passing police car for assistance. The policeman was very short with us as he was on his way to reinforce police numbers at the demonstration. When we arrived at Derby the atmosphere was oppressive. Aboriginal women had come to attend from all over the Kimberleys, but mainly to be closer to the news of the event that was on everyone's mind. We were all waiting for word of what now seemed the inevitable.

At Noonkanbah itself, the men gathered for a last ditch stand in a creek bed, Mickey's Pool, on the track into Noonkanbah. On the Monday night, some sixty men used their bodies and seven vehicles to form a blockade across the road:

Early the next morning the men saw a lot of dust. They knew the police were coming. Kurilji and Tiepin went up on the hill. They saw ten vehicles and thirty police waiting on the other side of the rise. The men knew they must be waiting for the bulldozer to come. Two paddy wagons were parked to the south. (From the Noonkanbah school newsletter, quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 280)

When the bulldozer did arrive the police, using Aboriginal Police Aides[122] as the front line force, moved the vehicles and bodies one by one. There were five white churchmen who had joined the Aboriginals in a show of solidarity. As the Aboriginal people set up a slow chant of singing for their country:

The police moved in and tried to arrest the white church people first. The police must have thought that once the Europeans were arrested then everyone else would give up and walk away. No one gave in. . .
Tiepin and Tojo were some of the first people arrested. Sam Fuller had to be carried away by two policeman because he kept on grabbing others when the police placed him under arrest. The police kicked Truman Boxer to make him walk to the paddy wagon. Joe Wunmah kept holding Kurilji's legs to stop the police carrying Kurilji away. As soon as they locked Kurilji up the police arrested Joe.
The road was cleared after twenty-two people had been arrested. The men who were left behind had broken hearts because they could not do anything but sit and wait for the convoy to come. Meanwhile the police stood along the road and watched everyone. It was a very sad time. (From the Noonkanbah school newsletter, quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 283-284)

In Derby at the conference, we soon learned of this development. I remember Olive Bieunderry laughing forlornly at the news her husband, Jimmy Bieunderry was in jail. They were both highly intelligent community leaders, who followed both Walmatjiri and Christian beliefs in their everyday actions. The shock of hearing about her husband marked an end to a long struggle Olive had made with others to be heard on their own terms. For the rest of that day we whites at the meeting stood aside to allow a women's meeting to be held in language. We white women gathered in the shade of a tree and were just together in our sense of despair that things could be any different.

At Noonkanbah too, Hawke and Gallagher (1989) report a mood of deep desperation. The police remained on guard against any further Aboriginal action and people just waited to hear the arrival of the convoy. The big contingent of media present was also dispirited as they waited to cover this story to its end. Then one of them picked up a national news broadcast: The drilling crew needed to operate the rig had been persuaded by Bob Hawke and the union movement not to operate the rig. Further, the Colonial Sugar Refinery, the owners of the rig, had stated they would not risk their industrial relations by using scab labor. The Noonkanbah people were going to win out against all the odds. "People were still exclaiming and explaining to one another as the rumble of the convoy was heard in the distance" (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 287).

Penetration at last.

Court was foiled again. At this time the Prime Minister, Malcom Fraser, moved to bring about some sort of settlement to the long drawn out conflict, perceived to be threatening Australia's international standing and his own reputation as a key supporter of black rights in South Africa. His tentative moves for appeasement received short shrift in a reply from Sir Charles Court:

> The public patience throughout Australia, according to the best information we are able to obtain, is fast running out with the Aborigines. It only wants a degree of firmness on the part of the Commonwealth and I think the nonsense would end. It is no time for "bleeding hearts." (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 297)

Pressurizing the Colonial Sugar Refinery to use non-union labor and the Aboriginal head of the Aboriginal Lands Trust to declare there were no sacred sites involved, Court moved in for the final blow. In this he was able to make use of local knowledge. At the end of August, knowing the people of Noonkanbah would be in Fitzroy for the annual race and rodeo meeting, a cobbled-together, non-union crew commenced their drilling operation. The final sad press release from the Noonkanbah community reads:

> We had this fight for a long time now, for three years. Charlie Court got round us using a dirty trick. All we can say is that the white man is mad. He doesn't know what he is doing.
> They might hurt that sacred maladji place. But we've still got our Law. We will live by that law. The white man can't kill that Aboriginal Law no matter how hard he tries.
> We can't say any more now, but we know we are not beaten. We are still strong. And we know that we are proud, and that Charlie Court, and Senator Chaney, and the Federal Government, and Ken Colbung[123] are the ones who are weak and shamed. (quoted in Hawke & Gallagher, 1989, p. 304)

The oil well proved to be dry but Sir Charles Court had seen his community campaign through to its bitter end. The Noonkanbah people, fighting for their community of intention, had been left without material territory. They retreated to spiritual territory. Shortly after this forced desecration, they became fundamentalist Protestant Christians. This accommodation to white man's ways allowed them to engage in a form of dialogue with the dominant culture. As one woman told me, "In heaven everyone will have land rights." A form of syncretism among some Looma and Noonkanbah people had predated the drilling saga, as some elders sought to make connections between the bible law and their own law. When I was at Looma, people talked about connections between their own Looma flood story and the story of the flood in the bible. Killer had often said to me that his mother's and father's law, together with Christian law, would make his people stronger (Crawford, 1976). Now this interpretation came to be seen as a way forward for many Noonkanbah people. However, while the Noonkanbah people temporarily retreated from the campaign field in this way, the end Court had expected to claims for Aboriginal land rights did not eventuate. Among other Aboriginal people, the push for land rights strengthened.

My Transfer From Broome

I returned from maternity leave to full-time work in October, 1980. We had a new house, a new office, and a new baby and it seemed to be a new era of welfare in the Kimberley. In my absence, the relieving social worker had prepared a report for the Director, Keith Maine, on the running of the Broome office. Written from the perspective of urban community service delivery, the report detailed many areas in which the full statutory services of the Department were not provided. Of particular note in the context of a rising feminist influence in policy considerations was the lack of local surveillance of the operation of child care facilities. In Broome this meant in particular a woman, who operated child care from her home for the children of meatworkers during the season the meatworks were opened. I drove past her place every day and nodded when we met in the street, but had never considered it a priority to actually call and inspect the conditions of her home. The specialist service for the licensing of child care facilities visited from Perth irregularly and I had presumed this was their work unless I had a direct complaint to investigate.

This one case was symptomatic of a general message I received from Head Office that the Broome office should be seen to attend to the welfare needs of all town residents and not just Aboriginal people. Locally I got the same message, as much of the work that formerly fell to welfare was now being picked up by new agencies. I was gradually adjusting to a new pace and style of welfare work, while increasingly enjoying family and leisure time. It was a time of retreat and recuperation from the commitment to a community development approach that had prevailed in the seventies and I was emotionally ready to fall back from the pressures of brokering and campaigning.

At the same time, with the growth of Broome and increasing business endeavors looking to profit from the development of this place as a tourist center, the issue of land rights became a controversial issue in Broome itself. In one instance, lobbying commenced to resettle the Kennedy

Hill Reserve people in town housing so the site could be redeveloped as a multi-story tourist hotel. I pointed out to the reserve residents the ways in which they could express their opinions on such a move. The local Labor members, Ernie Bridge and Peter Dowding were working closely with Broome people to take action to protect their current power base in this time of rapid economic development, while the local Liberal party members were keen to use their connections to the state government to ensure that nothing impeded their ambitions to profit from economic development.

The State Labor party had realized that there was another Upper House seat for the taking in the Kimberley at the next election and were building relationships with Aboriginal organizations such as the Kimberley Land Council. Media coverage of Aboriginal aspirations had not abated in a climate where the Australian policy of multi-culturalism was seeing meaningful changes in many areas of Australian life. The Labor party was taking full advantage of the leverage they had to portray the State Government conservatives as uncivilized, oppressive men of the past who were trying to shore up their vested interests. Labor politicians were able to successfully portray the conservatives as marginal to the future. State-wide opinion polls revealed that the Liberals had lost ground with the electorate. Nominations for the Upper House seat of North Province, which covered the Kimberley and Pilbara were about to open and the Liberals were worried about who the Labor party would endorse. We heard rumors that it was thought Michael, my husband, was preparing to nominate.

I was peripheral to this discourse as I went about my every-day practice. I can only imagine that it serves to explain the telephone call we received in June, 1981 advising that Michael and I were to be transferred to Perth at the direction of the Minister, Bill Hassell. There were no reasons given: This was a Ministerial prerogative. The phone call came at five o'clock of a Friday afternoon. I had arrived back from a day's field trip to One Arm Point in the company of an Aboriginal arts buyer from Perth. The pleasures of the day quickly faded as I learned that we were to report for work in Perth, 1,600 miles south in two weeks time; we were not to take any holidays due to us before leaving, and the decision was not amenable to appeal. There were no complaints about our activities; the Minister thought we would benefit from wider experience in the Department.

Winded is how I felt. For years we knew so many local white people who said they would like to arrange our transfer out of town. We had been so careful to give no actionable basis for such a move. Other welfares had done things like smoke marijuana and had been picked off easily. We had survived for longer than anyone else at that time as welfare officers and had been lulled into a false sense of security that staying alert and being responsible would keep us safe. Of course it was this very survival and the depth of our local knowledge that made us a threat in our lowly capacity as public servants, operating without direct supervision and only tenuous ties of communication to Head Office.

It seemed that part of the reason for our transfer was the wearing down of Keith Maine's commitment to a community development approach. A strong defender of his Kimberley staff all through the seventies, battle fatigue was setting in. Hassell had already forced him to appear twice before the Public Service Commissioner to explain his actions. These actions related to Maine's strong

resolve to deliver mandated services to Aboriginal people despite their political unpopularity. I have no difficulty picturing an emotionally exhausted Keith Maine deciding to let us go without a fight.

The next two weeks passed in a blur of packing up and trying to complete office work ready for hand-over. The person sent to temporarily administer the office while waiting for replacements to be appointed was supportive seeing out his last months with welfare before retirement. At our farewell party, his wife sat with my mother, who had flown up to help us pack and drive down south. The wife said to my mother, "Don't look now but I think there are Aboriginal people here." We laughed when told that story because most people at the party were Aboriginal. She was referring to the people who looked like the white Australian stereotype of a bush blackfella. The people of Broome with their sophisticated multi-cultural, multi-raced appearance she had accepted were Australians like herself.

We left feeling it was time to let go. To protest would just confirm local views that we were key manipulators of Aboriginal actions. To leave would hopefully allow the message to penetrate that Aboriginal people came to their own resolutions and took their own stands. At this stage I had formed my own binary logic of "them" and "us." I imagined a time stretching into the future, in which all of us that had networked in various ways to work for the empowerment of Aboriginal people and the achievement of well-being for all Australians, would continue to work together in coalition. I believed our transfer to Perth would not change that certainty.

An end to my age of innocence was about to begin at this point. Being plucked from the scene placed us in the kaleidoscope of shifting views and allegiances that reveal themselves in the continuous unfolding of history. There was both power and pain accompanying my developing consciousness of this complexity. We had achieved a limited notoriety over our transfer. Social workers drew back from me as one who had undermined their claim to professionalism or came forward to acclaim what I had achieved for the social work profession. Others were carefully neutral to my face, but I heard back their private comments were there is no smoke without fire. I must have done something to deserve my transfer.

Over the next twelve months there were many scenes where we were alternatively feted and shunned; lauded and ignored; rewarded and vilified, or monstered and valorized. These were strangely strengthening. "What would people think?" is one of my family's catch cries and I was always looking over my shoulder to find out. When you are treated as heroes by some and pariahs by others, not because of any particular knowledge these judges have of you but in reflection of their own prejudgements and values, it can be freeing. My own voice became much stronger and I followed it. Listening to the views of others enabled me to tune in on some of the multiple lenses with which the world is viewed, without imagining any one way was fixedly the right way.

<u>Finishing up with welfare.</u>

It was winter when we arrived in Perth to stay with my mother in her house on the river while we looked for a place of our own. I didn't do much looking for a long time. For weeks I dragged myself to work and back and otherwise stayed huddled by the heater thinking about what I had done

wrong: why I hadn't seen what was coming. I was strongly tempted to find out by consulting a psychiatrist, but was prevented by the strong cultural aversion to the idea of being therapized Scott (1993) identifies as operating among Australians.

My placement at first was back in the Perth Division of the Department that I had worked in ten years previously. Here, people spoke about their enormous caseloads and interaction with the public was primarily carried out through interviews in the office. It was disconcerting to find that a favorite past-time in the tea-room was the sharing of Aboriginal jokes such as "Why do Aboriginal people smell?" "That's so even blind people can hate them." At first, in my paranoia, I thought these were directed against me, but soon realized there was a profound indifference to where I had come from and where I was going. Rather, the jokes reflected a lack of engagement by welfare staff with the lived experience of Aboriginal people; in this they were representative of Western Australians in general.

While I agonized with self-blame, it dawned on me that among those male middle management in the bureaucracy aware of my forced transfer, many saw it as having nothing to do with me at all. When I was promoted to become acting supervisor of the Homemaker Service in Head Office, the expressions of guilt by those I was now interacting with caught me by surprise. It seemed that being a "white stirrer" was recognized as a male phenomenon. Avuncular gestures of atonement were made by those feeling responsible for having posted to me to Broome and thereby exposing me to the dangers of marriage to a stirrer. This taken-for-granted belief that I had done nothing to bring on my transfer needed digestion. Was I like an Aboriginal incapable of thinking and acting for myself unless stirred to it? Certainly, like other women in the Kimberley, I had consciously gained mileage in my practice from the knowledge that I was seen not to count, as not threatening. On the other hand, what did it mean for my sense of self to be seen to be invisible even if I knocked to be heard?

My answer to such questioning was a decision to resign from the Department with the expected arrival of my second child. Catherine was born in May, 1982 and I decided to retreat from the traumas of doing social work to become a full-time mother at home. Pat Grimoldby soon lured me out again by arranging for a ten-week contract position in which I was to write an orientation manual for non-Aboriginal workers in remote Aboriginal communities. This was a project close to my heart, and I devoted considerable energy to distilling some of the practice wisdom I and others had accumulated during our time in the Kimberley. When my completed document was forwarded to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs white bureaucrats who had funded my time, they rejected it as unsuitable in using the concept of power and covering history. My supervisor, an employee with the Community Welfare Department, sent me home with my text, saying he should have known better than to entrust this task to a radical like me. This rejection held me home again, though this text was later published as Jalinardi Ways (Crawford, 1989) after many years of informal circulation of the manuscript.

Two Labor Governments: 1983

Euphoria was high in 1983 when the Labor party came to power in both Western Australia and Australia. At last the coalition against the status quo had the base from which to put their ideas into action or so many of us thought. Now, all that had been resisted so strongly by the conservatives would become possible. Land rights had emerged as the Aboriginal priority, and many of the lawyers, union leaders, and politicians who had worked so hard on defining this issue with us were now in fact government ministers, with the power to put their ideas and knowledge into practice. Some had publicly expressed their purpose in entering politics as being to enable the achievement of land rights for Aboriginal people. In the field of welfare services many possibilities now seemed achievable: Aboriginal involvement in policy-making for Aboriginal people and welfare rules responsive to Aboriginal actualities.

Small beginnings were made in this direction and some of the male professionals who had been part of the Kimberley network were promoted to key positions in the new state administration. As time went on, however, it became obvious that the new relations of ruling may have involved a change of cast but not of script. I noted a repetitive pattern in my conversations with those friends and acquaintances who had ascended to positions of power in the new order. "Well Fran, the reality is . . . " or "You don't understand--the reality is . . . " A young male professional, excellently placed to capitalize on opportunities took a position as expert on Aboriginal issues, though this directly contradicted his previously stated philosophy of creating room whereby Aboriginals could speak for themselves. He explained his new stance in the following terms:

> Well Fran, if you had breast cancer, I'm sure you wouldn't want to wait for a female researcher to find the cure, would you? The reality is that there are just no Aboriginals professionally qualified to do the research work necessary to come up with the answers.

A Reassertion of the Relations of Ruling

I wondered what reality was so clearly visible to these new apparatchiks who used to be "one of us," and how the rest of us were going to come to see it too. Dorothy Smith's (1987) work speaks so forcefully to me in making sense of this experience. These men were now situated inside rather than outside the relations of ruling and the world looked different. For a while they used to join us[124] for parties and occasions, but that stopped when we didn't seem able to accept the new reality. We kept harking back to old agendas, not realizing they were non-operational or non-relevant in this new context. Wives of the new rulers were advised by their husbands to let unfruitful friendships lapse and Aboriginal workers who insisted on using old relationships to press political points were threatened with counseling for their emotionality. The men on the new network of ruling told themselves it was a shame all those others (who happened to be women, black or not professionally qualified) just weren't up to the new opportunities offered them.

Smith (1987) names such happenings as "relations of dominance." The circle of power was a closed circle of significance to which few women, blacks or non-professionals had access, but which was now seductively open to those with white, male, professional credentials. We had all been risk-takers together but now for some of us opportunities were opening up which made risk-taking so much less attractive. The seductions of their new ruling positions exemplified the double bind that W.I. Thomas identified in the early days of the Chicago School of Sociology as endemic to any understanding of society (Deegan, 1988a). The tension between changing society or benefiting from it had for some become irresistibly loaded.

Renato Rosaldo (1993b) has noted how the dominated must, of necessity, be aware of the cultural practices of those in the dominant position. Those in the unmarked position of power, in contrast, have no such necessity. Many of these newly powerful men had formerly studied with us the mores of Court and his supporters. Now a change of government had rendered them privileged by virtue of their maleness:

> Male privilege often appears invisible, even to itself. This male privilege can seem neuter with respect to gender, normal with respect to sexual orientation, fit with respect to health, adult with respect to age, traditionless with respect to ethnicity, colorless with respect to race, and odorless with respect to smell. (Rosaldo, 1993b, p. 81)

The option of refusing this privilege that would seem so obvious to those of us on the outside looking in is, Rosaldo argues, not such an easy choice for privileged men:

> Women have so routinely been excluded from the patriarchal line of succession that it requires a special effort of the imagination to conceive both how compelling the fictions of patriarchal succession can become and above all how devastating the threat of ostracism can appear. For men who have come to enjoy a vested right in male privilege, it can seem as if there is no place to go. From this perspective, banishment can seem like a sentence to wander forever in the wilderness. For women who have by fiat been excluded from the line of patriarchal succession on the other hand, the threat of formal exclusion probably appears more like another dose of everyday life than a form of intimidation. Patriarchs cannot threaten women with disinheritance if they were never in the line of succession in the first place. (Rosaldo, 1993b, p. 86)

In this new circle of significance, the relations of ruling that permeate society were little changed by a change of political party. And within the relations of ruling of Western Australia as a whole, Aboriginal issues had no power base. The new government had attracted the strong support of the newly rich entrepreneurs of the sixties boom. These men were not acceptable to the old pastoral elite who perceived them to be significantly lacking in cultural capital. The most flamboyant of them, Alan Bond, an English immigrant turned billionaire many times over, found membership in the establishment yacht clubs not accessible to all. He went on to fund in 1983 the wresting of the Americas Cup from the United States by the Royal Perth Yacht Club, proving a point along the way, but still not winning acceptance from the Perth establishment. The new Labor Government, lacking in economic expertise in this decade of financial fervor, turned to men such as Bond for advice and planning directions. The new Premier, Brian Burke, was a journalist and master of the media. Irish Catholic, with a wealth of relationships to the newer immigrant residents of Western Australia, he

radiated a bonhomie that reminded me of my father. His oft-quoted suggestion shortly after election was that he would create a new form of government for the people in collaboration with "four-on-the-floor[125]" entrepreneurs, who really knew how to make money and were willing to share this knowledge with all of us.

In October 1992, a Royal Commission into the conduct of this government tabled a report in Parliament that chronicled corruption and improper conduct on a billion dollar scale in the administration of the state. Forced by public pressure to call for this Royal Commission, the Labor Government brought on its own demise. So many of the people who had been part of our team in the seventies--lawyers, a Premier,[126] bureaucrats--were now perceived as corrupt. Interestingly no Aboriginal people, women or non-professional males from our group were named: what keeps us looking up at the underbelly of power had kept us safe from that.

The editorial in The West Australian of 21st October, 1992 summarized the findings of the report as follows:

> It was an era in which Parliament was swept aside, ministers elevated personal and party advantage over their duty to act in the community interest and public funds were manipulated to private uses . . .
> Former premier Brian Burke bears overwhelming responsibility for the disastrous style of government he introduced which produced a legacy of huge financial losses to the taxpayers, tarnished the state's reputation and compromised the traditional independence of the public service--to the extent that the commission said the service lost its role and character. (Editor, 1992, p. 14)

An alternative reading of this era of Labor government is that their inexperience at working within the relations of ruling led to their vulnerabilty to such investigation and judgment.

The Mabo Decision

In June 1992, the High Court of Australia found that there had been human occupation of Australia prior to British settlement. There had always been knowledge of the prior existence of Aboriginal people in Australia but previously the legal fiction had prevailed that this did not count because it was not of a pattern the British recognized as human/civilized. This belated legal recognition of Aboriginal being opened the way for limited Aboriginal claims to land rights. Before the possibilities of this judgement could be explored by Aboriginal people the Western Australian Liberal Party was voted back to power at the end of 1992 with the son of Sir Charles, Richard Court, now Premier. By the end of 1993, in reaction to what was perceived as the threat of the Mabo decision and the attendant enabling legislation proposed by the federal Labor government, the Western Australian Government passed the Land (Titles and Traditional) Bill. This extinguished all native title to land such as existed in the old reserve system and established that the Minister would allow what he deemed to be traditional[127] usages of land. Where this interfered with other usages of land, there would be compensation paid to Aboriginal people, again as decided by the Minister to be appropriate.

There have been High Court challenges lodged to the legality of this move and Australian pressure groups are again arrayed around the issue of the place of Aboriginal people in Australian democracy.

Conclusion

In the field of social work practice, Western Australian Aboriginal juveniles are now 48 times more likely to be in correctional institutions than non-Aboriginal juveniles (Tickner, 1993, p. 3). Among Western Australian adults, Aborigines made up 57% of the people in police custody in August 1992 though they accounted for less than 3% of the total population (Pryer, 1993, p. 7). Poverty, health, housing, and morbidity measures similarly recount that finding ways to deal with the personal troubles of Aboriginal people is of pressing concern for the social work profession. Looking at how we practice social work in addressing the personal troubles of Aboriginal people indicates some of the complexities involved in praxising a value of all being of equal worth.

In this chapter I have covered narratively some of the key contextual factors operating to shape my own efforts to actualize this value. In previous chapters I have covered some of my own intentions and actions in this direction. My story highlights how both the personal troubles of individuals and public responses to them are shaped by the intersections of history, biography, and the power issues structuring society at any particular time. In social work practice it is necessary to have a base to work from in responding to personal troubles. In my narrative I depict the difficulty of maintaining a base if you define personal troubles differently from their representation in the ideological constructions of those in power. Western Australians elected leaders who had no difficulty in being kind to Aboriginal people, but there was difficulty in accepting that multinational capitalism was possible only at direct and current cost to Aboriginal people and their way of life. Further, there was a reluctance to consider that there could be any other reality than that driven by the logic of multinational capitalism. A great part of this difficulty was the exclusion of Aboriginal voices on their lived experience from the *demos*. Aboriginal people were still largely to be known through anthropological expertise, and even then, only as suited powerholders. In the next two chapters I want to cover a variety of texts written in the last ten years addressing the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Western Australia. Chapter Eight will be two earlier self-authored reflective pieces on listening to Aboriginal people and on working from a community perspective. Chapter Nine will look at texts representing two arms of knowledge and relationships I worked as a broker during my time in Broome: local knowledge and professional knowledge. In the final chapter I want to reflect on where this journey into the story of my practice has taken me when it comes to considering how I can work with those preparing to become social workers.

Notes

CHAPTER EIGHT

Earlier Efforts at Textualizing My Experiences

There is properly no history; only biography.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

In this chapter I present two earlier efforts at reflecting on the story of practice I have told in the previous chapters. They give some clue to the archaelogy of my thinking as I moved from being a social work practitioner in a remote setting to becoming a social work educator in the metropolitan area. Both papers are transcriptions of spoken presentations; I have left them substantially unchanged except for the Americanization of spelling and some minor tidying up and clarifying of local knowledge.

The first paper, "Aboriginal knowledge: Does it count?" was delivered in 1988 at an Australian Conference on Aboriginal Adult Education held in Perth. The audience was largely Aboriginal people and those working with Aboriginal people. The Labor party was in power at both federal and state levels and though land rights had not been delivered as promised by this political party, it was a time of relative optimism and creativity in the Aboriginal Affairs industry. The paper was subsequently published in the proceedings of the conference, <u>Learning My Way</u> (Crawford, 1988).

The second paper, "The meaning of 'community' in thought and action," was presented in 1991 at Kalgoorlie to an audience of rural welfare practitioners from Australia and New Zealand (Crawford, 1992). I will provide more contextualizing information on this paper later in the chapter after my first example of attempting to textualize understanding.

<u>Aboriginal Knowledge: Does it Count?</u>

I'd like to start this afternoon with two Kimberley stories. Kimberley stories have been some of my best learning experiences. Following the stories I will develop an argument that perhaps Aboriginal knowledge doesn't count as much with non-Aboriginal controlled professions such as social work as it should. Then I will look at why this might be so and share some of the beginning strategies the Curtin School of Social Work has developed to open itself to listening and learning from Aboriginal knowledge.

This paper rests on my conviction, born of practice, that an understanding of Aboriginal knowledge is fundamental to effective social work practice in Western Australia. I would argue that without such an understanding, a professional service to Aboriginal people is unachievable. This paper explores how to prepare social workers to effectively work in this situation.

<u>"But you're not a social worker are you?"</u>

To the stories. The first is about an Aboriginal worker in an agency that employs social workers. A new social worker arrived in town and the Aboriginal worker was asked by the regional social work supervisor of the agency to introduce the newcomer to everything he would need to know about working in this particular place. The setting was one where Aboriginal people were the overwhelming majority of the client population as well as comprising a very significant percentage of the total population.

The Aboriginal worker, realizing how important it was for the local populace to deal with sensitive and aware social workers, took this task seriously and spent considerable time thinking through an introduction program that would help orient the new workers' thinking to appropriate action. She tried to incorporate all that local knowledge essential for effective practice.

While anthropologists labor long and hard to acquire such knowledge and often earn doctoral degrees for their efforts, this Aboriginal worker gave the knowledge in the spirit of improving the work of her agency. The social worker was taken to meet significant community people, given the history of the area and a rundown of the important factors underlying community dynamics. The local skin system was explained and its importance in understanding local interaction patterns demonstrated. Meetings were set up with local Aboriginal women so the worker could grasp their perspective on child protection issues.

It was, all in all, an extensive introductory knowledge package for any professional working in the region. The social worker expressed his gratitude. However, some six months later as he and the Aboriginal worker shared a coffee break, he confided his disappointment at the quality of supervision given by the regional supervisor. His main complaint was that he had been left to find his own way in the new job without an orientation program. Our Aboriginal worker had to swallow hard but managed to ask whether the time spent with her had been useful. "Oh, yes of course," said our social worker, "but that doesn't count. You're not a social worker."

<u>Spirals of Aboriginal knowledge.</u>

The second story comes from the same town as the first. A now-deceased Elder explained his people's view of the learning process as follows. He drew a small spiral in the sand. That represented the mother's womb. When you emerge from the womb you start learning; learning how to suck the mother's breast, learning how to hunt and so on. As you learn more, your spiral gets bigger, your world gets bigger. Aboriginal law kept people moving out further on that spiral. The more law you learn the richer your life gets and the bigger the spiral, the closer the link with the land.

However, when the children go down south for what the whitefellas insist is education, their spiral stops growing, starts to get smaller. They lose their law and begin to want material things. Aboriginal knowledge and ways of seeing the world are not recognized or understood by those the

younger people interact with in the big city. The young are forced to change their way of thinking. When they return home it is found their spiral of life has been disrupted so that they are no longer equipped to take their proper place in their community.

How social work knowledge has "seen" Aboriginal knowledge.

Social knowledge in this State has been remarkably obtuse regarding the existence of Aboriginal knowledge. There are many interplaying reasons as to why this should be so, not the least of which are:

1. Non-Aboriginal Australian ideologies about the meanings of Aboriginal--this covers the whole host of stereotypes/prejudgements through which non-Aboriginal people approach any contact with Aboriginal people.

2. The relatively recent origins of social work as a profession in Western Australia and its dependence on the overseas conceived models and theories. In common with other professions, we have applied theory and content derived from other places without due consideration to the contextual factors unique to practice situations in the here and now.

3. The strong urban base of social work training and practice. Until quite recently there were few social workers outside the metropolitan area and major regional centers. In contrast, until a major population move to Perth in the past twenty years, even more Aboriginal people lived in rural settings than do now. This did lower the chances of interaction, especially outside the potentially limiting roles of social worker and client. The 1986 Census figures show that more than 70% of the total Western Australian population live in the metropolitan area. Only 1%, or 10,000, of this total of almost a million people living in Perth were Aboriginal. In contrast the Kimberley with a total population of 25, 070 had 40% of these being Aboriginal people. In raw numbers this translated to roughly the same 10,000 people as lived in Perth. In the non-metropolitan population total of 412,457 people, Aboriginal people accounted for 6.7% of the total. (Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1988.)

All these factors combine to produce a state of affairs in which social work knowledge about Aboriginal people in any ordered and formal sense hardly exists, while social work action with Aboriginal people prevails out of all proportion to the percentage of the total population that is Aboriginal. The recent Welfare and Community Services Review in Western Australia reflects this situation (Carter, 1984). Awareness of Aboriginal people and their realities is only peripherally present in the final report. Planning proceeds as if everyone is basically just like "us"--the main aim of social work being to address deficiencies by bringing everyone up to scratch. This is yet another manifestation of the cultural deficiency model that pervades in so many of the human service professions, where any idea of people living in varied realities is not addressed and where any understanding of history and location (time and place) in shaping present circumstances is missing.

Thus, the impression is given that enough scientific research will unearth the right answer to get apathetic, misfit, dependents on track with the rest of us.

The Review states in its section on Aboriginal people:

> We considered the relationship between welfare services and Aboriginal people to be a vital one to consider. However, our slender resources of limited time, low budget, and few staff limited our consultations with Aboriginal people. New approaches to matters of Aboriginal welfare are a priority, since we estimated that a good half of the current clients of the Department for Community Welfare are Aboriginal and that patterns of dependence on welfare have been reproduced generation after generation. (Carter, 1984, p. 31-32)

I would argue that the main resource lacking in this review and in Western Australian social work generally when it comes to addressing Aboriginal issues, relate to the absence of an openness to understanding Aboriginal terms of reference. Further, I would argue that until such resources are developed the profession of social work will remain distant in its work with Aboriginal people, from its general goal of enabling and empowering people to lead self-satisfying lifestyles.

Two of the axioms of social work are: Starting where the client is at and valuing all humans equally. These have developed as the value-based axis to social work practice throughout the world. They are the best Western traditions of democracy and humanitarianism. When it comes to their application to Aboriginal people, however, these axioms appear to have been submerged by other more strident aspects of Western knowledge--knowledge such as prevailing Western cultural beliefs that there is no other way than ours, the positivistic view that there is only one reality and that Aboriginals are culturally different only because they are trailing us in evolution. Such ethnocentric arrogance has been challenged but still pervades the taken-for-granted thinking of many of us. The worst manifestations of such an approach are seen in those human service professionals who claim that given enough money and research, they will measure this reality and control it for the good of all.

It is my belief, based on many years working and living with a diversity and complexity of people, including Aboriginal people, that social work has to be about starting where people are if it is to value people equally. To do this, it has to move away from the acultural, individualistic framework that underlies so many of the social work models and theories developed in America and the structuralist Marxist framework that flowered in the English experience of the seventies. Social work in Western Australia has to become Western Australian social work. We need practice that is grounded in the everyday realities of this place, including its history and its stories and beliefs. This must necessarily incorporate Aboriginal knowledge and does not preclude the inclusion of overseas knowledge evaluated to be appropriate for the Australian context.

Aboriginal knowledge: How is it seen by the wider society?

At Curtin, those of us with an interest in increasing professional social worker's knowledge of Aboriginal issues saw as our task the opening up of existing social work knowledge frameworks to

perspective taking. This would increase the chance of Aboriginal knowledge, when given by Aboriginal people, being "seen" and "heard" in its own terms. Message sent could more clearly remain message received, instead of being consistently subsumed under what are believed to be greater truths. For example, a non-Aboriginal response to an Aboriginal suggestion can be, "That's all very well but the reality is that education must take place in school." While I am not denying the value of a school-based education this response erases and negates unthinkingly all the education for life that takes place for Aboriginal children within their own community from a non-Western understanding and valuing of the nature of life.

From our debate as to how to open up existing knowledge frameworks, a multi-dimensional conceptual model emerged. The model is not an explanatory one. It seeks to tease out and order some of the factors to be addressed in organizing a curriculum that will prepare social workers to work effectively with Aboriginal people. It is an open model and only lists some of the possible dimensions. It is conceived as being constantly subject to revision depending upon feedback from practice. With a dynamic, flashing light, three dimensional model, the interplay between these factors would be more easily conceived. The following linear list is an example of what happens to knowledge when reduced to a flat paper culture. In practice the struggle is to hold these dimensions together in listening to any particular account of personal troubles.

Dimensions identified in the "seeing" and "hearing" of Aboriginal knowledge by the wider society.

1. Awareness-unawareness continuum.

One example of an extreme of unawareness was the community advisor in a remote Aboriginal community who did not know what gadiya meant after twelve months in a community where the cry of "Gadiya coming!" traced his every move. To him everything was "mumbo-jumbo" unless it was in English.

2. Affirmation-negation continuum.

David Carnegie's (1982) journal of his epic journey from Kalgoorlie to Halls Creek almost a century ago, contains good examples of how Aboriginal knowledge can be negated even as it is affirmed. The exploration party used Aboriginal knowledge to locate water by offering those Aboriginals they met heavily salted meat. They assumed this knowledge was a once-off need because the black race must inevitably fade before the superior powers of the white. The Social Darwinism that supported this process of negation is with us yet.

3. Dehumanized-humanized continuum.

There is a common belief that "we" act as spontaneous individuals whereas "traditional Aboriginal people" are but puppets held on a string by their culture. We are humans, subjects of our

own actions, while Aboriginal people are objects. Both Black and feminist writings have clearly developed the oppressive consequences for those so objectified.

4.   Romantic-pragmatic or ideal and real continuum.

This relates closely to the previous dimension and a manifestation can often be seen in the newly qualified social worker, full of sympathy for the poor Aboriginal, who finds it hard to cope with the complex human realities found in practice. Unfortunately, the outcome is often a retreat into dogma about Aboriginal people, either positive or negative, remaining closed to input from experience.

5.   Process-product continuum.

Western culture is materialistic, valuing product and structure over process and relatively blind to interaction and relationships. Liberman(1985) develops this point with regard to the way anthropological writings have tended to depict Aboriginal culture. With his opening description of an early morning camp scene in a desert Aboriginal community Liberman goes on to detail the wealth of interactional knowledge involved in understanding what is happening. Liberman points to the paucity of such interactional data in the vast Western academic literature on things Aboriginal.

6.   Holistic-analytic continuum.

A story about Marge Spurling, my presenter here today and a fellow social worker, might serve to illustrate this point. The first essays I had to mark at Curtin were about the family and the set question was essentially, "Is the family a good or bad thing?" Of all the students' work I marked, Marge's was the only one which concluded unequivocally that it was both at the same time. The either/or framework of Western thinking that has been so important to our scientific age can, in fact, be less than helpful in conceptualizing the human condition. A more general example is the non-Aboriginal worry over whether an Aboriginal person is really an Aboriginal if they have a whitefella name, drive a car, or perhaps have less than observable blackfella genes. In this view you can only be Aboriginal or not Aboriginal. Sally Morgan's (1987) My Place has done a lot to raise people's awareness of the complexities transcending the black or white approach.

7.   Socially constructed truths--one true reality continuum.

This is the issue of there being contextual realities as well as universal abstractions about the human condition. Social work manuals on how to recognize child abuse wherever it occurs on the basis of an acultural fixed checklist would be one manifestation along this continuum.

Curtin initiatives to date.

These dimensions are obviously interrelated and not exhaustive. The question is what have we done at Curtin about reading current states of play involving these dimensions and targeting where we would like to move for change. In all our considerations we have been guided by the staff of Curtin's Aboriginal Studies Center.

In terms of actual curriculum changes, we have:

1.   Ensured that all units address Aboriginal issues, preferably from an Aboriginal perspective, with the use of guest speakers, as to date we have no Aboriginal staff.

2.   Introduced a major culture stream into the three Behavioral Science units, which stress the everyday cultural realities of all of us and not just Aboriginal people and migrants.

3.   Introduced Community Development and Rural Social Work electives for third and fourth year students. Both these units significantly focus on Aboriginal issues.

4.   Used Western Australian Aboriginal literature such as <u>My Place</u> (Morgan, 1987), <u>Wandering Girl</u> (Ward, 1987) and <u>No Sugar</u> (Davis, 1986) to raise student consciousness as to the complexities of the issues in addressing Aboriginal wellbeing.

5.   Non-Aboriginal staff have lectured to students on the history of white control of the policy and administration of Aboriginal Affairs in this state, with the emphasis on understanding the nature of non-Aboriginal knowledge and ideologies about matters Aboriginal and how they have shaped our actions.

6.   Aboriginal students have been recruited into the course and faculty have tried to make these students feel they can build on and share their Aboriginal knowledge, rather than be expected to shed it if they are to emerge as "proper" professionals.

7.   Perhaps most effectively to date, the Center for Aboriginal Studies and the School of Social Work invited as a Visiting Fellow earlier this month, Lilla Watson, Lecturer in Aboriginal Knowledge from the Social Work Department at the University of Queensland. She has left behind, for students and staff alike, a wealth of visions and ideas.

<u>Where to from here?</u>

That is about as far as our initiatives have taken us to date. An obvious next step is the appointment of Aboriginal staff. Though no decisive actions have yet been taken in this regard, I am optimistic about the future and feel that far beyond any of our actions there has been a marked shift in the wider society making it far more receptive to Aboriginal knowledge. The first year I was at Curtin in 1984 was at the height of the Land Rights Inquiry and the associated campaigns and debate. There was a distinct lack of interest in Aboriginal issues, seemingly colored by an either/or belief that it is "us" or "them." One student said then, "Oh no, we're not going to talk about them again are we? We've already done three hours on them and we all know how awful it is but there is nothing for us to do. That's their business." This student went on to take a position, on graduating, where she had significant control over the everyday lives of Aboriginal people.

Now at Curtin there is interest among the student body, in many cases engendered and supported by the small number of Aboriginal students. Rather than an understanding of Aboriginal realities being conceived as an esoteric tack-on to fundamental social work theory, the usefulness of theory in understanding Aboriginal situations is seen as a central test of any claims that theory might

have to universality on the human condition. Along with gender issues, issues of race and culture are currently a very fertile ground for social thought.

There is more debate and awareness than I have experienced before of the existence of many social realities--more awareness of the interplay of power in everyday life and the unequal struggle each of us has to have "our" definition of reality accepted as "the" definition of reality. In Australia generally, the Australian Studies movement is recasting the frameworks through which we view ourselves. This gives Aboriginal people a far greater chance to be heard and counted. A chance to ensure that the decisions that will affect their lives start where they are "at."

The Second Presentation

The Australasian Association of Rural Social Welfare held their second conference in July 1991 at Kalgoorlie in the Goldfields Region of Western Australia (the first was at Coober Pedy, South Australia in 1989). Some two hundred people from all over Australia and New Zealand participated in articulating the meanings attached to attending to welfare issues in rural areas. The energy and base to come together on this issue resulted from the interplay of a number of issues. Many of us had networked informally over years on the inappropriateness of "metro-centric" theories and models of welfare practice for rural areas and the difficulties in developing alternatives.

In Australia then there were three main 'types' of settings in which rural welfare was practiced:

1. Mining settlements. These tend to date from the sixties mining boom in iron ore, nickel, coal, uranium and later gold. The existence of these towns well symbolize the irony that most of Australia's wealth comes out of the ground in remote areas and not through the human creations of the population centers. Mining towns are marked by their transient populations and all the issues attendant on short term residence without extended networks of family support. Many people do not go to mining towns to live but to make money so they can afford to settle somewhere else. Company towns are common and perhaps the most common call for social work services is around intra-family violence issues, with women and children being the most likely sufferers.

2. Farming areas. Despite the fact that Australian agriculture has depended on government subsidies for most of this century, farmers did not receive this assistance in the form of welfare. After the economic collapse of agricultural markets in the eighties, crippling interest rates meant farmers were often forced into harsh poverty and many lost the family farm just as happened in America. "Welfare" was not something farmers were used to relying on and they had had sufficient political power to demand that it be provided in "culturally sensitive" ways such as the rural counseling service I mention in my article.

3. Aboriginal people. Living in diverse settlements across Australia, alongside miners and farmers as well as on Aboriginal-controlled land, each community had a differing pattern of issues.

Common, however, was the fact that the relatively small-scale patterns of interaction threw into sharp relief for the practitioner some of the issues of poverty, racism and gender relations that could remain more muted and fragmented in urban settings. Around this emerged a particular view that metropolitan styles of work, particularly individualistic casework, were not suited to simple transplant into rural settings.

Impetus for providing a forum at which this view could be aired and developed came from both the State and Federal governments--both Labor at this time. The West Australian Government provided both funds and an opening address from the Minister for Community Services reiterating his commitment to attend to the interconnections of economic and social policy in building a Western Australian community that is "fair and soundly based" (Ripper, 1992, p. 1).

The Australian Government did not have such a formal input. Instead there was the attendance at the conference by Senator Peter Walsh. Recently resigned from his post as Finance Minister he was an active participant in the three-day forum. A Western Australian farmer from Doodlakine, a dry and easily missed hamlet on the road from Perth to Kalgoorlie, he was also a long-standing personal friend of the key organizer of the conference. I knew him because of his hands-on involvement in the campaign for Aboriginal votes in the Kimberley during the seventies. Others knew him through other means, including his high profile participation in the Australian media.

His presence there brings home to me just how public and participatory Australian politics remains, especially in rural areas. An outcome is that who you know remains clearly linked to what you know, and the opportunities for 'knowing' people remain fairly democratic (though it is noteworthy that both Peter Walsh and Jim Laffer the organizer, were white, middle-aged and middle-class males). In this sense there remains a clear overlap between Australian society, that which we can know through impersonal measures such as the census, and Australian community, that which we can know through relationship and experience.

At the same time, the way knowing is taught in educational institutions for both welfare practitioners and the public in general, clearly highlights and privileges social knowing over communal knowing, where social knowing reflects knowing by positivistic methods and communal knowing is more likely to be shaped by knowing by relationship and discourse. In any situation both types of knowledge can operate but it was the struggle to hold both ways of knowing in dynamic tension and balance that motivated mounting the conference, many of the papers presented at it, and much of the discussions resulting. In his keynote address, Anthony Kelly, Social Work lecturer from the University of Queensland, responded to the title of the conference: Community work: Solution or Illusion?

> Oh, I wish I could say which it is! Community work can be a method of work that offers hope, a solution to some of the many troubles that face us in the 1990s, but it can equally be described as an illusion, a folly. It is in truth, both solution and illusion. But the matter does not rest there, for there is also illusion in the solution and solution in the illusion. Such simple choices simply do not capture the true complexity of the method of community work and

what it has to offer . . .

At the very heart of community is the human experience of "us," of "we," of "together," of "belonging." This notion of "we," no matter how potent and unforgettable, can blaze forth only to disappear again. "We" stands in utter opposition to the anonymity of crowd or the coercion of collective. But neither is "we" romantic. It is a human relationship that needs attention. "We" changes despite and because of our best efforts to help, for although it is sometimes memorably beautiful and passionate, it is at other times frustrating and centrally disappointing.

A movement that changes the focus of the problem from mine to ours, and then joins this insight with the commitment of person to person, is right at the basis of the method of community work . . .

Community work is not a mechanistic miracle: it is a purposeful process of building responsive relationships with other people, for public rather than private purposes (Kelly, 1992, p. 5).

This quote serves as appropriate introduction to the transcription of the presentation I made at the conference.

<p align="center">The Meaning of "Community" in Thought and Action.</p>

This is a story of David and Sue--a love story of two Australian individuals. It is also a story of community. A story of the dynamic relationships and cultures, grounded in a place and time that make community. The anecdotal approach is to convey the practice possibilities that an awareness of and use of the concept of "community" opens in an era of post-positivism.

Community is not about the truth in any absolute sense but about our stories and our truths and about sharing these to make new stories and new truths. The title of this conference is Community Work: Solution or Illusion? That is a question about method which to me begs an examination of the taken-for-granted either/or positivism that has framed it. It suggests that there is a right way to deliver welfare services and either community work is this answer or just another mirage that has led us off-track in our quest for the truth.

To me the use of the term "community" signifies a re-examination of what the question is in being welfare practitioners. It is my belief that a community perspective has the potential to open up different ways of seeing which can mean different ways of acting. In this, the practitioner is a key player and ideas of practice wisdom (Scott, 1989, 1990) and practitioner as researcher (Peile, 1988b) become central.

Positivism is a term that was coined by the French philosopher Auguste Comte back in the mid-nineteenth century. It signified his belief that if sociologists set out to find objective facts as the natural scientists had done we would be able to use this knowledge to control the future and eliminate unnecessary human suffering. His belief resonated with and reflected the beliefs and interests of powerful others so well that it has been the dominant paradigm for over a century now and continues to shape much of the language of welfare practice. It is about finding the truth to the neglect of the perspective that humans are continually socially constructing their reality. In this ongoing dynamic our futures are as much to be made as found:

> The future is not some place we are going to,
> But one we are creating;
> The paths to it are not found but made;
> And the activity of making them changes
> Both the maker and the destination.
>   - from Peter Ellyard, Australian Commission for the Future, 1988.

This quote reflects what I'll call the naturalist or constructivist position. The meanings that this perspective attaches to "community" have the potential to inform and shape the full range of traditional methods of welfare practice. They have the potential to transcend divisions into case and community work and to reframe what we see as welfare and the tasks attached to seeking this. (See Guba, 1990 and Lincoln & Guba, 1985 for a full discussion of the naturalist /constructivist /post-positivist paradigm).

David and Sue.

To the love story. David arrived in Broome in the mid-seventies as a young clerk with the newly established Social Security Office. He was enthusiastic, open, friendly and dedicated to getting the job done: the job being to deliver Social Security services to the people of the Kimberley. The office opened in a climate of lobbying and media pressure as to the lack of basic entitlements reaching Kimberley residents.

The aftermath of Cyclone Tracy[128] and the huge demand for financial assistance by people escaping Darwin by road highlighted the inadequacies attached to servicing the Kimberley region from the south. David, along with the others in the new office, were instructed to right this situation.

In keeping with ideas of equal rights for all Australian citizens, the services and procedures of Social Security were standardized across the nation. There was to be no discrimination or prejudice--everyone was to be treated according to standard procedure with reference to the manual as needed. From our place in history now it is notable that all the initial officers of Broome Social Security were white males but at the time that was not a named issue. What was named by us down the road at the state welfare office was the failure for our workload to be lightened with the arrival of Social Security. We had been the local agents for Social Security until their arrival and had then expected to cease involvement. Not so. The people of Broome seemed to have difficulty fitting into the systems established in response to the objectively determined needs of Australian society. They kept coming back to Welfare asking for help in order to access the resources of Social Security.

Then David met Sue. Sue was black, beautiful and Broome. By building a relationship with Sue, David was able to connect with an insider's view of Broome and the Kimberley. Perhaps more importantly he was open to doing so. Through Sue he came to know her many siblings and relatives, her Chinese father and the Chinese community and culture of Broome, her Beagle Bay mother and the Catholic Church with all its history and influence. He came to know local Aboriginal lore and humor, fishing culture and music culture, the complex ways of Broome funerals and how to act when a new

baby arrived, the flow of the seasons and tides and why people didn't work during sit-down time. Why an old-age Aboriginal pensioner should have the flashiest car in town and lots more what was to him exotica. Balancing this, he came to know of the grim everyday experience of poverty for many Kimberley people and how this related not simply to a lack of cash, but to issues of power to be heard and to participate.

He came to love the place and the people and this flowed onto his work. (With acknowledgments to Kelly & Sewell, 1988 and their definition of community, based on a sense of being in a place that you love with people that you love, doing work that is meaningful to you.) He shared his new understandings with other staff and introduced them to the people and places he'd come to know. They reciprocated. A network of relationships between the people of Social Security and the rest of town grew with tangible consequences for the quality of service delivered to the Kimberley community. Locals were employed as counter staff and recognition was paid to the Aboriginal English or Kriol that was spoken locally and to local Aboriginal realities such as pensioner males having three wives to support and teenagers being too shamed to apply for benefits.

Of course, you don't have to fall in love to come to know such different realities. I chose to come in on a love story to "community" because relationships as lived processes that are vital in making the world we live in are not usually a conscious focus of either academic enterprise or welfare practice outside a particular individual's case. In lay language if we say "They are having a relationship" that tends to mean an intimate connection between two individuals. The fact that we all live in dynamic interrelationships with one another marked by language, meaning, knowledge and power in each moment of our everyday lives tends to be elided.

"Having a relationship" being the language of positivism is not identified. Relationship is turned into product from process and then relationships become what individuals in society have, rather than the process by which individuals are connected in dynamic community. Erich Fromm (1956) has argued this point around the term "love" in his The Art of Loving as has Joanna Macy (1983) in her focus on human interconnection in Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age.

To many now living in Broome, David and Sue are strangers. Any newcomer's experience of Broome may well be largely a different network of relationships. The community issues that a new agency would deal with now would be very different to those of David's time. Responding to the needs of the newly poor in town is one issue that springs to mind. This highlights the point that "community" is not about a tangible and fixed reality but an ongoing process.

But the processes involved in connecting with community remain the same: the processes of listening to people and looking with them at what is going on locally. This involves exploring outwards with people--those Wadsworth (1992) calls the critical reference group--as to how the local ties in with national and global realities and of taking action together out of the picture built. The reflective step of checking out with local people whether this worked and was appropriate is always integral to the process. Through all the community worker manages tensions and balance between

Australian society and this Australian community and the powerholders and stakeholders in both. Obviously in this dynamic process specific outcomes and control are never guaranteed but access is possible to a rich source of creative potential to address human concerns. (See Wadsworth, 1992; Jackson, Mitchell & Wright, 1988 for further explication of these processes.)

What David did, he did naturally and as a matter of course. He did it because of the sort of person he is, but an essence of the story is that he didn't do it alone. What happened at Social Security in Broome was a social and cultural construction and no one person could have controlled the outcomes. It is a story grounded in the context of a particular place at a particular time. Some of the positive outcomes remain and have been extended, some have been whittled away by the ongoing dynamics of community, and some have provided lessons for offices in other places facing similar problems. The ongoing process of looking and listening locally, and acting on that before reflecting on outcomes, speaks to the meaning of community in praxis--the bringing together of thought and action in practice.

Peter.

I want to turn now to another story which illustrates how a training in the mindset of positivism can take practitioners away from the possibility of working with the concept of community. This took place in another town and concerns a welfare practitioner, Peter, posted to a remote area from an urban base to deliver a welfare service. He had been there approximately a year when he attended an out-of-town training seminar where an anthropologist talked about his research with Aboriginal people. The picture painted of the unidentified Aboriginal community fascinated him. These people were alive, endlessly resourceful, creative and full of plans for the future. How he would like to work with such people instead of the hopeless and passive dependents who dominated in his town and work.

It turned out that much of the anthropologist's research had been done in Peter's town. The difference was that the anthropologist had been speaking to people on their own territory, in their own terms, and at their own pace. He had been able to build a rich picture of the complex cultural realities that shaped the community. Important in this, but only one of many elements, was the local welfare office. It was a resource to support and improve the Aboriginal groups' current lifestyles and as such to be fostered. It was also a threat to the continuation of their ways of life with demands for proper (by western standards) care of children and ideas for economic development.

Because the welfare practitioner was trained to think in "individual in society" terms he had access to a very limited part of the whole community picture. One by one, or at best family by family, would come to see him at his office with requests for help or explanations for transgressions of welfare expectations. Being creative people with the intention to act in ways to achieve their ends they

presented themselves as welfare clients. This meant in that context they presented themselves as passive dependent beings who needed help and whose failings could be excused.

As Stanley (1990a) points out, from a social construction framework, the "how" and the "what" of any investigation are indissolubly connected. In researching the nature of the Aboriginal population of his town, the "what" Peter found was a product of the "how" of his investigation.

Social workers and other human service practitioners have been trained to focus on the individual in society. This has meant that practice then occurs in ways that hamper the development of a consciousness as to community. Social work developed in the context of the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. It was about finding out, researching how people might best be helped, and many of the early efforts in social work were community focused. While it was developing as a practice discipline with a focus on listening, finding out or researching with people in order to act, there was a commingled movement to transfer the industrial success of the scientific method to the social problems now to be tackled. The outcome of this discourse was that while sociology and social work started out as intertwined enterprises they moved into the nineteenth century with social scientists actively seeking to disengage themselves from any identification with social work. Social workers compromised the search for scientific knowledge by their value stance and by working directly with people, thereby losing objectivity and contaminating the data.

It was important that the development of Comte's positivism be done properly. Knowledge must first be found by objective scientific methods. Then, after being properly processed and turned into a validated scientific commodity, it was ready to be applied to people. People helping others based on their local knowledge and moral convictions were judged by positivists to be no doubt well-intentioned but misguided.

The fact that a positivistic perspective came to be dominant in shaping social reality is captured in the naming of social work as an applied science. Scientists would find the necessary knowledge about society and social workers would apply it. Training of human service practitioners increasingly took place in tertiary institutions where the belief was that students would acquire the knowledge to take forth and apply on graduation.

That was on the knowledge-of-society side of things. On the understanding-individual-aspects side, there was often a focus on communication, building relationships and rapport, active listening, reflexivity or self-awareness, and reflection via talking issues through with a supervisor. All this knowledge was very much about a conscious use of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Process skills were learned in order for the professional to do their own finding out about the individual client and their situation. These findings were to be the guide in terms of taking action.

The lack of connection between the individual and society, between the personal and the social, in the taught frameworks led to a focus of these process skills on understanding the individual as an acultural, psychological entity and not as a social construct.

Where the social was considered, social work academic Glenn Haworth (1984) reflecting on the nature of social work knowledge, found that:

> Much quantified, conceptualized and abstracted knowledge is produced, taught and used in practice mainly presenting generalized images of social work clients. This knowledge is useful but it lacks the experiential party, the particularized knowledge that presents our clients in ways that foster understanding. What is missing are their own stories, their own interpretations of what their lives are like. For social workers, who are mainly professional strangers in the worlds of their clients, these stories and accounts are important to gain understanding. (p. 347)

We don't work with Aboriginals, with single parents, with juvenile delinquents. We work with people who may well be identified through such named dimensions. Issues of power and structural analyses are important in understanding the processes and "reality" of such constructions of identity. To work with, challenge, and change such identity it is also important to understand the insider's views and meanings. This was my motivation in writing Jalinardi Ways: Whitefellas working in Aboriginal Communities (Crawford, 1989). It was an orientation document for those seeking to know what best to do in Aboriginal communities.

While Jalinardi Ways sets out an overview of West Australian history and geography, the key message is to do what David did--build relationships in the place that you are working, talk with people, find out and share with them. The what to do must come out of the context and the meanings of the people you are working with. In this, communication skills are obviously key.

Community-aware practice often happens "naturally." The challenge for both practitioners and educators is to tune into the communication processes involved and name the theoretical frameworks that link our thoughts to our actions. In this, practice informs theory as much as theory informs practice. The struggle is to consciously work at balancing the tensions between ideas and acts. Too often one can come to negate the other as in: "All that theory was very interesting but I'm dealing with reality now"[129] or "A structural analysis would indicate that Aboriginal people are condemned to a life of poverty."

In this struggle for balance, I would suggest that much of the polarity between community work and casework dissolves. Community-aware case work becomes as valuable in context as relationship-focused community work. Community workers do not work with communities as material entities but with people, people in all their intricate network of relationship with one another. All of these relationships are grounded in the material realities of a particular time and place.

I'll finish with another story. This one highlights what I see as the importance of being consciously able to talk about the world view that frames a "naturalistic" conception of community. In order to "make the talk walk," it is a start to talk the talk.

<u>Margaret.</u>

Margaret is a widow who lost the family farm to the bank. An energetic and resourceful woman, she had been part of a local group of farmers who lobbied successfully for a local rural counseling service. The group chose her to take the first position as rural counselor. She traveled miles, listened to seemingly endless heartbreaking stories. Always she tried to do her best as apractitioner. The funding body was well pleased with her work. They knew enough about community to know how important a culturally appropriate local broker was in dealing with the casualties of the rural crisis. They also "knew" what "the reality" was. This knowledge was invoked any time Margaret sought to convey the stories she heard and tried to explore actions that could be taken in response to these stories.

Increasingly, she felt like a gigantic sheet of blotting paper, employed to keep the bleeding from becoming too visible. The bureaucrats didn't want to know her news and views. They didn't see any need to incorporate it into their planning. They already knew what was to be done. Stressed, alone and unsure, Margaret became ill. Recuperating and networking as part of the local community, she became part of a small group of farmers who tapped into new knowledge: There was a gourmet Japanese market for a shellfish considered locally as rubbish food. The local group was able to develop a lucrative export industry around this product. Margaret is now a successful businesswoman and not working for welfare anymore. When the value of community-aware processes can be measured by money, they have no difficulty selling themselves.

CHAPTER NINE

Other Textualizations

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
Leviticus xix

The way we conceptualize and define our problems has everything
to do with the solutions we seek.
Carolyn Morrell (1981, p.41)

This chapter is about my self and my feelings in response to two other texts that circulated in Western Australia after my transfer from Broome and helped me make sense of my lived experience there as a social worker. The first text is <u>The Wellbeing of the People: The Final Report of the Welfare and Community Services Review in Western Australia</u> (Carter, 1984) prepared by a professional social worker in consultation with human service practitioners and consumers from throughout the State. The second is an Aboriginal musical play, <u>Bran Nue Dae: A Musical Journey</u> (Chi, 1991), conceived and written by Jimmy Chi, the band Kuckles and other Broome people from the late seventies through to a first official public performance at the Festival of Perth in February, 1990. I bear witness to the fact that my feelings were of anger and despair with regard to the first text and joy and elation with respect to the second. In this chapter I want to research and write the bases for these feelings. Linking back to Dorothy Smith's (1987) conceptualizations of texts, in this chapter I explore how I figure the government review of welfare services as a text that functions to support the relations of ruling while I interpret the Aboriginal musical as illuminative of the possibilities attached to taking a critical ethnographic approach to understanding from our bodily situatedness in the world.

<u>The Context of the First Text</u>

In 1983, on coming to power, the new Labor government in Western Australia honored its campaign commitment to undertake an extensive review as to the nature and adequacy of welfare policies and practices in the State, with special reference to the operations of the Community Welfare Department. Further terms of reference set for the review were: priority areas for the development of welfare policy and services were to be identified; the respective role and functions of government and non-government organizations were to be considered and recommendations made for improvement; and, finally the Minister was to be advised of any other matters arising from the process of the review (Carter, 1984, p. iii).

Still anticipating that a change of government would enable the aspirations of Aboriginal people for wellbeing to have a fair hearing, I was excited at the announcement of this review. I

expected the review to formulate a strategy to create a shared sense of community among the diversity of Western Australians and move to at least name the ongoing exclusion of Aboriginal people from the *demos*. Like Jane Addams, I took-for-granted that social work was about interpreting "democracy in social terms" (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 75). The trauma of my transfer was going to be worth it because now an independent social work research project would see for itself the inhumane oppression being visited upon Aboriginal people. Through all my socialization I was "taught to be self-forgetting and self-sacrificing, to consider the good of the whole before the good of the ego" (Addams, 1990/1910, p. 71). Now I might have lost my life in Broome but my project would be carried forward by other social workers. Jane Addams was "sure that if the critics could but touch 'the life of the people' they would understand" (p. 82). At this time I did not think of the review team as critics but I was equally sure that with their proposed research trips all over the State they would come to understand "the Aboriginal problem."

At that time I was not aware of the postmodernist understanding that:

> Truth and knowledge are ideological constructions based on power formations that exist in any society at any time. There is no objective world independent of the meanings and discourse brought to it. (Denzin, 1990, p. 146)

I had so personalized my harassment by Sir Charles Court and Bill Hassell that I had failed to realize how closely these actions were tied to the general white community's ways of seeing Aboriginal people. There were very few social workers at this time seeking to work with Aboriginal people and I had presumed this was mainly because they were not aware of the issues to be addressed. Social work was still a relatively new profession, based in the city and with many overseas trained practitioners and educators. At another level I was aware that Western Australians, arguably more than other Australians, carried cultural baggage as regards Aboriginal people that did not allow their ideas on race to be lightly changed. In the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) Referendum of 1967, which gave the federal government power to intervene in Aboriginal affairs, twenty per cent of Western Australians opposed the idea that Aboriginals be counted as citizens (Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics). This was double the percentage for Australia as a whole. Yet I presumed that most professionals, like Keith Maine, had internalized the changes in ideological frameworks attached to a shift to multiculturalism and the Australian cultural studies movement. These stressed the importance of cultural and historical considerations in filtering, interpreting and understanding the everyday realities of Aboriginal people, of women, of migrants and of all of us.

The local social work professional organization was consulted in the formation of the review team by the new government: This would be a major opportunity for the social work profession to display the skills and knowledge base of practitioners. Jan Carter, a Western Australian social worker with extensive overseas and Eastern States experience, was appointed director of the project. Assisting her were an executive and research officer, a twelve member Advisory Board, nine specialist committees (a membership of ten each), many consultants and a widespread participatory process of consultation through workshops, seminars, and submissions. I sought to make a submission to these

public hearings. When I telephoned the Review Office to make an appointment, I was told that it would be hard to fit me in as the hearings were virtually booked out. Explaining that I wanted to address the issue of Aboriginal welfare, I was told that would be easy as there were no bookings as yet on that topic. As a result of making this submission, I was offered the task of summarizing all submissions[130] focusing on Aboriginal issues: It seems this was not an issue included in the forward planning. My summary sits among all the other appendices of the final report: the only one not a report of a consultant or working party--just a summary. This was perhaps my first direct clue that what was so close to my heart was not at the forefront of the consciousness of those conducting the review.

Donald Horne (1986) has commented on race chauvinism that "what can be most effective . . . is that in most of the public culture, for most of the time, they are simply not there at all" (p. 93). In Australia, there has been a persistent tendency by non-Aboriginals to act as if Aboriginals were not really there. This was my own feeling when I completed my anthropology degree: Australians were socialized from childhood to believe that the fading of "the lowest evolutionary form of humanity" before the superior strength of Western civilization was perhaps sad but inevitable. Aboriginal people left few physical monuments to their history and presence, while individual Aboriginals were classified as having hope of becoming like us or being without hope. Such views were relatively impermeable to change while we kept looking at Aboriginal people rather than listening to them. With regard to the conduct of the review, I think that invisibility is a fair description of the standing of Aboriginal issues among the key decision makers. Community Welfare was seen to be primarily about children and social work because these were the professional concerns and lived experience of those in charge of conducting the review. Aboriginal issues were conceptually categorized as outside these areas of expertise, even though the review's own quantitative research revealed that Aboriginal clients were a majority of the clients interacting with the welfare system.

The Wellbeing of the People: 1984

I still have the pages of hand-written notes I wrote in response to first reading the final report. Strong statistical evidence is presented that Aboriginal people are a basic raw material of the welfare industry. The submissions I had summarized highlighted the over-representation of Aboriginal clients in all types of institutions, from children's homes to juvenile detention centers, through hospitals to jails (Carter, 1984, p. 311). The Review's own research indicates that over 50% of the clients of the Department for Community Welfare were Aboriginal people (Carter, 1984, p. 31). Despite this, there is little recognition that it is within the domain of social work to seek to change these figures. The frame Carter uses in presenting the report seems to owe much to a social work education in structural functionalist positivism and her absence from Australia during the seventies when Australian public culture tentatively discovered a continuing Aboriginal presence among us (Horne, 1986).

In analyzing this text from my situatedness as a Western Australian with practitioner experience of working in remote areas of the state, I want to stress that in saying Aboriginals were left

out I am not suggesting that there is some one right way the report could have been written nor that I would have written a better report overall. Rather I am suggesting that any such report is always written by natives of their time and situation. In this particular context it is almost inevitable that such a welfare review prepared by professsional social workers would have failed to incorporate Aboriginal understandings and lived experience into the text because of the absence of Aboriginal people from the professional discourse of social work. In the earlier chapters of this thesis I referred to the nature of Australian culture and to my own childhood socialization as marked by a strong sense of democratic fairness. In Chapter 7, I cited Denney's (1957) representation of Australia as a semi-socialistic state where a homogenous population of lower-class immigrants from Europe, particularly Britain, were advancing in prosperity and wellbeing in tandem with one another. Though this was a process that favored men over women, Australia as a whole was a relatively democratic country in which institutional welfare such as pensions and child allowances was accepted as part of the way of life for everyone and residual welfare payments were seen as short-term measures except for those like Aboriginals who were excluded from the *demos* and many institutional welfare measures. Denney (1957) refers to his abiding image of Australia in the fifties being one of the "whole social group going up the scale together" (p. 127). This was certainly the experience of my own family of origin, who arrived in Western Australia at the time of the first major influx of white settlers to this place. The second major influx of settlers to the state came after World War II and, again, this population overall was quickly absorbed into the economic activities of the state, participating in the institutional welfare of the nation but only peripherally in the more residual welfare of the state. Individuals and families suffered hardships, but there were few non-Aboriginals in Western Australia who could be categorized as members of that population who had become dependent on residual state welfare across generations of dependency. I argue that these actualities as to the nature of the Western Australian population are important in interpreting a distinction made in the review. Those for whom preventative community-based self-help welfare services are required were distinguished from the misfits who because of their dependency on welfare across generations, have become trained to be passsive and resistant to self-help efforts.

Early in the text on presenting the statistics that stress the presence of Aboriginal people, Carter apologizes for the lack of any focus on Aboriginal people in her report and recommends that a task force of Aboriginal people and experts be set up in the near future to address this deficit. This implies that the personal troubles of Aboriginal people lie outside the knowledge base and expertise of social work. While this lack of awareness as to Aboriginal realities predominated in Western Australian social work at the time there is no exploration in the text as to whether this should be the case for the future nor of what responsibility the social work profession had to address this issue. This absence of expressed concern sits oddly with the fact that Aboriginal people were quantitatively the majority of people interacting every day with the state welfare system. Carter (1984) states:

> New approaches to matters of Aboriginal welfare are a priority, since we estimate that a good
> half of the current clients of the Department of Community Welfare are Aboriginal and that

patterns of dependency on welfare have been reproduced generation after generation. (p. 31-32)

In interpreting this, I am aware that when the Native Welfare Department was abolished in 1972, part of the thinking was to do away with the stigmatizing label "native," while the disruption caused to Aboriginal lifestyles by white arrival was to continue to be addressed by the welfare provisions of the Community Welfare Act. In the review text, "welfare dependent" appears to have become a code term for Aboriginal, especially when figured as "dependency reproduced across generations." In recommending a move of state welfare services away from a residual nature to a more institutional, community-based and preventive approach, Carter (1984) makes the point that during the seventies and eighties:

> Some of the best of us became social casualties. If not us, it almost certainly happened to some of our relations or neighbors. The intelligent, socially productive and gainfully employed who had always been regarded as well above the "bottom line" stood the risk of becoming social "misfits" too: executives were made redundant, young graduates were unemployed; the wives of doctors and teachers became welfare beneficiaries after a marriage breakdown; receptionists and nurses brought up children alone, sometimes out of wedlock. (p. 1-2)

Here I interpret an argument that welfare is for all of us and we all benefit from its provision. The definition of welfare used in the report is "the satisfactory condition or wellbeing of the people" (Carter, 1984, p. 15) Yet I suggest that the difficulty surrounding policies for services to Aboriginal people is that they are not figured as being of the *demos*. While the quote above indicates that we all benefit from the provision of welfare services and that any one of us could become in need of assistance, a different logic operates when it comes to Aboriginal people.

> The classic dilemma of how far a Government should pursue the interests of one group against the perceived interests of others, has developed into a major problem of welfare policy. The legitimacy of claims of one group as opposed to others . . . is the difficulty surrounding questions of services for Aboriginal people. (Carter, 1984, p. 7)

More for them seems to mean less for us--with us and them as binary categories. Things changing for the better for Aboriginal people would mean taking something away from the rest of us causing hurt and upset which should be avoided. The differences between other categorical groups discussed in the report such as men and women, children and adults are not so connected. More for women is not seen to involve less for men. On the contrary, enrichment of the less fortunate is seen to enrich society at large. The implication is that Aborigines are not part of the "us" of community. They are permanently and unchangeable the "them"--the outsiders. After noting many times the chronic dependency of Aboriginal people on welfare services, the report concludes:

> We reject philosophies of welfare which result in dependence and exclusion. In our view, welfare policy and services should ensure that those helped should be enabled to develop or maintain personal responsibility, independence and self-sufficiency. If the preventative policies and services outlined at the beginning of this section are regarded as priorities, we consider that there is a greater chance of welfare strategies being oriented to maintaining the autonomy of individuals, groups and communities.

Having made this clear, we recognize that . . . the State [will] need to recognize that it is not possible to reverse the deprivation showed by some overnight . . . it is clear that there will be a remnant of persons and families whose chronic dependence on the State has existed for generations. This will need to be recognized and accepted. Welfare policies and services will continue to have a role in maintaining the so-called "misfits" of our community. This is an honorable task and those who undertake it need to do so in conditions of dignity and community support. Our concern is that there should not be an unthinking transfer of policies for the chronically dependent to welfare policies for the community as a whole without considering the special needs of the chronically dependent. (Carter, 1984, p. 232)

While this reads as humane in comparison with current U.S. welfare policy, it is my argument that separating out the fit from misfits in this way served to endorse preventative community work with all the population except for Aboriginal people. With Aboriginal people conceptualized as permanent dependents on a residual welfare system, it was unlikely that different solutions to their personal troubles would be searched for in the review process. This was in fact the outcome of the review for Aboriginal people. The "cornerstone" of the recommended new preventive welfare system was community houses and neighborhood centers with the key service being child-care (Carter, 1984, p. 233). This policy would enable women, who were now entering the work force in unprecedented numbers, to have access to state subsidized high standard child-care. Enabling such a policy were generous federal subsidies for states willing to build child-care facilities. At the same time the policy met the political demands of those women organized to claim responsibility for electing a Labor government. Finally, the policy also enabled the realization of a key idea of the report writers. "We think that the best service for child protection is prevention . . . Children are indeed the seed corn of our future" (Carter, 1984, p. 233). In addition to child-care for working mothers, these new facilities allow the placement of children from families under stress or with special difficulties who need time-out from child-care. Conceptualizing stress and special difficulties with child-care as the main reason for needing child protection services, this preventive solution of institutional child-care aims to reduce the need for statutory intervention procedures over abused and neglected children.

Again, the figures show that most children coming into statutory care are Aboriginal children, but there is an absence of any consciousness of Aboriginal community membership in the service designed to prevent children's entry into statutory care. At this time, few Aboriginal mothers were seeking child-care for their children while they worked or had time-out from child-care responsibilities, yet the Review's statistics show that 66% of children in the statutory care of the Department are Aboriginal (Carter, 1984). These figures reflected the continuation of an historical pattern of the state removing Aboriginal children from their families because of the taken-for-granted belief that socialization in white institutions was inevitably better than allowing children to be raised in Aboriginal culture. This policy had most effectiveness in the south-west of the state, while in the north of the state it mainly applied to mixed-race children. Anna Haebich (1988) has documented some of the exactitude and inhumanity with which this policy was applied; the title of her text For their own Good indicates her reading of the spirit in which it was applied. Now many of the adult products of this system of institutionalized socialization into white ways, raised without the ties of kinship were themselves giving birth to children for whom they were unable to provide care. Many of these

children entered the care of the state and added to the high percentage of Aboriginal children in care as a result of policies which applied up until the demise of Native Welfare.

In the framing of the government welfare review such history was not considered. The multicultural reading that it was possible to live a satisfying lifestyle in a diversity of ways was also missing from the final report. Aboriginal people were by and large consigned to the category of chronic dependents with whom nothing much in the way of self-help and empowerment could be achieved. They were not members of the social democracy for whom The Wellbeing of the People was written. Community work is for the "fit." Continuing maintenance will be necessary for those "misfits" whose chronic dependence on the State has existed for generations (Carter, 1984, p. 232). This categorization "misfits" then connects in my mind to Parsons' suggestion that categorization is 9/10ths of subjugation (Babcock, 1993).

Community work with Aboriginal people.

Seen from this perspective as to the nature of Aboriginal people, the Kimberley community development story exemplifies the sort of community work not to be done by the State. In the body of the report, Carter analyzes what she calls the Stan Davey case and concludes that such work is basically about changing the status quo, which must necessarily be political and therefore not possible for a Government department. I reproduce at length here her voice on this case, though I break the text into parts by commenting after each paragraph.

> By the mid 1970's some of the Department's work in the North of the State had altered. The style of work had changed from that of a traditional native welfare officer who offered rations and relief and organized practical services for Aboriginal people. The new approach was a different philosophy and strategy. From paying attention to individuals in a crisis or in chronic disorder, the work changed to developing the cohesion of a group or of a community. The hope was that a community would begin to work on its own problems, by allocating tasks and dealing with the outside authorities. (Carter, 1984, p. 157)

Here there is no mention of the cultural and historical factors that combined to bring about this change in strategy or the extreme circumstances that gave motivation to the welfare department leaders and others involved to endorse such a different approach. There is no context given; rather, a tradition of native welfare officers stretching back in time giving out rations and relief and organizing practical services is offered. Cursory research into the history of welfare in the area would have challenged the veracity of such an image. There was no welfare office in Fitzroy Crossing until 1970; prior to that, the area was covered by irregular Native Welfare patrols from Derby and most of the Fitzroy Valley population of Aboriginals lived on stations:

> This was a formidable task in the case of Aboriginal people who had been trained to be dependent on welfare relief and handouts over several generations. It was appreciated that "self-help" could not happen overnight, but would take years of effort and time. It was also recognized that in its most traditional form, Aboriginal society was based on a collective rather than individual way of operation. In essence, the work became that of helping Aboriginal groups recover and strengthen traditional ways of organizing their lives. It was

recognized that some Aboriginals, as subservient, dependent and demoralized people, needed to become autonomous, independent people with high esteem. (p. 158)

Peter Biskup (1973) examined the history of the administration of Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia and captured something of the status of Aboriginal people in the title of his book, Not Slaves, Not Citizens. Prior to the introduction of the Pastoral Award in 1968, many Kimberley Aboriginals worked in a form of peonage in which they were anything but welfare dependent. The dependency they could have on the Native Welfare Department set up to protect them was minimal. The value of their underpaid labor lost to stations at the beginning of the seventies is one reason why Kimberley cattle stations lessened their economic viability during the seventies and eighties (Bolger, 1991). In Carter's (1984) reading of this situation there is a lack of groundedness, of specific local knowledge and context connected to the actions decided. Instead it is recognized that subservient, demoralized people need to become autonomous, independent people with high esteem. It is not clear what relationship this will bear to the collective way Aboriginal people have of organizing operations. Self-help was happening before the arrival of welfare. What the community development approach did was to recognize, engage with, and back these Aboriginal initiatives.

> The leader of this new approach to Aboriginal work was a man called Stan Davey, a former Christian Pastor from Victoria. From the office at Fitzroy Crossing, he determined that he should attempt to pursue methods to help some disintegrated, disreputable Aboriginal persons in the Fitzroy Crossing area to settle out of towns, away from the temptations of consumerism, particularly alcohol. He and other staff assisted several groups to return to their traditional areas, to develop a form of community organization, to have access to services of power, water, bookkeeping, transport, communication, housing and education. These developments raised the confidence and self-esteem of such groups and by most standards these ventures have been considered successful. Nevertheless the establishment of these communities was controversial and led to clashes between the Department and the Government of the day. A major row developed concerning Mr. Davey's role and when the Department eventually transferred him from his Fitzroy Crossing outpost, he resigned from the Department for Community Welfare. (p. 158)

Here, in a manner reminiscent of the erasure of the settlement house style of work with the demonization of Jane Addams (Deegan, 1988a), Stan Davey is figured as autonomously the controller and determiner of the community development approach. Aboriginal people become the objects of intervention, appearing to have no agency in the process described. The phrase "from the office at Fitzroy Crossing" rings oddly as the base for Stan's agency in this approach. Stan was invited to shift here from Wyndham because of his effective work at engaging with and collaborating with the displaced people of the Forest River Mission on the site of their lived experiences at the Wyndham reserve. No context is provided to understand the paths by which Davey arrived at an understanding of his task in Fitzroy Crossing. Interestingly the Chairman of the Review Advisory Board was Bishop Michael Challen, head of the Anglican Church that had closed this mission, thereby forcing these people onto Wyndham Reserve. I know that Stan would not have represented his project as getting "disintegrated, disreputable Aboriginal persons to settle out of town, away from the temptations of consumerism, particularly alcohol."

The essence of the community development approach is that it tries to empower groups to stand up for themselves and to take responsibility for their own affairs. In so doing, they may need to challenge established ways of proceeding and to confront conventional ways of doing things. One example pertinent to this discussion, well known in Western Australia, was the decision of the newly established Noonkanbah Station community (formerly from Fitzroy Crossing Reserve) to resist the mining company and Government attempts to drill for oil on land they regarded as sacred. This led to a highly publicized and dramatic major confrontation between the Noonkanbah community and the Government, which left wounds and mistrust in many sections of the community. A few years before, the Noonkanbah people had been known to be dispossessed and disillusioned, living on the fringes of the Fitzroy Crossing. Their development as a community gave them strength to assert their collective view against the Government. (p. 158)

Again the ahistorical, acultural nature of this narrative erases the lived experience of the Noonkanbah mob as so much more than being "dispossessed and disillusioned." Their development as a community sounds like something that was done to them rather than a process of listening to and working with their self-determined goals. I think of Dicky Skinner, Olive Biuenderry and all the others and how their very being is dehumanized in these words.

Choosing the most highly publicized example available illustrates the consequences of encouraging self-help amongst Aboriginal people. We endorse work which develops community responsibility and self-help. But our problem is that we see that Department for Community Welfare community work with Aboriginal people contains the inherent problem of groups wishing to criticize the Government of the day about its allocation of resources. There is therefore a potential, but major conflict of interest for the Department for Community Welfare staff concerned. As Government officers they are required to work to the policy of the Government of the day, but simultaneously they support a professional obligation to defend the efforts of the community they serve. (p. 159)

The Review had no difficulty endorsing those groups criticizing the Government of the day for its allocation of child-care resources and recommending major changes in this field. This was an issue that had a significant base of community power behind it at the time the report was written. Citing Noonkanbah as exemplifying the hurtful consequences of encouraging self-help amongst Aboriginal people tends to confirm for me my interpretation that Carter saw Aboriginals as belonging to a category of chronically dependent misfits who are to be maintained as such. The personal problems of Aboriginal people are defined in ways that enable the maintenance of the status quo.

A further problem relates to the selection of particular communities with whom Department for Community Welfare spends its time. The selection of one community as opposed to another for extensive help is a subjective process. There have been complaints when one group has been selected but not another. We were left with the impression that there is an understandable preference for work with outstations, ahead of work with camping reserve communities. (Outstation communities are those attempting to develop a community in their traditional country, whereas camping reserves often contain parts of, or splinters of more than one community. They are thus less cohesive and, perhaps, by definition are less motivated communities than are the outstations.) In the inevitable selection about work priorities, reserve communities took second place to outstations. Yet some reserve communities live in conditions that we can only describe as disgraceful. (p. 159)

Community development is a participatory approach. Groups were not selected for help and others denied it. The work is an ongoing process of building relationships and addressing issues

people define for themselves. There was no standard set of welfare rights on offer; what people achieved depended on their own participation. The outstation communities were primarily self-drawn from the reserve communities and they did most of the work involved in the shift. The reserve communities lived in conditions that can only be described as disgraceful not because of any dereliction of duty by local officers, but because of a consistent state government policy to not allow any resources to be used to upgrade these places. There were federal funds that incorporated Aboriginal communities could access if they chose to become an outstation community, but there were few such funds available to those who remained on state-administered reserve property. This was part of the bureaucratic and political dance between federal and state authorities as to who should fund infrastructures to Aboriginal wellbeing. Again there is no appreciation of the dynamics, the politics, the history and lived experiences of Aboriginals, workers and administrators.

> Our reservations about the role of the Department for Community Welfare in pursuing community work with outstations are not intended to criticize the method. Rather, we express considerable admiration for this work and those officers who undertake it . . . Our reservations concerning the modus operandi of the Department for Community Welfare relate to that mode of operation known as community or social action. That we wish to see other types of community work extended has already been made clear. We do not see the role of a Government welfare agency as that of developing the politicization of welfare work to the point where the Department is said to be "pro" one section of the community and "anti" the rest; or for or against the Government of the day. In short, we see a role for community or social action but in the future we consider that this is best achieved outside the framework of a Government service. (p. 159)

This passage fails to recognize that success in working with modes of community work such as community development, social planning and community organization (Carter lists these as acceptable modes of community work) can shift the process over into community and social action regardless of what the worker intends. This is particularly so in situations of gross inequity and oppression where small improvements in living conditions for the oppressed will upset the status quo. Part of the outcome of the community development approach was the making space for independent bases of action, such as that Steve Hawke used. Prior to that there was no non-government presence in Fitzroy Crossing with a base from which to operate. In the historical situation in which this work began, however, Carter seems to suggest that it is not the task of welfare and social work to listen to people and work with them on their personal problems, even in the most oppressive circumstances, if that is likely to upset those in power in the setting.

Perhaps allied to these findings on community work with Aboriginal people, the Review also found that the leadership of the Department had been "non-professional" in allowing itself to become embroiled in government politics. This had resulted in an attrition of resources budgeted to the department by the Government and a consequent weakening of the power base of the organization to address welfare issues. Carter provides figures as to how the Departmental share of resources had declined over the years and concludes:

> In the long run, we believe that the Department would be managed most adequately by persons whose professional competence is beyond dispute, whose managerial capacity is

proven and whose understanding of the political economy of welfare is highly developed. (Carter, 1984, p. 171)

Here there seems to be connection made between democracy and capitalism similar to that Parenti (1988) argues operates in the American context. Someone who knows how to fit into the relations of ruling and call it "professional competence," "managerial skills," and "understanding the political economy" is to be preferred to a leader who becomes morally disturbed at the lived experience of some members of the Western Australian community. While I am not arguing that a capacity to be morally disturbed is a sufficient capacity to administer a government welfare department, I am suggesting that for review text to disown such motivations as an important and necessarily political part of delivering human services is to buy into the relations of ruling (Smith, 1987). I am also arguing that when the social work profession chooses such a path it gives away power to mediate and broker on behalf of the dispossessed for short-term self-empowerment. Shortly after the Review presented its findings to the Labor Government, Keith Maine lost his position as Director of the renamed Community Services Department and in the tradition of redundant permanent senior public servants was redeployed: in his case, to run the newly created Office of Redeployment.

With regard to the Homemaker Service, Carter (1984) recommends its continuing development: formerly a means of brokerage between local situations and the bureaucracy, it is to be transformed to a form of top-down specialization where "first and foremost the needs of young children in the area need to be considered" (p. 233).

My overall interpretation of this Review report is that it replicates in the Western Australian setting, Cornel West's (1993) description of the continuing exclusion of black lived experiences from the dominant conception of the American *demos*. It recommends, despite the failures of earlier Aboriginal welfare policies which aimed to do precisely this, that the needs of young children can be considered in isolation from the needs of their parents.

Feminism and the Western Australian Welfare Review.

In 1983, I had been living too long in the Kimberley to be fully aware of what a marginal concern Aboriginal issues were to the majority living in the urban area. I was only peripherally aware of the powerful political force feminism was coming to be in the Australian political scene as a result of changing public consciousness during the seventies. I had also failed to realize how central positivism was to the professional power base of social work. A chance for the profession to conduct a thoroughgoing review of all state welfare services was no frontier setting for pragmatic experimentalism. It was a chance for welfare professionals to consolidate and extend their claim to be able to deliver "scientific practices" with what Fuchs (1993) calls "its established routines and polished certainties" (p. 25). The social work profession could not claim to have such practices with regard to Aboriginal people so the obvious way out of the dilemma was to leave it to Aboriginals themselves and other unidentified experts to come up with solutions in regard to that issue. Professional social workers I spoke to at the time the review was released agreed with its direction on this point, arguing

that welfare had for too long interfered in the lives of Aboriginal people. Now it was time for Aboriginal people to determine their own future. Such liberal sentiments evaded the issue of how thorough-goingly the relations of ruling were able to enter and control the everyday lives of Aboriginal people. This was the case even in the remote setting of Noonkanbah. The paradox was that in this logic when Aboriginal people did approach welfare services for help, by that action they categorized themselves as "misfits" and "chronic welfare dependents" for whom nothing but maintenance could be provided.

The thrust behind the recommendations of the review became so clear on reading Dorothy Smith (1987). The task of the review was necessarily to stabilize "relations of ruling." If the unrest among Aboriginal people had been instrumental to bringing Labor to power, that had little to do with the ongoing pressure to keep "relations of ruling." In the Australian system of democracy, which of these two main political parties was in power at any time would have little impact on these "relations of ruling" except peripherally. To quote again from Smith (1987) on this point:

> A mode of ruling has become dominant that involves a continual transcription of the local and particular actualities of our lives into abstracted and generalized form. It is an *extralocal* mode of ruling. Its characteristic modes of consciousness are objectified and impersonal . . . The practice of ruling involves the ongoing representation of the local actualities of our worlds in the standardized and general forms of knowledge that enter them into the relations of ruling. (p. 3)

The textualization above on the story of community development in the Kimberley and Stan Davey's part in it, exemplifies the process Smith (1987) describes of abstraction and generalization in the transcription of the local and particular actualities of Fitzroy Crossing into a rule that community work with Aboriginal people was not to be done and had dangerous political consequences for public servants. In the report the society of Western Australia, excluding Aboriginals, is framed as a ball of homogenous harmony with one key exception: There is a need for more child-care. Community Houses are to be located throughout the state in areas of greatest need as defined by statistics showing workforce participation by mothers. These preventive services will ostensibly meet the needs of all women and their children who might otherwise require statutory child protection services. This recommendation I read as a version of liberal feminism where the mono-culturalism of the hegemony is critiqued only for leaving women out. To add women to the status quo defines the political limits to liberal feminism. It is not about women in all their diversity but about women who would belong to the relations of ruling except for their gender. Morrell (1987) calculates this to be the dominant form of feminism currently operating in Americal social work and describes this ideology as a "depoliticization and redefinition of one of the century's most compelling movements for social change" (p. 147).

By separating out the fit from generationally created misfits as suitable targets for preventive community work, the review recommendations introduce a notion of pathology as the basis for exclusion. I have heard many social workers testify that they experience Aboriginal clients as passive, dependent misfits. Yet to me there seems to be a connection between this social fact and the social fact

that females are often described as weak, dependent and passive when patriarchal ideologies dominate. For women and Aboriginals such passive, dependent behaviors are often a matter of survival and the consequence of being categorically subjugated.

As a working mother of three children, I must agree that child-care is a central economic and inclusionary issue at the public/personal level. However I would read feminism as so much more than that in its call for humanitarianism. Eisenstein (1984) has written of "false universalism" as a generalization "about the experience of women, ignoring the specificities of race, class and culture" (p. 132). It "gives rise to analysis that in spite of its narrow base of white, middle-class experience, purports to speak about and on behalf of all women, black or white, rich or poor" (p. 132).

In her acultural, ahistorical version of liberal feminism, Carter is able to persist with an objectified, reified view of society. Viewing the actualities of lived experience through the lens of a structural-functionalist theoretical framework enables a technocratic vision of humanity to persist with attending faith in understanding through scientism. Community development then becomes precisely the sort of community work not to be done by the state. The provision of child-care, because quantitative research indicates it is needed, is in keeping with a social planning model of social work. Community development involves practitioner research on the run with home-made models of actuality guiding action. This must necessarily be political and uncontrolled with unknown outcomes. As a profession social work is seduced by the relations of ruling to avoid such work with its potential to disrupt the status quo. It is a central argument of this thesis that the more social work operates to fit in with the relations of ruling in this manner, the less chance the profession has to be effective in its stated purpose. To fit in with the status quo is no less political than to challenge it on certain issues. This is what happened in the post-settlement house era in the U.S. and I argue here something similar happened in Western Australia with this first major social work review into welfare services. As Bernstein (1983), Fuchs (1993) and Kuhn (1970) have argued for science, progress in professional development is not made by conforming to the rules of the status quo.

In writing this while living in America, I am aware of how democratic the Australian welfare system is compared to the American system. The status quo when it comes to welfare issues is a much gentler one than that obtaining in America. In many ways this makes the continuing conceptual exclusion of Aboriginal people from the *demos* so much starker. To give one example, "Aboriginal riots" in different country towns around the state were an issue at the time of the Review. Carter (1984) recommends that the most effective way of handling such incidents would be to train a mobile team of experts who would be able to travel the state and "fix" such outbreaks as they occur (p. 231). Local knowledge and understanding the history of such incidents are not identified as relevant. Instead social work expertise promises that such disruption to order can be contained by abstracted and generalized technical skills.

Increasing power and control over citizens by experts are the implicit consequences of this review. Carter expresses great faith in professional welfare services and properly conducted research as the way to "the wellbeing of the people." There is a taken-for-granted acceptance of the social as an

obdurate reality which can be known, given enough expertise and research. The report served to address society and the social from the standpoint of people situated, partially at least, inside the "relations of ruling" and seeking fuller membership. This aim was not met in the outcome of the report. The state welfare department continued to be run by male bureaucrats; the implementation of "adding women in" policy recommendations did not have the desired effect.

The fate of the review captures a continuing pattern and dilemma in social work of bending to belong to the "relations of ruling," but of rarely achieving the acceptance and hearing that would make such belonging meaningful (Lowe, 1987). Even when they speak the dominant language of control and scientism, women's admission to the patriarchal relations of ruling remains conditional. Would it be more effective for the profession to acknowledge a variety of ways of knowing and agree with Jane Addams that there is no "science's sake" independent of human interest and interpretation? As a profession can we justify the linear pursuit of professional practice methods without reflecting on the lived experience of those we say we serve?

Opting for continuing conversations and creativity in context.

Many professionals of course do speak a language of there being many ways of knowing but the "relations of ruling" work to mute, negate and discount this voice. This serves to allow social work professionals who "fit in" to the language of the dominant discourse continued bases from which to practice. This then leaves continued personal troubles unaddressed and unheard which erupt into public issues and force a questioning of the efficacy of social work. Social work is what we make it and in the making it we cannot escape the continuing dilemma that Smith (1987) so well identifies: that in meaningfully addressing the societal we cannot do without the standpoint of those outside the "relations of ruling."

> Inquiry of this kind builds in an open-ended character . . . We begin from where we are. The ethnographic process of inquiry is one of exploring further into those social, political and economic processes that organize and determine the actual bases of experience from those whose sides we have taken. Taking sides, beginning from some position with some concern, does not destroy the scientific character of the enterprise. Detachment is not a condition of science. Indeed, in sociology there is no possibility of detachment. We must begin from some position in the world. (p. 177)

To me, Smith provides in the above quote a satisfactory definition of potential inquiry methods for social work as well as sociology. It would imply developing "home-made" frames for practice that start from where each of us find ourselves positioned in the world. These "home-made" frames would always be social and delimited, both by the cultural context and dominant ways of knowing, but never contained by them. So my disappointment and anger at the nature of The Wellbeing of the People (Carter, 1984) became an important force in leading me to clarify my own understanding of what it can be to do social work. The text was published at the same time I was preparing a first curriculum on using the concept of culture in social work. It gave me a wealth of ideas as to what I should address. The Welfare Review brought home to me how trapped social work

can become within certain ways of acting if we are not able to name the social theories and ideologies which inevitably frame ways of seeing the world. When we see the world only as an obdurate reality to be known by the scientific method there are consequences for practice possibilities. When we see the world differently, different actions become possible. None of us can ever see the world without filters of interpretation, but all of us have a human capacity to dialogue with others and thereby develop consciousness of different ways of seeing the world and acting in it.

One of the main lessons I draw from The Wellbeing of the People as a text serving the "relations of ruling" is the necessity to move beyond an either/or binary framing of social work in seeking to escape being controlled by such texts. Taking up Morrell's (1981) suggestion that "the way we conceptualize and define our problems has everything to do with the solutions we seek" (p. 41) opens social work to a multiplicity of actions instead of expecting a rigorous application of method will ensure the solution we seek. Instead of feeling obliged to operate within pre-chosen boundaries of method and field, we can as Morell (1987) suggests seek to:

> Politicize individual services and personalize social structures. As psychological changes occur, collaboration on one's own oppression is withdrawn; as oppressive social structures are resisted and personalized, oppression is weakened rather than reproduced. (1987, p. 148)

Naming, explicating and opening up the ways we can frame social work and identifying positivism as just one way of knowing not the way of knowing, would seem to be a way to move ahead. It allows social work to have relevance in a variety of cultural settings and with regard to a diversity of human interests. Even while the relations of ruling are ever present, their precise nature is always susceptible to change with time, reflexivity, power and action. The American social work educator Ann Hartman (1992) has captured some of my feelings on how we can do social work:

> There is a painful paradox in being a professional and being committed to empowerment. A key part of the definition of a profession is the possession of knowledge, and in fact, the ownership of a specific area of knowledge. As professionals we are supposed to be experts, but the power in our expertise can disempower our clients and thus subvert the goals of our profession . . . We need not discard our knowledge but we must be open to the local knowledge, to the narratives and truths of our clients. We must participate with them in the insurrection of subjugated knowledge . . . we are only wrong when we continue to cling to our mistaken truths. (1992, p. 484)

The Context of the Second Text

This bright and boisterous musical play conveys voices of the people of Broome, bringing to others in an engaging form, subjugated knowledge. It is a story that Aboriginal people have hopes and dreams and schemes just like all of us. This play was conceived, developed and produced by Aboriginal people because as Jimmy Chi describes it:

> We've got to fucking show them that we're fucking capable of putting on something magnificent . . . The musical was an attempt to get our stuff recognized and put it into something that can be heard . . . And Aboriginal people are not exactly, sort of liked--let's face it they're not liked and this is an Aboriginal play about Aboriginal spirituality saying this is our truth for you--for you guys to look at . . . It was about how we could do something

about Aboriginal affairs or put over the Aboriginal perspective without polarizing the two sides and we came up with Bran Nue Dae. It was written for Australian people--about dole bludgers as Malcolm Fraser used to call them. And voting rights and rigged ballots. . Drinking--alcoholism was a problem. . . . Everybody is related. The play has a lot of biblical references to show what our journey is about. We need to search for our common humanity to make a better world . . . I wanted to make a statement about all the things I'd been through and all Aboriginal people had been through . . . We have to have self-determination and carve out our own future--only in struggling for a better world will you achieve it. Bran Nue Dae is about that struggle. Bran Nue Dae is one way of achieving it. (Zubrycki, 1991)

Australian theater critic Katherine Brisbane (1993) has given one reading of what was achieved by this musical. Referring to national celebrations held throughout 1988 to commemorate two hundred years of white settlement in Australia, she commented:

The most successful subversion of the bicentenary--possibly its most lasting contribution-- was a boycott of the celebrations by the Aboriginal community. Through their ministrations, joined by a growing force of ethnic minorities, the realization began to spread that Australia had a significant population that did not identify with our British convict-ridden heritage, nor find our history a subject for celebration: that we were, in fact, a multicultural society. . . .

A new spirit of confidence was stirring in multicultural Broome. The inhabitants of this rundown relic of the pearling industry on Western Australia's north coast are a medley of all the nationalities attracted to it by the pearling--Indonesians, Malays, Chinese, Japanese, Europeans and Aborigines. Along with the traders came the missionaries, Irish, English and German; and more recently the tourist operators and the British building tycoon Lord McAlpine[131], to who most of the town owes its tenancy.

Music and dance have always been part of the color of this remarkable place, so where better as the birthplace of Australia's first multicultural musical? Bran Nue Dae by Jimmy Chi and his band Kuckles had its premiere at the 1990 Festival of Perth and has since toured nationally to great acclaim . . .

It may prove to be the lasting legacy of the bicentenniel year. For while the work itself gestated for a decade there is no question that the consciousness-raising of the late 1980s provided the climate and confidence that, against all odds, brought it to the stage. (p. 11)

Stephen Albert, the narrator of a film made about the production of the musical, describes it as "Jimmy's own story, which also reflects mine and other stories from Broome" (Zubrycki, 1991). Jimmy was born the same year I was, in 1948, into a place that I imagine as one of the most physically and socially idyllic settings for childhood. Broome then was a multi-ethnic, multi-racial community of some 4,000 people, where the majority called themselves "colored"--a term then serving to differentiate the mixed race Beagle Bay graduates and all the residents of Asian descent from the "natives." Coloreds, in the absence of laboring whites, tended to have employment, homes and the supportive network of both relatives and the Church. During the seventies I can remember applicants for positions with welfare explaining that as a colored person they had always been interested in the welfare of less fortunate "natives." This view of reality was one people were socialized to from birth and one backed by both mission and government policies and practices. The Beagle Bay people were considered the fortunate ones, endowed with some white blood and saved from a life of savagery by education in the dormitory system. Since Noonkanbah and other developments of the seventies the term has almost disappeared from use. The actions of the Western Australian goernment and all the media coverage attached to it, served to bring home to the people of Broome that the world outside

classified only in terms of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. "Colored," however, symbolizes much of the story of Broome and Jimmy Chi.

The mixing of blood behind the term "colored" involves complex, human stories. Broome was also the place where miscegenation was forbidden by law and where Asian workers employed through the pearling industry had few legal rights. Jimmy's mother was from Djarandin on the Dampier Peninsula, north of Broome. Her parents were a local Djarandin woman and a red-haired Scottish policeman. In keeping with church and government policy for such hybrid offspring, she was raised at Beagle Bay Mission. After World War II she married Jim Chi and settled in Broome in the tropical bungalow he built, opposite the Broome Courthouse and just down the road from welfare.

Jim Chi, who died in May, 1994 at the age of 91, was born in Broome of a Japanese mother and Chinese father. The family achieved some commercial success in the Chinatown business section of Broome and Jim grew up to run a variety of business ventures such as a taxi company. Then came the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Broome society felt very threatened. Asians were threatening, even if Australian-born. Jim was arrested by the Broome police as an enemy alien, had his business and property confiscated and was interned thousands of miles away for the duration of the war.

When I was told this story in the seventies as part of the process of becoming a member of the Broome community, it had an extra twist in that the push to have Jim arrested came from Bill Wrightson. I knew Bill as the nice old man from the pensioner's quarters who did the daily run to collect the town's newspapers from the airport in his vintage station wagon. It seems back in the forties Bill had been trying to chat up a barmaid in one of the hotels. She turned to Jim to act as her protector. The idea that a white woman could prefer a "slanty-eye" to a "real white man" deeply offended Bill's sensibilities. This offense apparently resonated with other white men in town, who quickly acted in concert to teach the "little bastard" his place. The barmaid overheard some of their plans and warned Jim that something was afoot and, before being interned, he was able to save and store a few of his things. The tale of the tragedy is then punctuated with typical Broome-style humor when one of the family comments in the telling, "If I have to hear one more time how the macaroni maker got saved, I'll go spare."

After the war, with the help of the local Labor politician, Mr. Rattigan, Jim was able to return to Broome and resume his life, though to my knowledge he never received official compensation for his unfair imprisonment as an Australian citizen. He was still sending yearly boxes of mangoes to Mr. Rattigan in Perth in thanks for his assistance more than thirty years later during the time I lived in Broome. He married into the extended Beagle Bay family that saw his children related in the Aboriginal way to most people in town. With the power of the Catholic Church in town and their paternalistic relationship to Beagle Bay graduates, most Asian men marrying locally agreed to raise their children as Catholics.

So it came about that the son Jimmy, like most Broome children, was raised in the Catholic Church--a Church bent on missionizing the Aborigines and a Church isolated from and in many ways shunned by an irreligious white community and society. At the level of Australian society, the

Protestants still held the dominant power base and were apt to react with disrespect and suspicion to anything they saw as a papist plot to challenge their hold on power. At the local level, where pearlers held the economic base of power, such was the strength of the belief in the Aboriginal demise, nothing the Catholics chose to do in that area could conceivably be a challenge to the strength of Protestantism. Protestant identity often had little to do with organized religion, but was an ethnic commitment to keeping Catholics from taking over the mainstream way of life.

The isolation of the Catholic Church from other whites in town was compounded by the fact that so many of the priests and brothers were German, with little familiarity with, nor admiration for, Australian ways of doing things. Many were set on demonstrating the superiority of a disciplined German way of life with the superiority of their product--missionized Aboriginals. In this sense Jimmy was a top of the line product--bright, so bright as to hardly be like an Aboriginal at all. At the end of his primary school years he was "handpicked" by the Irish nuns to be sent to the Rossmoyne Pallottine Center in Perth to complete high school.

Jimmy was followed in later years by other Broome boys, including Stephen Albert and Peter Yu, both of whom were to play a major role in the eventual mounting and production of Bran Nue Dae. All of them tell very funny stories of the ends to which the German brothers would go to prevent them having any contact with the Nyoongars[132] of Perth, because of the clearly contaminating and polluting effect this would have on the Broome boys. Again and again it was explained to them that they were of superior stock. They were the natural leaders of the Aboriginal people with the God-given responsibility of leading them all to a better way of life. The whites who fathered children with Aboriginal women in the south-west, where plenty of white women were available, were clearly from the lowest dregs of humanity. For a stalwart pioneer of the bush to give into bodily urges in the absence of a suitable partner was sinful but understandable. The stories are funny in the telling but they also capture how hard it must have been for young boys so far from home to carry the weight of these expectations as they addressed the tasks of identity that come with adolescence.

As described in the film on the making of Bran Nue Dae, the administration of the Rossmoyne Center fitted neatly into the government policy of assimilation that prevailed during the sixties. Father Luemmen, the superintendent of the center confirms this aim:

> Pretty strict yes. Well that was the only way. That's why we succeeded. I knew by then well enough what the weaknesses of Aboriginal people were. We taught them to be reliable, clean and on time. (Zubrycki, 1991)

In the same film Jimmy Chi adds:

> You had to be better than a white person. Totally assimilated and become these sort of "super niggers." (Zubrycki, 1991)

Jimmy graduated from Aquinas College, the leading Catholic high school in Perth and began at the University of Western Australia the same year I did, studying engineering. The first identified Aboriginal person to attend university, much was made of him as the most outstanding success of

mission endeavors. At the same time, it was brought home to him that "everybody likes Aboriginal kids but they don't like them when they grow up" (Zubrycki, 1991). "Thrust out into the world at large which is a white majority, I went through a whole identity crisis and a lot of pressure" (Zubrycki, 1991).

Some of the nature of this crisis is captured in a song, "Acceptable Coon" written for the musical but excluded from the final production because it was judged too potentially threatening and alienating to a white audience:

> When I was young they sent me to school
> to read and to write and be nobody's fool
> they taught me the white ways and bugger the rest
> cos everything white was right and the best.
>
> So I grew up in a white man's sense
> and I found belief and I gained confidence
> no doubts were apparent in my little world
> so I sailed on to big things with my wings unfurled.
>
> My world was so rosy until I saw
> that nothing I did could open the door
> cos when you reach somewhere no matter how soon
> you're nothing more than an acceptable coon. Copyright J. Chi.

Jimmy had a car accident which brought his crisis to a head. He spent his 22nd birthday in the locked psychiatric ward of Royal Perth Hospital, diagnosed as a schizophrenic. After several years under a heavy regime of psychotropic drugs, ideas of de-institutionalization, anti-psychiatry and Ronald Laing, together with the late arrival of the hippie era to Western Australia, all combined to support Jimmy in his decision to return home to Broome in the mid-seventies. His plan was to cut back on drugs and find himself with the aid of alternative therapies, especially his music:

> I felt a lot of guilt--shame that I hadn't finished my degree. I found comfort in my family and the simplicity of Aboriginal people. Music was my therapy--just as a spiritual source to write about all the pain that was in me and to relate to the world again. (Zubrycki, 1991)

It didn't take me long to meet Jimmy because that is the way Broome was: It would have been hard to avoid meeting a fellow resident. His house was just across the road, his niece Colleen was the office secretary and his next door neighbor, cousin and bubbli[133] Peter Yu was the Aboriginal Welfare Officer. Jimmy, along with others, hung out at the welfare office and was often to be found up on Kennedy Hill, sitting on an upturned kero drum, looking out over Roebuck Bay and philosophizing with old man Lockie bin Sali and others. Lockie had worked as a guide on naval boats out of Broome during the war but had never been paid for his services because he was colored. I can always hear Lockie in the words from the title song "Bran Nue Dae", "we want 'em rights, we want 'em fair deal, all same longa white man" (Chi, 1991, p. 84).

The first poem Jimmy brought to the welfare office to share with everyone was written at the time of the bicentennial public celebrations of James Cook's discovery of Australia in 1779. Called "Bicentennial," it lyrically captured the spirit pervading in the Aboriginal local community in response

to the pressures over voting rights and mining. Jimmy continued to write poems and songs, but it was not until after Noonkanbah and the disappointments of the Labor government that others in the community realized that this was a way of getting their voice out to the public at large: A way of being heard that wasn't dependent on the interpretation of the relations of ruling. Producing this musical, which had been Jimmy's idea for a long time but dismissed by his friends as the thinking of a crazy man, then became a shared community project.

Bran Nue Dae: 1991

> There are only two kinds of madness one should guard against, Ben. One is the belief we can do everything. The other is the belief we can do nothing. (Brink, 1984, p. 304)

It was a great high to be at the opening night of this play in Perth. The party afterwards was a grand Broome reunion so none of us were quite sure how the public at large would react to the performance. It didn't take long to find it was a smash hit with a sold out extended season. Since then it has toured many times. Prime Minister Paul Keating (1993) wrote the introduction to the program for the second season in Perth:

> The creators of Bran Nue Dae have already achieved what few others have managed to do, and along the way they have shown that there is a large audience waiting to see and hear the contemporary Aboriginal story told.
> It is a landmark show. A landmark in Australian musical theater. And, no less significantly, a landmark on the road to a relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal which is more like it should be--one which is fair and equal, but more than that, one built on a sense of shared experience. (p. 1)

The story of the play is quite simple. Young Willie, a Broome boy is expelled from Rossmoyne Pallottine Center for stealing lollies and cool drink. Denounced by Father Benedictus as "a rotten abble in der barrel" and "a blot on der mission" (Chi, 1991, p. 13) Willie answers back with the song, "Nothing I Would Rather Be:"

> There's nothing I would rather be
> than to be an Aborigine
> and watch you take my precious land away.
> For nothing gives me greater joy than to
> watch you fill each girl and boy
> with superficial existential shit.
>
> I love the way you give me God
> and of course the mining board
> for this of course I thank the lord each day
> I'm glad you say that land rights wrong
> then you should go where you belong
> and leave me to just keep on keeping on.
>
> Now you may think I'm cheeky
> but I'd be satisfied
> to rebuild your convict ships
> and sail you on the tide. (Chi, 1991, p. 15)

Willie ends up with nowhere to go but a city park, where lots of Aboriginal fringe dwellers gather to drink in solace with one another. There he meets Tadpole, an old man from Broome, who explains he is an uncle of some kind. They decide to head for Broome and Lombadina (Djarandin country) together. Setting out, they become confused in all the traffic and are knocked down by a car. A young couple, Marijuana Annie, an Australian hippie and Slippery, a German tourist come to their aid. When Willie and Tadpole explain they are on their way to Broome, Marijauna Annie becomes excited at the thought of this hippie mecca and the couple offer Willie and his uncle a ride. Along the way they have joyous and sad times. In Roebourne they spend time in jail. This incident connects to the fact that at the time Australia was organizing a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in response to the high numbers of young Aboriginal men dying while in police and correctional custody.

The jail song, "Listen to the News Talkin' Bout the Blues of our People" ends with a vision that the subjugated knowledge and being of Aboriginal people will be heard one day:

> But a leader will come
> from the house of the son
> and the man and the gun will be broken
> and the word will be heard
> when the leader is reared
> and the words that he speaks
> will be spoken. (Chi, 1991, p. 39)

After release from jail, they travel on and join some Karadjerri[134] people on Roebuck Plains for a jalinardi[135] hunt. This introduces some of the more traditional Aboriginal culture of the desert people south of Broome, who are also part of the Broome community. When they finally reach Broome they go straight to the Roebuck Bay hotel for a drink, a dance, and song. As throughout the play the songs are bawdy and boisterous and the actions involve much sexual play. Willie meets up again with Rosie, the girl of his dreams:

> Everybody lookin' for kuckle[136]
> everybody lookin' all day
> everybody lookin' for kuckle
> blackman, whiteman and grey. (Chi, 1991, p. 58)

Then the action shifts to Kennedy Hill Reserve where an evangelical meeting of Pentecostal Christians[137] is happening. Theresa, Willie's mother is there. She sings:

> All the way Jesus, just all the way Lord
> Bend me and shape me, give me your reward.
> Let me lie in your body when I'm wracked in my pain
> And just light up the loving that always remains. (Chi, 1991, p. 62)

Marijuana Annie under the influence of the charismatic occasion testifies to the fact that she has a child out of wedlock and "gave him away after I lost my boyfriend when I was 19 and he was shot in the belly in Vietnam" (Chi, 1991, p. 62). This leads Theresa to testify that:

I had a child too, to another man, to a German missionary. He took my child away and all I had left to console me was alcohol and this photo. Look! (Chi, 1991, p. 68)

The photo is of Slippery's father. In an exuberant rush of connecting that follows, everyone finds they are related: Willie finds his uncle Tadpole is his father; Slippery is the son of Theresa and Father Benedictus; Willie is Slippery's brother. Marijuana Annie remembers that she was born into an Aboriginal family before she was taken and raised as a white person. Even as the veil on the actuality of relationships between the races is lifted, the play offers warm memories of times gone by. Theresa sings of life in the dormitory system:

I still remember the old mission yards,
the old days the old ways, the times that were hard,
the friends of my childhood, when I was young,
the fathers, the brothers, the old Irish nuns. (Chi, 1991, p. 78)

Then all travel the final stage of the journey to Lombadina Mission and sing in procession a hymn, "Child of Glory:"

Though the journey is tortured and so long,
it's the same path the Christ child trod upon.
Child of glory come take me by the hand
help me, heal me and make me understand. (Chi, 1991, p. 81)

Then all join together in the title song of hope, "Bran Nue Dae:"

On the way to a Bran Nue Dae
Everybody everybody say
On the way to a Bran Nue Dae
Everybody everybody say. (Chi, 1991, p. 87)

Though Tadpole, Willie's father injects a note of realism/cynicism:

They bin talk about this kind, that kind, anykind, everykind, but still same kind--and boy make me slack. (Chi, 1991, p. 87)

The final production note in the play reads, "The cast goes up to heaven singing Bran Nue Dae" (Chi, 1991, p. 89).

This short synopsis can hardly do justice to what a live performance of the play conveys, but I have sought to give some idea of the voices to be heard in this creation from lived experience. The blend of music celebrating Aboriginality and parodying everyday life in Broome was a conscious attempt to break through the deafness and hostility Aboriginal people faced from mainstream society when they tried to speak their experience. The marginal had become centered in a style of humorous ribaldry that Australians find hard to disclaim; it connects to the mainstream Australian theater's culture of debunking Eurocenteredness and celebrating our origins in the underclass of British society. Collins (1986) has argued that given the interlocking nature of oppression, people on the margins are in a favored position to take a stand on the solidarity of humanity. Chi (1991) has successfully brokered between so many dimensions in this play--between races, genders, cultures, religions, ages--

and left the audience with a promise that we can go on across all these differences and create anew. Like Jane Addams (1990/1910) and West (1993), Jimmy Chi sees the realization of the Christian message coming about in our everyday actions in the world as we travel through life. Like Sartre (1981), he stresses the importance of recognizing our universal singularity in order to achieve a world worth living in:

> We must acknowledge God and do to others as we would have them do to us. That's the message of all religions. For every man is an island--not just one of a herd of sheep. (Chi, 1993, p. 9)

Jimmy Chi had to write this play for his own sanity: to make sense of and give expression to a self that embodied a multi-raced, multi-cultured identity. The performance of these ideas by a Broome-based ensemble of musicians and players connected with an Australian audience that could hear and relate the experiences conveyed to their own. I don't know if this play could have been heard at an earlier time in Australia's history. The Australian cultural ethos and discourse of the seventies went some way to providing a general audience with the tools to listen to what this story had to say. At the same time, thinking of my own childhood, it can be argued that each child has to learn to read across image-banks to some extent just to grow up:

> Multiculturalism asserts that people with different roots can co-exist, that they can learn to read the image-banks of others, that they can and should look across the frontiers of race, language, gender, and age without prejudice or illusion and learn to think against the background of a hybridized society. It proposes--modestly enough--that some of the most interesting things in history and culture happen at the interface between cultures. It wants to study border situations, not only because they are fascinating in themselves, but because understanding them may bring a little hope for the world. Multiculturalism that asks not for a favorable judgment ahead of time but simply for a fair hearing. (Hughes, 1993, p. 83-84)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reflected on and interpreted two texts that spoke in different ways to the meaning of what it was for me to practice social work in Broome. Both have been important to my project of understanding how I can do social work and both are reflective of the biographies, history, and social structure of Western Australians. One I have figured as a "relations of ruling" text serving to reinscribe existing patterns of exclusion of Aboriginal people from democratic consideration. At the same time this text was also written by a woman seeking to have fuller participation and power for women in these "relations of ruling." This political aim for change was of only problematic success. The second text, I have figured as a form of local knowledge narrative written for the purposes of political resistance to the existing pattern of ruling in the State. This text too also sought to be acceptable in order to be heard. The danger in this is that it becomes possible for it to be appreciated as entertainment without ensuring political consequences. Theater reviews praise the play for not being threatening to a white audience:

> If the story line is audaciously silly, the satire is for the most part good-naturedly broad rather than pointed (no need for white guilt except perhaps for the shackled prisoner photographs)

. . .

> At the heart of Bran Nue Dae's success is its conciliatory approach to black-white relations.
>
> It nudges audiences to an awareness of Aboriginal culture and achievements without laboring the point about injustice. (Even the harsh treatment meted out to Aborigines by the German Catholic priests is lampooned with affection). (Banks, 1993, p. 7)

It is received as fictional entertainment and as each production becomes tighter, more polished and professional, it travels further from the human energy that saw its creation:

> Those who still fondly remember the original production might fleetingly regret that the rough edges--that sense of raw innocence and spontaneity that made the first season so endearing -- has been replaced by more mature production values. (Banks, 1993, p. 7)

My concern here is that the play served to give voice to the unheard, but while the play can go on and enter the rich body of Australian literature, similar stories that are told out of personal troubles continue to be told to social work practitioners who need to be able to listen without the glitz and smoothness of a mature production. In that sense, my issue for the concluding chapter becomes how to explore holding together the message of <u>The Wellbeing of the People</u>, which articulates an aim to be inclusionary and include all of us in welfare services while leaving out Aboriginal people and the message of <u>Bran Nue Dae,</u> which insists that we are all connected with the Aboriginal people of our community. Unless we can incorporate both emic and etic styles of research and practice in social work, the danger is that those in power can categorize into subjugation members of our society. When this is done to some of us, the possibility is open that it may well be done to more of us:

> The good we secure for ouselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated in our common life. (Addams 1990/1910, p. 69)

<u>Notes</u>

CHAPTER TEN

And the World Keeps on Turning[138]

All theory, dear friend, is gray, but the golden tree of actual life
springs ever green.
Goethe 1749-1832

Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from
time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.
Oscar Wilde 1854-1900

Action is the only medium man [sic] has for receiving and
appropriating truth.
Jane Addams 1860-1935

The way to solve the problem you see in life is to live in a way that
will make what is problematic disappear.
Wittgenstein 1889-1951

Denied access to the podium, Black women have been unable to
spend time theorizing about alternative conceptualizations of
community. Instead through daily actions [they] have *created*
alternative communities that empower.
Patricia Hill Collins 1948-

This project has researched my reflections on becoming a social work practitioner. The motivation for this exploration lay in unresolved tensions within my understanding of what doing social work means and how I then undertake my commitment to educate others to become social work practitioners. Alternatively cast, the impetus of this research was to search for and save myself as a social worker and as a person. In struggling to write a text that captures and covers some of these concerns I have not come to closure but in this chapter I want to articulate some of the outcomes of this project that I identify as shaping my future practice.

My Relationship to Social Work

In the beginning chapters I figured this project as an exercise in critical autoethnography linking back to a classic text from social work, Twenty Years at Hull House and to current postmodernist ideas, especially those of critical, feminist interpretive interactionism. I have applied the methods of critical ethnography to a reflection of my lived experiences as a social worker in a particular place at a particular time, organizing the construction of my self-narrative around remembered epiphanic moments. Using my biography I have painted a picture of social work practice that at one level bears little resemblance to the actualities of practice in which any other social worker will find themselves immersed. Much of the territory I worked in does not exist any more except as

history and human memory. This is also the case with Jane Addam's' depiction of Chicago at the turn of the century (Addams, 1990/1910). It is the ongoing case for each of us as social workers and as humans that we act in worlds of material and meaning that keep on changing. My project starts from a refutation of the notion that we live in a world of obdurate reality whose precise contours and nature can be known. The project rejects that there can only be a positivist understanding of the task of social work and seeks instead to research what it might mean to prepare to do social work from a critical postmodern understanding that we live in a world that can only be apprehended through human interpretation.

My research has located me in Urbana, Illinois reflecting on being a Western Australian social worker in the Kimberley in the seventies and early eighties before becoming a social work educator in Perth in 1984. What can I conclude about being a social worker that transcends my personal experience and connects to the tasks of other social workers likely to enter a world not yet known?

In the chapter covering my entry into social work as a young woman, I described a childhood in a secure and safe community of kin and neighbors with little experience of the world as a dangerous and exclusionary site of living. It was a place where I was socialized to a very Australian understanding of democracy with a valuing of egalitarianism and the equal worth of all people. At the same time, there were some who were excluded out of this ethos of inclusion--dynamically changing categories of people such as non-kin, people of color, migrants and Jews. These exclusionary processes became a central part of my consciousness during my teenage years when my own acne caused me to feel excluded out of the category of normal femininity. At the time I pursued what I perceived as a way forward through the meritocratic system of education. I finished an anthropology degree in this way without ever becoming conscious of the necessity to graduate from the role of student to that of worker.

When the time came to seek a working life, both my own socially constructed ideas and the material realities of the employment market led me to undertake social work education. In this course I resonated strongly with the material taught on the value base of social work and connected this to my own childhood understandings of the value of a social democracy and the humanist philosophy permeating much of my reading of anthropology. As a result of traveling to the Kimberley region of Western Australia and seeing the abject conditions in which Aboriginal people were living, I made a conscious decision to commit myself to the task of understanding and helping Aboriginal people.

From this grounded experience of being with Aboriginal people in their everyday actualities, I developed over time, in dialogue with other welfare workers, an emotional and intellectual commitment to "doing" social work. In this Kimberley community of relationships and reflecting on lived experience and imaging how life might be better for people, I developed a sense of competence in belonging to a community in which there was open participation in creatively and commitedly listening to one another in working to make a fairer life for all of us. Over time and through these relationships, I did not think only in terms of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, of men and women, of workers and non-workers, of social work clients and non-clients. Rather in such a small and isolated

setting as the Kimberley, it was much more likely to start with the personal and in the style of Dorothy Smith (1987) to construct a critical ethnography of the complexity of cultural lives lived in the Kimberley and come to an awareness of the structural factors of power shaping the everyday lives of Kimberley people.

In this ethnographical approach, I did not accept common wisdom that said Aboriginal problems were for Aboriginal people to address though the paradox is that they was the central understanding of my practice. At the same time separating out Aboriginal issues and Aboriginal people would seem to imply that Aboriginal people live in a world that is not controlled and dominated by white relations of ruling. On this point I resonate with bell hooks conclusion that:

> The story of a white liberal acquiring a radical consciousness is a needed representation for many indifferent or uncertain white folks who do not know that they have a role to play in the struggle to end racism. (p. 188)

hooks describes such political commitments as not determined categorically by race, gender, class or circumstance but rather as:

> a learned standpoint emerging from awareness of power and domination confirmed experientially . . . [which] disrupts the idea that the black liberation struggle can only take place if there is an inspired individual messianic (preferably male) leader. (p. 189)

This describes my sense of finding myself in a place and time where people's lived experiences did not conform to my ideas of human solidarity and their stories to me suggested they wanted to change these conditions. As a social worker and a human, I felt morally responsible to listen to people and stand by them as they sought change and improvement in their lives.

Working out of this awareness brought me into conflict with those defining the task of social work as bureaucratic and not political. After my forced transfer from Broome in 1981, I still believed that the power of social work lay in a professional capacity to enable others to develop their own resources and human potential. My involvement is such work and reflection on it had been a core component of my own self-empowerment. With my own transfer I believed that I might be paying the necessary price for risk-taking in practice but the struggle of social work for empowerment of each of the collectivity persisted.

This understanding became problematic in 1984 with the release of a review of welfare services in the state conducted primarily by social workers (Carter, 1984). This suggested that empowerment should never be the aim of a government employed social worker if disruption to the local status quo could be the outcome. My struggle then became an intellectual one against accepting that I had misconceived the tasks of social work. My reading of the review was that it concluded that social workers could only hope to maintain Aboriginal people in a state of passive dependency and that any move for change could only come autonomously from Aboriginal people. This text seemed to reinscribe the racist ideologies that I had worked against in practice/in myself. It did not resonate with the stories of lived experience I had heard in my seven years of practice in the Kimberley.

In the researching that this writing has been, I came to name this review text as an exemplar of what Dorothy Smith (1987) calls the relations of ruling textualizations, where abstracted, generalized and standardized forms of knowledge are constructed as rules and filters through which the local and particular are to be understood. Such processes are an integral part of any society and in the text I argue that in the Australian context compared with the American setting, they have often produced relatively inclusionary forms of knowledge. A key theme of this thesis is that these relatively democratic Western Australian relations of ruling, categorically excluded Aboriginal people. I have argued that their existence was held not to count in the calculations of what was economically feasible in this society. Instead they were to be maintained in their dependent lifestyles as an act of charity by the rest of us.

Writing of my life as a practitioner has enabled me to understand that this interpretation of the task of social work is not the truth in any final sense. My text itself contests the claim to power of such positivistic versions of the truth of social work. Instead I am claiming that social work, always delimited by the settings in which it is practiced, is also always what we practitioners make it. This writing of my own life has been an exercise in social theory, connecting thought and action; self and others; process and product; and persona and environment. By starting with my bodily position in the world, my many selves have woven in the text a temporal and spatial web of meanings which provides me with a sense of where I have traveled as a social worker and provides some sense of navigational direction as to where I might travel from here as a social work educator. The test of this sense will come with the degree of communicability I can achieve with other social work practitioners and the outcome of actions I take in the world as a consequence..

I have written a text that stresses the importance of listening in an engaged way with those we work with in social work and responding according to our perceptions of that situation rather than falling in with an oppressive interpretations from extra-local sources. Included in the text is my rendition of Jimmy Chi's (1991) <u>Bran Nue Dae</u> to give some sense of the voices that are missed when social work as a profession accepts the seductive offer of the relations of ruling that they can be etic experts. In saying this, I stress that I am not suggesting we do away with etic perspectives in social work. They have a place to play in the ongoing discourse. I agree with Wadsworth's (1992) concept of "the critical reference group" to highlight the importance of those whom a welfare service is "for" being the key evaluators of its effectiveness. At the same time she argued the importance of taking into account the perceptions of all players in any situation including those outside experts representing the interests of the relations of ruling. Centering the critical reference group in evaluation, however, makes it less likely that the voice of those we say we serve will be silenced by the very expertise and structures set up to serve them.

In my text I address the silencing and negation of the lived experience of a particular group of people with whom I lived and worked over many years. Other social workers' consciousness would be similarly shaped by their lived experience and often with diverse outcomes in terms of the identification of particular groups of people left out of the *demos* social work says it serves. In my

relationship to social work I see that we gain a professional identity by sharing such autoethnographies of our practice and discoursing about the ways in which we make sense of social work aims in our grounded practice. Experientially, I know that social workers do this all the time in conversations with each other but these tend to be texts without trace, that can be forgotten when curriculum for social work education are drawn up from available written texts. Tuning into the creative power of our knowledge by relationship to people with personal troubles, I believe that social work has an integral part to play in making this world a place to live for all of us, not just "economic man". We will never actualize this potential in practice while we constrain ourselves by counting bureaucratic research as more "real" and necessarily then more powerful than hermeneutic and pragmatic research (Fuchs, 1993).

<u>My Relationship with Jane Addams</u>

Though in Australia I knew of Jane Addams as a pioneer social worker, it was only on coming to America that I became aware of her particular style of social work. Reading the history of American social work, her texts and visiting Hull House I connected to her approach at a time when I was feeling alienated from many of the more current texts on doing social work. I read her as a native of her time and place in the same way that I felt myself a native of Western Australia one hundred years later. Her story has been woven into my story through this text as a way of suggesting that the values of social work can transcend location when we start by talking of our practice experience. Her critical ethnographic approach to understanding the intersections of person and environment is one I think replicable in any setting though never with a guarantee of controlled outcomes. Addams took the role of wanting to understand rather than being the expert. Her humility and vulnerability in living with "others" had positive and tangible outcomes in terms of the learning by doing she describes. At no time did she claim closure in her knowledge of "others" but this did not stop her taking effective actions from her position as an engaged and critical thinker in the world, driven by a moral commitment to social democracy with all its political connotations. Such a vision of social work is similar to the post-modern view Goldner describes in which "the problem and its solution are not self-evident but, rather, *discovered* , in their nuanced complexity through the clinical work" (p. 158).

Culturally Addams' view of self was very much one based on relatedness, social embeddedness and interdependence. She concentrated on the totality of problems in a single geographic area and the intersectionality of gender, class and ethnicity in the lived experience of the people she came to know. She describes the thinking, experiences and actions of the local population and praxised out of this understanding in the wider political environment. I relate to her work across all these dimensions. I also realize that many other American social workers have practiced in similar ways over the years. On this point I relate to Addams work in a political way. In an educational climate in which such an understanding of knowledge for social work is not hegemonic, I relate to Addams' canonical text celebrating the achievements of one of the heroines of American culture. If this style of work has been erased the same cannot be said for the text itself and the achievements of

Jane Addams in making the world a better place to live. In relating back to this social work text, I would hope to strengthen my claim that critical ethnographic approaches are intellectually rigorous, driven by values, research based and effective if political.

Twenty Years at Hull House brings home to me that there is no other way to know than humanly from our historical and cultural situation (Smith, 1987). The text has recurring cameos of epiphanic moments of practice that raised her awareness as to the workings of the social in the personal troubles of individuals (Denzin, 1989b). The contradiction in her work is that even while her text describes her simple but powerful insistence on starting in actual, local, subjective experience from a standpoint that insisted that women know what women and children need in a way that dominant men could not, her text could also be read as the work of an extraordinary genius. In connecting with her work, I want to bear witness to the fact that ordinary social work practitioners act similarly in their engagement with clients though seldom with such a firm base of power on which to stand. Writing my text then and connecting with Jane Addams is one way to begin to network such a base among social workers across time and place so that we might make the power to resist "fitting-in" to the relations of ruling. I am not suggesting that only women know how to be social workers but social work is needed for all of us who are not integral to and critical of aspects of the circle of ruling. In making a space and base for social work that will be about hearing the voices of the excluded there is a strong constituency of ordinary people from which to network such solidarity.

Social Work as Context-bound, Ideological, and Subjective

This finding in by no means a new one. It is captured in the figuring of social work as a value based profession and relates directly to Scottish philosopher David Hume's finding in the eighteenth century that in taking action in the world no amount of knowing precisely "what is" will lead us to "what should be". For that we can only depend on moral judgment; on values. The basis of such moral judgments are our subjective reactions to the effects actions in the world have on ourselves and others. All of us as humans work out of our values in our actions in the world but often they are taken-for-granted as a "true" view of the world rather than our particular interpretation of what should be the case. Thus in social work, positivist empiricists value a view that science makes knowledge while practice uses it. They value a view that only the results of projects using the scientific method can tell us what to do in practice. This leads to examination of what social work practitioners actually do and lamentation that "there is evidence that social workers value personal experience, consultation and supervision more than research findings as a source of practice knowledge" [Duehn, 1985 #435, p.24].

While endorsing positivist research as an important and integral part of the whole project of social work, my text has argued that the use of such methods must always be subsidiary to the particular purpose of social work practice at any particular time and place. Human constructions of meaning, reflecting the positionality, power and values of those deciding on these purposes, are always what drives social work research and practice. In working with the personal troubles of those we say we serve, social workers inevitably listen to the client. With what ears we listen becomes the key task

for social workers to develop consciousness about. We can never fully become aware of our values but in their application to our actions in the world we can always work to pragmatically assess whether in fact our beliefs are verified by action.

<u>Reflexivity</u>

Knowing the meaning of the stories we are told as social work practitioners is always a melding of the story told and the way we hear it. The inevitable filtering process of listening reflects as much who we are as social workers as it does who our clients are as narrators. The dialoguing about our personal experience with colleagues, with clients and with supervisors are all means by which reflective social workers strive to become more aware of the ears with which they listen. They are all exercises in reflexivity by which practitioners can research the inherently autobiographical manner in which we are able to apprehend the "other"--the client (England, 1986; Scott, 1990). Such reflexivity is a means to become aware of our standpoint in our material world--the amalgam of ideas and lived experiences that filter the way in which we see the world and necessarily shape the way we hear other's perceptions on the world. Each of us as practitioners and as humans will in taking action act out of our own judgment as to which interpretation best fits the situation. Such judgment will always be socially constructed.

I see a key task of social work education as being the cultivation of a culture of life-long reflexivity. This aim has been an inherent part of the development of social work education apparent in the valuing of placement and mentor based learning, of supervision and in the stress on the development of self-awareness among students. The dominance of the discourse of what Foucault (1980) calls the modernist surveillance society has however served to undermine certainty in the continuing value of such processes in preparation for social work practice. The psychologistic focus of casework on the individual has encouraged a self-awareness that has few conscious components of history, culture and power. The role of supervisor has often become that of a bureaucratic manager rather than a listening board against which a student can reflexively articulate practice concerns. Placement has often become a way for the student to ingratiate themselves into future career possibilities rather than being primarily valued as a reflective learning experience. Mentorship has frequently been constrained by hierarchical power differentials between student and teacher, with the positivist assumption of a binarism between those who know and those who do not in those two categories.

Feminism has re-articulated what reflexivity offers in enabling recognition of the shifting intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, class, nationality and sexual preference. In the personal troubles experienced out of particular intersections of these dimensions in local places, social work has always to be constructed in actuality by the people involved. There is always a power dimension in this construction and it is possible for local social workers to act in concert with what Dorothy Smith (1987) terms the relations of ruling with an effect of dampening, colonizing or negating the voices of local people. On many occasions such actions may also reflect the wishes of the clients experiencing

the personal trouble requiring intervention. Kelly and Sewell (1988) in their configuring of styles of community practice suggest that there is always a popularity dimension in the provision of community services and some clients are able to evoke effective support and concern from the relations of ruling. So the parents of intellectually handicapped children often have powerful lobbyists working on their behalf--usually lobbyists who have lived the experience of this trouble.

There are also many whose personal troubles are peripheral to the imaginations to those in the circle of the relations of ruling. In listening to these troubles social workers can often not hear the situatedness of the narrative and the cultural values and beliefs that shape the telling of the tale. In the body of this thesis I have given examples of how listening and looking at clients from within an unreflected ethnocentric filter of interpretation can act against any possibility of helping the client with their personal troubles in terms meaningful to the client. One example I gave in Chapter Five was of my own dispensing of second-hand clothes to people in a manner that undermined the community's way of organizing and understanding personal interactions. In Chapter Nine I gave another example of how a review of welfare services acted to enhance the power of the social work profession at the cost of valuing the uniqueness and worth of Aboriginal people.

Both of these examples testify to the importance of social workers being able to articulate and dialogue about the stance with which they listen to others in each particular instance and place, even if only on reflection. Those wanting to insist that social work knowledge and research can only be of a bureaucratic kind of positivism with polished procedures and controlled outcomes ought to be able to argue that in its own right and not depend on what Mills (1959) terms the taboo on thinking about other ways of knowing.

<u>Listening</u>

Learning how to listen is closely connected to being a reflexive thinker (Imre, 1991). How to listen is socially constructed for each of us but we have a human capacity to reflect and become increasingly aware of the stances we take in listening. In developing such consciousness I would argue on the basis of my research findings for an emphasis in social work education on the methods of critical ethnography in interpreting interactions between client, social worker and the wider community. Each of us are historical social actors, constrained by the world we find ourselves in but always with delimited possibilities of making it different. In whatever decision we take as to how we understand the world and believe it should be there will be tension within ourselves and between ourselves and others. It seems that a possibility for each social worker is to resist just fitting in with the seductions of the status quo and explore instead the possibility of collaborating and dialoguing with the many others seeking to creatively make communities of wellbeing (Collins, 1990). This is always an ongoing process, politically contested and historically unfinished that starts for each of us in answer to the question of what am I to do from this base, in this place with this space. It is a process of action through human relationships that Martin Buber well describes:

What is to be done?

If you mean by this question, "What is one to do?"--there is no answer. One is not to do anything. One cannot help himself, [sic] with one there is nothing to begin, with one it is all over. He who contents himself with explaining or discussing or asking what one is to do talks and lives in a vacuum.

But he who poses the question with the earnestness of his soul on his lips and means, "What have I to do?"--he is taken by the hand by comrades he does not know but whom he will soon become familiar with, and they answer (he listens to their wonderful reply and marvels when only this follows):

"You shall not withhold yourself." (Buber, 1966, p. 109)

In this project I have argued that this is what Jane Addams (1990/1910) did in community with fellow Chicagoans and settlement house workers; it is what Collins (1990) argues to be the nature of much black feminist thought and praxis in the current American situation and it is what I have struggled to do in my own practice. I have introduced the reader to some of the cast of fellow strugglers I met and worked with along the way in a medley of listening, learning, living, loving, risk-taking, failing, despairing and celebrating.

With this story of reflections on my practice I arrive at a conclusion about that nature of social work education that takes me back to Jane Addams and moral pragmatism. The task becomes one of working with students to engage in and understand the peculiar problems of their contemporary world, starting with their biography. My story clarifies for me that I need to be ready to respond to those students who ask to be told what to do so they can become a skilled practitioner. I need to be ready with stories on why it is not possible ever to know what to do in the abstract. We can only listen to stories in the particular and decide our actions from there. It is the skills of listening that we can begin to develop as students and these involve our values and theoretical frameworks as much as our bodily skills of attentiveness to the other in the here and now situation. I need to be able to explore with students why the story that positivism tells about the power of the scientific method is not the only story.

Apart from emphasizing the importance of ethnographic methods and cultural studies, none of what I would seek to praxis as a social work educator would appear to be new to social work. Much of this knowledge however has become subjugated in the discourse of professionalism as expertise, dominance and control. The positivistic research I earlier quoted on the state of wellbeing of American children is one measure of the outcomes ensured for social work when the hegemony of positivism pervades. When widespread anguish in children's lives is taken-for-granted as the best the social work profession can achieve and as what the democratic consensus accepts (Chira, 1994), it might be time for social work to return to the pre-positivist voice of the child-saving era of their history and argue again for the centrality of processes of reproduction to any society's wellbeing.

Mapping a Way Forward

In mapping a way forward that resists a despairing definition of social work and democracy I would want to honor the hands-on work and action that have always been integral to social work practice. Instead of educating social workers to understand their actions in the terms set by the

relations of ruling, I would attempt to encourage social workers to develop their own voice out of reflected practice. In this political process of developing a will to power in the relations of ruling we need to reconnect with earlier social workers such as Addams and the many like her. We need to reconnect with the importance of being able to articulate the social theories with which we view the world and the social theories of others who argue that personal troubles should be addressed by working the social. In this the work of feminists is a powerful exemplar for the profession of social work on the importance of being able to articulate a standpoint from ontological experience rather than dominant epistemologies. This was the strength of what has come to be called the maternalism of early social workers (Kunzel, 1994). Without essentializing our identity as nurturers, social workers need to think about reworking and reclaiming such a firm base from which to make moral claims for their profession. For me such moral claims would relate to achieving the ideal of a social democracy that is such a powerful story of Western countries, including Australia. Such an articulated stance would free us from the powerful connection to method that has been a dominating motif of professional identity since Flexner's pronouncement that mediation didn't count as professional knowledge. As feminism has done more generally with regard to the idea of there being no connection between the knower and the known, we need to challenge this pronouncement and argue for the essentialness of nurture, reproduction and connectedness to the wellbeing of any society. We need to resist the subsuming of such tasks within a binary logic that connects these tasks to the female and the lesser. As my research indicated both men and women perform these tasks in everyday reality but in the relations of ruling they are seen not to count in the same way that Aboriginal knowledge and other differences are pathologized and marginalized as not being the "real" of obdurate reality. From the margins we need to challenge the "realness" of autonomous, self sufficient actors in the world who are able to know free of any ties of relationship.

Looking around the world at the many different forms of democracy that exist, it is obvious that working the social to democratic ends can have many different outcomes. A critical ethnography in social work practice will not promise control over the unpredictability of human culture and social change. As I complete this project I return to my position as a social work educator in a place where many of the same issues I document in my text remain unresolved, with consequences for the personal troubles people experience. I return with a clearer sense of my positionality in praxising education for social work and a clearer sense of the pride and power social workers need to take in our work of listening with and being with others.

The knowledge core of social work lies in these processes of reflexivity and listening and with the interpretive turn in social thought we can move to reclaim our heritage of praxising an understanding of the person in the environment and of critical ethnography. We should let go of seeking to be bureaucratic above pragmatic and hermeneutic in our research and practice endeavors. In this project I have presented my findings on what it has meant for me as a social worker to work with a particular group of people in a particular context. This involved a complex and multi-dimensional system of activity in which who I worked with from what system of values and beliefs

shaped my course of action from a wide range of possibilities. I would hope this work connects to a growing literature on an emic perspective on social work. Practitioners have of course specialized in making texts that often leave no publicly perceived trace when they listen and respond to the stories of clients. This project has been about articulating that process of text making in ongoing action. We are all the participants in an unfinished world rather than the spectators in a real one. In one sense we are all social workers attempting to enact our understanding of what is and what could be. The potential strength of an education in social work is providing a base from which people can enrich and become conscious of their interpretations and understandings of what it might be to move toward their ideal world in their particular place in concert with others.

In practical terms this would involve offering students a curriculum that exposes them to the interpretive disciplines of philosophy, feminism, anthropology/sociology and history. At the same time students could be exposed to a questioning as to whether economics, psychology and statistics are non-interpretive disciplines. In addition students could be encouraged to read and interpret literature that speaks to the lived experience of those they would serve. Through all this students could come to an understanding of themselves as life long learners and researchers in their diversity of potential practice situations. In concert with the traditional focus on the process skills of attentive listening, rapport and relationship-building this might prepare social workers with a sociological imagination who in learning by doing:

> Rather than work downward from abstract principles . . . work outward from an in-depth knowledge of a specific form of life. Informed by such conceptions as social justice, human dignity, and equality, they use their moral imagination to move from the world as it actually is to a locally persuasive vision of how it ought to be. (Rosaldo, 1993a, p. 194)

Education for social work can then be about preparing practitioners to work in this home-made manner in whatever situation they find themselves in. In this, knowledge of positivistic research becomes part of the picture but never the full story. I am recommending a Deweyan notion that we prepare social workers to be the researchers of their own practice and legitimate their own knowledge. None of us can do it alone. But if as practitioners we are able to discourse in open communication with others about our practice, we can as Smith (1990) suggests become aware of recurring patterns to personal troubles that reflect the operations of the relations of ruling in the continuing subjugation of some of us. There exists a substantial practice literature in social work and I am suggesting that the practitioner working out of their home-made model would access such material after they had begun to reflect on their practice situatedness.

Diverse participation in such discourse would appear be a democratic requirement and educators could address this issue in their practice by ensuring the recruitment of both a diverse student body and a diverse faculty. Politically the standing of social work in the general community will affect the public support available to social work and in practical terms this again involves social workers in the ongoing task of bringing home the importance of their work, not just in terms of the relations of ruling but also in terms of the diverse ways social work can "help" people with personal troubles in

their terms. Ensuring that social workers practice across a diversity of situations and settings provides a power base for the profession allowing risk-takers to be supported by the wider profession.

<u>Social Work as Always Community Work</u>

One of the implications of the interpretive turn in social thought for social work is that it becomes clear that we can only ever know in relationship. While we all live on one globe in an era of multinational capitalism none of us can claim to live in the normality around which the rest of globe deviates to varying degrees. This diversity of realities has profound implications for the practice of casework. In Australia work has been done on framing the practice of casework so that it always incorporates a consideration of the community/cultural connections of the client (Fook, 1992; Jackson, et al., 1988). Community work similarly must always work with the particular individuals involved in any community at any place. To work with a framing of casework that cannot incorporate an understanding of the cultural, historical and biographical dimensions of a client's story and that cannot facilitate the connection of this story with similar tales means social work remains caged in a way of seeing the world that serves to keep the relations of ruling. On the basis of my project I argue that each social worker has to struggle to articulate their home-made frame of practice and dialogue this with others. Ann Hartman (1992) offers a way forward that resonates with my idea of home-made practice:

> We need not discard our knowledge, but we must be open to local knowledge, to the narratives and truths of our clients. We must participate with them in the insurrection of subjugated knowledge. We must listen to honor and validate our client's expertise. We must learn to bracket our knowledge, to put it aside so it will not shape our questions and our listening and cause a barrier between us and the people we would understand. Furthermore, we must not privilege our professional knowledge and we must let ourselves hear information from our clients that would challenge our views. We must attend. We have been mistaken before and we will be mistaken again. But we are only wrong when we continue to cling to our mistaken truths. (p. 484)

<u>Notes</u>

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Publications

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1   District officer, evoking colonialism, applied to male non-social workers in welfare: females were termed welfare officers.

2   The law had required her employers to obtain a permit to employ an Aborigine and to pay part of her wages into a Trust Account administered by the State. These funds were to be used to meet the future needs of the employed person at the discretion of State authorities.

3   Marriage, cohabitation, or sexual intercourse between persons of different races was against the law for much of this century in Western Australia.

4   Aboriginal English.

5   A Walmajeri word that in Kriol means whitefella and in standard English white people.

6   Dating from time when in law and everyday meaning, bloodlines were all important in relations between black and white -- signified no mixing of race -- pureblood.

7   Signified racial mixing of parents. Policy to raise half-caste above native status kept "them" from presuming the full privileges of the whites. Beagle Bay Mission was started by Trappists in 1890 to work with Nyul-Nyul people of the area -- they were replaced by Pallottines after the 1905 Aborigines Act so it could become a training ground for half-castes from the region.

8   By this Act and an amending one in 1911, the Chief Protector's guardianship superseded the parental rights of the mother of a half-caste child. At the local level police officers were also Protectors of Aborigines until the middle of this century. As part of this protection, police were legally charged with the duty of taking such children from their mothers to be raised in an institution such as Beagle Bay.

9   Meaning usually both culturally and genetically Aboriginal.

10   A Broome term that used to be applied to and by graduates of Beagle Bay Mission and the Asian residents of Broome. The hierarchy then ran whites, coloreds and natives.

11   At the time there were three Aboriginal reserves in Broome, left over from the time when the Native Welfare Department had a responsibility to provide housing for Aboriginal people and now reluctantly inherited by the Community Welfare Department as a result of the 1972 amalgamation of the Native and Child Welfare Departments.

12   An upmarket dance.

13   An alternative to native.

14   The W.A. Court of Disputed Returns found that in the 1977 state election the ruling Liberal Party organized and implemented a concerted plan to deprive Kimberley Aborigines of their right to vote.

15   Between 1978 and 1980 there was a national struggle between Aboriginals and their supporters, including the unions, and the State government and its supporters, chiefly mining interests, over whether Aboriginals had any right to control mining access to their land. Noonkanbah was the site on which this drama was played out, holding media attention for over two years until in May 1980 a police-escorted convoy of trucks drove a rig from Perth to Noonkenbah and with the force of the state drilled the land.

16   In Aboriginal culture there is often a clear division between "men's" and "women's" business. It was noticeable how quickly many young white men displayed consciousness of this as a symbol of their cultural sensitivity to Aboriginal perspectives.

17   Foucault (1980) argued that "we are subjugated to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (p. 93). This is what I want to explore -- this intimate connection between power and knowledge.

18   Western Australians are known as sandgropers -- the State while occupying a third of the land area of Australia is largely sand and desert. Until massive mining development in the sixties, the State was known for its poverty and small population.

19   In this discussion refers to a dynamic set of symbols and myths produced within a communication system and not as some obdurate reality (See Denzin, 1986b)

20   The White Australia policy is a key component in understanding the history of Australia - the strength of multiculturalism in Australia is partly understood by the recent national awareness of the strength of the unreflected xenophobic racism that preceded it. The national magazine "The Bulletin" removed "Australia for the white man" as its cover slogan in 1960 and the Australian Labor party dropped the White Australia policy from its platform in 1965 (Horne, 1968).

21   This term covers the emotionality and self-hatred that locates around the real and imagined actions of others, particularly those with authority and power (See Denzin, 1993).

22   Sir Robert Menzies, first Liberal Party Prime Minister presided for sixteen years over Australia's most stable and prosperous times. Analogous to the end of the fifties era in the United States, his retirement in 1965 saw an upsurge of political action for change, culminating in the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972.

23   In Australian politics, the Liberal Party is the conservative party and the Labor Party would be closer to the American Democrats.

24   Australian Irish Catholics now "control" the country with Paul Keating as Prime Minister but, their history has been a long struggle against oppression and exclusion. Solidarity is widely believed to be the reason for their success now -- "mates must stick together."

25   In Australia the novel was titled "Schindler's Ark."

26   Keneally has written more than twenty novels addressing divides and links between women/men, black/white, migrants/nonmigrants, Catholics/non-Catholics, rural/urban, workers/bosses, children/adults, and convicts and non-convicts.

27   In the tutorial system the large lecture group breaks down into smaller groups (approx. 15 students) for reflective discussion of lecture material--a British tradition now under threat as Government policy and funding pushes universities to follow the American style of education.

28   I'll use that word because it so perfectly captures what we intended but we in truth didn't have that name for the concept at the time.

29   In the State welfare department Aboriginal people accounted for over 50% of the total client contact while numbering less than 3% of the total state population (Carter, 1984).

30   Laura Bohannan, under her pseudonym of Elenore Smith Bowen (1954) wrote another text influential on my thinking and imagining. Her tales of being a women fieldworker in most exotic Africa, left me believing such was possible for a woman anthropologist. Only on reading Bruner (1993) did I realize that her writing reflected a common pattern of female anthropologists married to male anthropologists. Bruner reports in the era of positivism, when personal narratives were

considered subjective, soft and feminine, "Husbands would do the ethnography and wives would tell the story of the field experience" (p.5).

31   The term "battler" applies to Australians who in the American setting might be called "loser." It has, however, positive connotations of someone who struggles on in the face of adversity.

32   Related to the historical nature of the Australian political economy, conditions for workers were often better than in Britain, hence the emergence of this term (Horne, 1968).

33   The original course was first offered in 1990. It has now been packaged and offered as an external studies unit by the Curtin School of Social Work. I note the subtitle to Research Inquiry has now become "An introduction to Post-positivistic Naturalistic Research" but I'm not aware of the particular politics behind the name change (See Dodds, 1993).

34   In a nation where government bureaucracy is relatively powerful, this could be equally understood as the feminization of bureaucracy.

35   That method driven scientism is of itself value driven is a major theme of this chapter.

36   That method driven scientism is of itself value driven is a major theme of this chapter.

37   In all my talk about particular people I am assuming they are natives of their times and place. So Comte did not personally and autonomously design this philosophy. It was socially constructed as are all human artifacts.

38   See in particular the work of Ruth Benedict(1946) and Margaret Mead (1971) .

39   Daniel Defoe took inspiration for his novels from the journals of William Dampier, an early explorer of Western Australia mentioned in Chapter Four.

40   I take it that Geertz is here using the term "ideology" in its negative connotations. Like natives having culture and "us" acting spontaneously, this seems to imply "we" are neutral but "they" are political. In the sense I use the term, following (Stanley, 1990a), ideology is part of the human condition-- even an ideology of being non-ideological.

41   At this time both terms were relatively new and plastic and Addams herself seems to have publicly identified her activities with both (Deegan, 1988b; Franklin, 1986).

42   So two public servants suggested it was unnecessary for people nowadays to know that in the early years of white settlement, the title Protectors of Aboriginals was changed to Protectors of Settlers and Guardian of Aboriginals after petitioning of the British Government by local settlers.

43   Terra nullius (Latin for empty land) is the British legal fiction that was used to justify Crown seizure of all Australian colonial territory. That the land was not empty on the arrival of the British was established in a June 1992 High Court of Australia case, the Mabo decision. Aboriginal people now have limited legal standing to make land right claims.

44   With regard to Aboriginal welfare it is important to note that in 1890, when Western Australia was granted responsible government, the British insisted on a condition that ten thousand pounds or 1% of the gross state revenue, whichever was the greater, would be devoted to Aboriginal welfare. In 1890 there was little difference in the calculation--after the gold finds the difference was so great that Western Australian government decided to ignore the agreement (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989).

45   At this time Aboriginal people were not included in the population statistics.

46   An old Western Australian term for all other Australians.

47   I am sure of it, having been to Ireland and seen so many people looking just like my father.

48   Clay brick is the common building material in Perth, reflecting its ready availability and the lack of timber.

49   The breakdown of the Clans of Scotland was hastened by the battle of Culloden in 1746 where over 1,000 highlanders lost their lives. This was followed by the Clearances when English power was used to replace people with sheep.

50   Pommy is an Australian term for English people.

51   As I do this I am reminded of the number of times I have witnessed Aboriginal people researching their ethnicity in anthropological texts.

52   Equivalent of cattle ranch.

53   Known as harness racing in the U.S.

54   Candy.

55   Samples of business wares with a heavy addition of candy.

56   Both my father and his sister Eileen died of Parkinson's Disease after long illnesses. Doctors advised the family this was not genetic but traceable to a virus the two would have been exposed to during the 1922 Spanish flu epidemic in Perth.

57   One particular hate was the ornate ivory plastic European clock set in a plastic glass case.

58   An Australian sandwich spread made of vegetable extract.

59   My brother later showed no difficulty in learning what he wanted to know, as when he had to study for a pilot's license to fly a cattle mustering plane in later years. In 1991 he was killed doing such work.

60   This was in the sixties and seventies, when compulsory schooling was until the child's fourteenth birthday. Now it is the end of the school year in which the child turns fifteen.

61   The father was a mechanic specializing in the new Mercedes diesel trucks being used in Perth. He worked from the garage attached to the house.

62   In fact my three younger sisters all went to Modern School because after the scholarship system ended, it became our district high school. They also all went on to study at University because this was now accepted in our family as the sensible thing to do.

63   In those days, Australian "girls" had such good reputations for working hard that it didn't matter that I couldn't type.

64   I realize now that in the bureaucratic logic that was operating, someone with an anthropology degree should work with Aboriginal people, who were proportionately far more numerous in country offices.

65   Jandamarra also known as Pigeon, was a police "tracker boy" who seized weapons and sustained a black rebellion against whites from 1894-97 (Hawke & Gallagher, 1989).

66   Pindan is the fine red soil that predominates throughout the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of the state--it permeates everything in these dusty conditions and it stains.

67   A course cloth made of a mixture of hemp and jute; used for bagging wheat and baling wool.

68   Hookworm, a parasitic worm with hooked mouth parts that fasten to the intestinal walls of a host, were found in the wet soil around the water tap and burrowed their way through the bare feet of children especially.

69   Aboriginal people were not legally able to drink alcohol until the State Labor government in 1971 repealed the restrictions on access. This repeal took effect in the Kimberleys in 1972.

70   Hawke & Gallagher (1989) detail the degree to which death and injury became endemic for Aborigines of the Fitzroy valley from the arrival of whites in the 1880's to some sort of "order" being achieved in the 1930's.

71   The annual report of the Department for Community Welfare detailed these statistics as did numerous other government reports of this time.

72   Other methods of controlling Aboriginals including poisoning waterholes and massacring are detailed, especially for the Kimberley area in Hawke & Gallagher (1989)

73   Subincision: the cutting of an opening into the uretha on the under side of the penis: a practice prevalent in some primitive socieities (Oxford English Dictionary).

74   In 1974, a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Affairs in Western Australia recommended that Aboriginal people each chose whether to give up their culture and progress or to retreat to special areas where they could preserve their culture (Furnell, 1974).

75   Many of us were now getting serious about careers after unthinkingly completing a non-vocational Arts degree, in which anthropology was a popular choice of subject.

76   My undergraduate department was actually called the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, but the only sociology covered was that perceived to be compatible with anthropology and so was heavily influenced by the work of the Chicago School of Sociology (Mills, 1959; Whyte, 1943). The American sociology influential in the social work course was mainly known to me through Mills' critique of it.

77   Two reserves actually, each with about twelve buildings: one set was of single rooms like large cupboards for local pensioners and the other set was of three small rooms, built in 1964 for the Sunday Island families who had been shifted into town because it was too difficult for government to service their island community. The Anglican missionaries had withdrawn their services.

78   Derby, at the time, was the biggest regional centre in the Kimberley with a population of some 4,000. The Kimberley, much larger than the State of Illinois had a total population of 15,000 (50%

Aboriginal) and the whole State with an area of 1 million square miles had just over a million

inhabitants (3% Aboriginal).

79   Gadeya - in Kriol means whitefella, in English white or non-Aboriginal person.

80   This name was given in childhood to Killer by whites in reference to his membership in a

party of Aboriginals arrested for killing cattle. Killer's father died trying to walk back to his homeland

from the Derby jail (personal communication with Mr. Kim Rose former owner of Liveringa Station in

Jan., 1976).

81   Town management wanted to charge me $100 per week for a site at the caravan park. Some

ten miles from Looma, there were just a few white residents but the school the Looma children

attended was there.

82   This organization, starting from the mission of translating biblical materials into indigenous

languages, has in the Australian setting become one of the key influences in facilitating the use of

Aboriginal languages in schools.

83   Indulging in all that is not available outback.

84   As told by Michael Maundie, Looma, 1975.

85   Meaning they occupied one of the paid community positions. These women tended to be

young and with some literacy skills.

86   A kriol expression meaning Aboriginal people who conducted their everyday lives in

accordance with traditional Law beliefs. The Walmajari and Mangal not having suffered the first

assault of white contact were often of the view that bad things happened to Aboriginal people when

they got slack about following their Law.

87   The Walmajari female term for one of the eight skin groups.

88   To be fair I should note that the male gadeyas who previously occupied my caravan may well

have regularly had and shared Playboy magazines.

89   "It is customary for Aboriginals in the European-occupied regions of Western Australia, South

Australia and the Northern Territory to refer to white people as 'boss'" (Liberman, 1985, p. 135-136).

Missus Boss refers to white women.

90   I don't know why Nancy was childless but women on station properties were used as sexual partners for white men and many suffered serious venereal and other diseases in consequence. At one time there was an island off the coast of Western Australia which was used as a lock-up hospital for the confinement of Aboriginal people found to have venereal disease.

91   A form of fresh water shrimp.

92   The local white power elite that congregated at the golf club.

93   Berger who later wrote on the advantages of capitalism and the importance of the family, would I'm sure be bemused to find his ideas rate as Marxist in Broome (see Berger, 1986; Berger & Berger, 1983).

94   A very Broome name, the Irish first name signifying the Beagle Bay connection and the influence of the Irish nuns and a Japanese surname signifying Colleen belonged to the "colored" sector of the population where Asian intermarriage was common.

95   The Homemaker Service was established in the late sixties in the Native Welfare Department when some Aboriginals became eligible for upgraded housing, in some instances the equivalent of what was available to non-Aboriginal people from the State Housing Department. The thinking had been to teach Aboriginal people how to use modern conveniences. With the amalgamation in 1972, this service had become part of the Community Welfare Department with a revamped philosophy of working with clients on the issues defined by clients in concert with practitioners. Broome had been one of the first places to appoint Aboriginal homemakers in this new scheme.

96   An upbringing by the Irish nuns in the Beagle Bay dormitory displayed itself in the use of Irish religious expressions, especially among the older women, many of whom still thought of welfare in historical terms as the providers of rations to Aboriginal people.

97   In a small town where everyone's affairs were likely to be public, Broome rumor was the term used to say you had only heard the story but it was probably true. Very often it wasn't because it was so seductive to use the gossip machine for various purposes. Stories then were always analyzed as to who could be getting what out of saying this.

98   The One Arm Point community was the initiative of another of the first Aboriginal groups to recognize the opportunities attached to changing federal policy in Aboriginal Affairs. The residents

came from Sunday Island, where a Protestant mission was established in 1898. When the mission authorities withdrew in the sixties, the residents had been forcibly transferred by the state to the Native Welfare Reserve in Derby. Now they had shifted back to their homelands.

99   Ministerials were communications, usually complaints, to the Minister, which required the Department to prepare an answer in reply. Attending to such work, which was usually referred back to the appropriate local office for explanation, was categorized by head office administrators as top priority work.

100   Both members of Labor governments.

101   An important step in being able to access federal funding for Aboriginal initiatives.

102   A position analogous to that of a State Governor in the United States.

103   In 1993, a Liberal Member of Parliament, Ross Lightfoot, wrote, "Aborigines were never civilized. Even in their primitive state today they are only the bottom color of the civilization spectrum (quoted in Manly, 1993, p. 5).

104   Doc was Whyte's key informant in the ethnographic classic <u>Street Corner Society</u> (1943).

105   This was a rural development acreage some thirty miles north of Broome.

106   The residents had previously asked their local member, Alan Ridge, to help them on this matter, so the quick response may well have been a function of the paper work already being on file.

107   A manatee.

108   This was to show videos as television did not arrive in Broome until 1980.

109   This was written about the time of the Seaman Aboriginal Land Inquiry of 1984 commissioned by the Western Australian Labor Government as the first step in their election promise of granting Aboriginal Land Rights. The recommendations of the Inquiry were never enacted into law. For a time however, anthropologists were able to make careers for themselves as consultants to mining companies.

110   So federal expenditure on Aboriginal Affairs in Western Australia increased from $2.5 million in 1971-72 to $17 million in 1974-74 and kept increasing exponentially throughout the seventies (Bolton, 1981).

111   The job involved being a spokesman for the community with gadiya government. Michael Maundie had spent some time as a child at Beagle Bay Mission and Broome, so could speak English more fluently than others and was held to understand something of gadiya ways. He was asked to act as a broker between the two systems.

112   By which individual Aboriginal workers were to be paid at the same award rates obtaining for white workers.

113   A different spelling of gadiya.

114   Such expressions were often taken by whites as a physical threat but it reflects the structuring of Aboriginal language in which there was no word for mind and idea. Thinking was done by listening rather than the looking metaphors such as insight which dominate in the English language (Liberman, 1985).

115   While Aborigines now had the right to vote it was not compulsory for them as it was for all other adult Australians.

116   Ballot boxes were only available at significant population centers.

117   A Kimberley card game.

118   Known in the Kimberleys as a potential police perk in serving in remote postings.

119   A piece of processed wood of suitable size for bashing.

120   Engaging in direct eye contact is not usual in traditional interaction patterns among Aboriginal people.

121   A producing oilfield off the coast of Western Australia.

122   Tommy Edgar, who had two sons-in-law who were Aboriginal Police Aides was particularly incensed at this strategy. He kept saying, "It's just like the old days, it's just like the old days." This referred to the police use of Aboriginal tracker "boys" in earlier times to control and monitor Aboriginal lives.

123   The Aboriginal Chairman of the Aboriginal Lands Trust.

124   Us here refers to the social network of Kimberley and ex-Kimberley people now living in Perth and more particularly Michael and me.

125   The very male symbolism of this language suggested that with the highly geared knowledge of the entrepreneurs, it would not take long to turn the state into a highly efficient machine. There were different players, but they were following the same game as that followed by Court and calling it reality.

126   In 1988, when Burke resigned, Peter Dowding, formerly Aboriginal Legal Service lawyer in the Kimberley, became Premier of Western Australia.

127   The specter of bureaucrats certifying the traditionality of Aboriginal people comes to mind.

128   A cyclone that hit Darwin on Christmas Eve, 1974 and destroyed the town.

129   Something of an insider's tale, this is what the social worker in the field says on meeting a social work teacher after graduation.

130   Submissions targeting the wellbeing of Aboriginal people accounted for 12% of all written submissions (Carter, 1984, p. 27).

131   Briton Lord Alistair McAlpine, Treasury Advisor to Margaret Thatcher during her time of office, bought up Broome property extensively during the early eighties before shifting his capital elsewhere during the early nineties. He came with experience of the Caribbean tourist industry.

132   What has come to be the generic term for Aboriginal people from the south-west of Western Australia.

133   Broome kriol term meaning brother/friend.

134   An Aboriginal language group. A lot of Karadjerri people live at Bidyadanga, formerly known as La Grange mission, south of Broome.

135   Monitor lizard or goanna.

136   A Broome cockleshell much harvested and much joked about because of its resemblance to a vagina.

137   During the late seventies and eighties fundamentalist Christian preachers started to proselytize in Broome and won converts in all sectors of the community.

138   A line from the song "Calling in the Name" (Chi, 1991, p. 8).

139   A line from the song "Calling in the Name" (Chi, 1991, p. 8).