

Crossing cultural contact zones to reclaim matriarchal leadership: indigenous and feminist leadership in early childhood education.

ABSTRACT:

Amongst the *subsistence knowing* (Hart 1992: 82) of Indigenous women leaders and of white feminists, a project of reclaiming our *primitive modes of affection* (Tyler 1993: 53) in the *work of mothering* (Hart 1992) our children contains a potential for powerful partnerships in early childhood education where we can learn from each other and reclaim matriarchal leadership.

Introduction

This paper, beginning with questions of uncertainty, will follow Indigenous protocols of respect for the land and honouring our elders. It proposes processes of respectful listening and learning from silenced and subjugated knowledges, reaching out across contact zones to heal the hurt and build new partnerships.

Un/certainty

Kerith Power 1983

What was that song I was singing last night?
Now I can't get it right, another illusion;
It's just over there, trailing smoke through the air,
Turn my head, unaware, slips into confusion.
Surely by now there must be ways to capture our dreams?
Drift through the dark with our nets of despair;
Some of the lights that are shining must be what they seem;
Certainty, are you there?

There was a time I thought I'd find a rhyme,
I'd so aptly define all the answers;
All I would need was the ghost of a lead,
Surely I'd match the speed of the dancers;
But all of the phantoms I follow are losing their way
Rhythms that falter and then disappear;
Promising paths that go nowhere have led me astray;
Certainty, are you here?

I thought growing older meant I would be wise,
And I'd slowly surmise the connections;
But the trail's growing cold, and here, over the hill
There are more unexpected directions;
Looking back over my life I can see where I've been;
Times when the concrete has touched the ideal;
Nothing I plan ever turns out the way I've foreseen;
Certainty, are you real? Are you real?

I have started this paper with a statement of uncertainty because, rather than making a claim to definitive knowledge I wish to convey the condition of radical doubt which has characterised this research project from beginning to end.

Respect for the land

Larnook Mountain Home

Kerith Power, 1985

Dreaming trees line the shoulder of a mountain,
Where I've lived and worked for many years
Where I brought my new world dreams and fancies
And called myself a mountaineer
In my Larnook mountain home, and in my Larnook mountain home
Where my friends are gathered all around me
There's no place I'd rather be than here.

With my loved ones I've toiled along the home trail
Oh, the times that we have struggled through
Heavy burdens, tears of desperation
When the helping hands were all too few
In my Larnook mountain home, and in my Larnook mountain home
Through the leaves comes a bird call to remind me
To look back and marvel how it grew.

Patchwork gardens pattern all the hillside,
Ripening fruit hangs heavy on the tree;
Children grow, the babies who were born here,
Lives are sculptured by the mountain breeze
In my Larnook mountain home, and in my Larnook mountain home
Where my friends are gathered all around me,
I have dreamed a life of harmony.

In the friendly faces in the firelight,
As their joy flies up to spark the sky
When the music rings across the valley
There's no need to stop and wonder why
I made my Larnook mountain home, and in my Larnook mountain home
Where my vision reaches all horizons
It's my choice to live where eagles fly;
Where my vision reaches all horizons
It's my choice to live where eagles fly

Few of us who fled the cities in the late 1960s to escape the alienation brought to a head by the Vietnam war were conscious of the history of Black dispossession underlying our Utopia, although by then the Australian Aboriginal civil rights movement included the 'Freedom Rides' of 1965, the 1967 referendum campaign which removed constitutional discrimination against Indigenous people, the Gurindji walk-off from Wave Hill Station which initiated national consciousness of the Land Rights movement, and the 1972 Aboriginal Tent Embassy (Sykes 1984: 50), addressing issues of civil rights, land rights and racial discrimination (IAD 2001).

While the mainstream of Aboriginal and women's civil rights movements proceeded apparently independently of each other, some currents intersected, including early childhood education. Up to the 1970s most institutionalised Indigenous early childhood education consisted of either

child removal or assimilationist early childhood services staffed by White teachers, both of which attempted to erase Indigenous cultures and values. In an early review of Indigenous education, Betty Watts (1982) outlined recent Federal government policy moves: 'from an assimilationist stance in 1965, to an emphasis on self-determination in 1973, and thence in 1975, to an expressed goal of self-management'. She described the 1979 establishment of Murawina, a playgroup which later became an Indigenous- controlled child care centre initiated by Aboriginal women linked with the Aboriginal Medical Centre and Aboriginal Community Centre at Redfern in inner Sydney. Murawina was the site from which the Nursery School Teachers' College derived its first few Indigenous graduates.

In the early seventies my Aboriginal colleague Dianne Roberts, after working as a domestic in the city since she was fifteen, bore her first child in a segregated back ward at the Kempsey hospital, one out of the two of seven Indigenous children born at the same time who survived (Roberts 1999, pers. comm). My first baby was delivered and cared for free of charge in a sparkling public maternity ward a day's drive away. Our paths did not cross for another twenty years, but our mothering and our interest in our own children's education led us both to an involvement in early childhood services. Dianne worked as a volunteer at Minimbah ('Learning Place' in the Anaiwan language) and was invited and succeeded as a mature age student to train as a teacher. Already having trained and worked as an elementary school teacher, I worked with a Buddhist rural commune to establish a state-funded preschool. Dianne came late to the formal education I had assumed was my birthright while I was learning how to go 'back to nature': to milk cows and grow vegetables, the skills of self-sufficiency experienced by necessity by Dianne in her childhood. Both teaching and rural self-sufficiency are characterised by Mechtild Hart (1993) as 'subsistence production'.

Within the context of the world capitalist system, the quiet and invisible work of women and other subsistence producers has been considered unproductive and unprofitable... With its overall orientation towards use and life, and with its preserving rather than destructive attitude, subsistence labour can serve as a model for a truly human vision of work and life ... we can construct a vision of work and life that is both life-enhancing and progressive ... education can itself be conceptualized as a productive process containing the major elements of subsistence production (Hart 1993: 95 - 177).

In our rural Utopia we white 'alternative lifestylers' or 'hippies' transformed our desires for peace into attempts at subsistence production. Our ideals were to live and bring up our children within a 'simple, self sufficient' life of co-operation rather than competition. Our respect for the land drew us reluctantly into an environmental campaign. We found ourselves in conflict with traditional farmers and commercial timber interests and our anti-Vietnam political experience was brought into play to achieve an environmental victory in the preservation of a rainforest

remnant as a National Park.

Child bearing and rearing took place in an enclave of values which broadly resembled a romantic Rousseau- type return to 'nature' (Berk 2000: 12) which, it soon transpired, was more difficult and complex than we had imagined. 'Nature' on the sub-tropical Far North Coast teemed with insects and introduced weeds which compromised our attempts at chemical- free food production. Co-operation and peaceful co-existence proved an even more difficult project. While forms of social capital involving barter, participatory democracy, extended family or 'tribal' relationships, spiritual rather than material values and consultative social processes did generate an interesting and productive small 'counter-culture', within one generation, restorative mechanisms came into play. Class and gender issues were not erased. As our children grew the middle class 'hippies' activated their social and cultural capital to become the next generation of local government councillors, politicians and teachers while those who lacked education became casual labourers or entered the illegal commercial marijuana economy.

Dianne Roberts' life during the same era was influenced by the new 'Aboriginalism' (The word 'Aboriginal' was used by Europeans and only in the 1940s taken up by Indigenous peoples themselves to celebrate their survival and reinforce solidarity (Bourke et al 1998: 43).

It was the Aborigines ... who ... replaced the 'citizenship rights' program of the 1950s with the Black American 'civil rights' of the 1960s before they concluded, like the American Indians, that 'self-determination' was a much more useful model for indigenous peoples in the 1970s (Read 265).

Of course, there were *Generations Of Resistance* (Lippmann 1981) to white colonisation since it began. I have outlined in previous work (Power PhD unpub) how this resistance had become covert in Dianne's parents' generation, where Indigenous identity, relationships to the land and Indigenous law went underground. 'Education' for this and succeeding generations has represented both an opportunity for social survival and a key mechanism in a loss of Aboriginal languages, loss of identity, loss of land and law. Dianne and her peers joined the emerging Black middle class.

Early childhood educational activism, largely by women, has been from the suffragettes on, a significant element of Australian feminism, alongside a 'refined and womanly profession' socialised into conformity and acceptance of women's 'natural' roles. Kindergartens were havens where well to do children would flourish and poor children be protected from the harsh conditions of the slums. Early on, white feminists colluded with the view that Indigenous parents were even more ignorant and 'savage' than white working class mothers. Any chance should be taken for 'saving' children, especially those of 'mixed blood', from their origins. (Moreton-Robinson 2000).

Second wave feminist class- and gender-based analyses of the field (Brennan 1982; 1986; 1998; Cox 1988; Davis 1990), by fundamentally challenging the sexual division of labour, included political advocacy for social change as an integral function of early childhood leadership. This function of leadership was resisted by the 'refined and womanly' element. For many women in the Kindergarten movement who did not subscribe to a feminist agenda, the existence of child care, rather than Kindergarten, was a necessary evil. 'We may not agree with the motives of mothers to work but we must accept their right to do so' (Joan Fry, Principal of Nursery School Teachers' College, 1969, cited in Brennan 1998: 62).

Many Indigenous people have expressed resistance to colonial education by school refusal. Frustration at indifference to the benefits of a 'superior' civilisation is a theme throughout Indigenous education from earliest times to the present day. Rev. L.E. Threlkeld, an adherent to the *civilisation and christianisation* view of changing Aborigines (Fletcher 1989), documented in 1836 one of the earliest cases of school refusal:

two youths, named Billy Blue, and Little McGill, are taught to read and write in their own tongue; but their disposition to wander, although well fed and clothed at my expense, manifests itself very frequently to my sad annoyance. (Legislative Council 1836: 603).

For early childhood professionals, the unspoken message of Indigenous people's disinterest in mainstream early childhood programs may be that to date, *developmentally appropriate practice* has been equated with colonial schooling, *the means by which children were (from an Indigenous point of view) denied their right to develop* (Valadian 1991: 6).

The Indigenous sector of the early childhood field has duplicated a 'care-education' split, which took place roughly along class lines and was also influenced by separatist versus assimilationist forces within the Aboriginal movement. At the time of Dianne Roberts' entry into teacher education, the New South Wales 'Save the Children Fund' pre-schools, which had been established by white philanthropy and therefore at this stage of their development represented assimilationist principles, were in the early stages of 'Aboriginalisation'. Non-Indigenous Directors were expected to step aside for Indigenous Directors as they gained teaching qualifications. Dianne, who had started working at the preschool as a volunteer parent, became a cleaner, bus driver and untrained assistant. In the 1970s and 80s when Indigenous cultures surfaced again, on becoming a University trained Director she did not forget the assistance she received from white allies: those who encouraged and helped her to study, the preschool director who, once having stepped aside, still works voluntarily each week with the children

thirteen years on and the 'Friends of Minimbah', white people who work behind the scenes to assist. This was a conscious choice in an era of separatism, where Murawina and its derivatives chose a separatist path..

Just as there had always been Indigenous resistance, there were always those among the whites who had protested against their treatment (Reynolds 1998). It was to these stories I came when seeking to counter the shame and guilt that was hampering my work with Aboriginal people. I decided to seek out and honour my own elders. In the second section of this paper I observe Indigenous protocol by learning from elders, as outlined by Dobson et al (1997). I seek to honour and pay respect to my own foremothers in early childhood education, linking historical events to contemporary gendered early childhood leadership in Australia in terms of constructions of women and children *and the work of mothering* (Hart 1992: 184).

Honouring Our Elders

A Heroine Of Mine

(Judy Small 1985)

She was a high-born lady from the gentry of the land
She never had known poverty, but she seemed to understand
That her privilege depended on the labour of the poor
And she spent her life in working just to even up the score.
She married a young lawyer and Chief Justice he became;
She could have spent her whole life in the shelter of his name;
But not for her the glory of reflections in the glass,
She saw the vast injustice and she couldn't let it pass.

CHORUS:

She was an inspiration for the women of her time
And, Jessie Street, you'll always be a heroine of mine.

She never had to work but still she fought for equal pay
And she fought for Aborigines, to the silvertails' dismay
She was a woman for the people, her commitment clear and strong
And she used her wealth and influence to help the cause along.
She saw the waste of human life in wars that make men rich
Her work for peace was endless, and they put her on the list
They branded her a traitor, called her communist and more
But Jessie's voice was never stilled against the crime of war.

CHORUS:

She was an inspiration for the women of her time
And, Jessie Street, you'll always be a heroine of mine.

And Jessie, your example helps us all along the way
Foundations that were laid back then we're building on today;
The struggle isn't over, there are mountains still to climb
But the legacy you and your sisters left is our lifeline.

CHORUS:

You were an inspiration for the women of your time
And, Jessie Street, you'll always be a heroine of mine.

The earliest Government policies from England towards Aborigines had concentrated on governing the white colonists' behaviour: natives were to be protected by British law (Fletcher 1989: 13). By 1825, however, it was clear that distance from England considerably weakened the power of such humanitarian principles. A discursive shift in the colonies had arisen in the face of Indigenous resistance to white settlement. The dissidents were constructed as a menace to order: dependent, irresponsible and unreliable. The emphasis then changed to

changing the behaviour of natives rather than colonists ... From their experience with Aborigines, colonists came to [a variety of] conclusions. The spectrum of ideas had at one end the notion that changing Aborigines was impossible or impracticable, while at the other end was the belief that Aborigines, like all God's children, were eminently susceptible to the forces of civilisation and christianisation (Fletcher 1989: 13-17).

In this passage intimations are absent of a third possibility : one of recognising peers and entering into a mutual exchange. This was excluded from colonial thinking by the assumption of Western superiority. Early feminist Kindergartners tended to the philanthropic end of colonial beliefs.

Jessie Street, having already participated in the English suffragette movement as a school girl (Radi, 1990: 11), became Australia's most prominent feminist of her time. She called together the United Associations of Women's national conference which produced the Australian Woman's Charters of 1943 and 1946. Clauses in the 1943 Australian Woman's Charter called for support for mothers at home in the form of personal endowment, child endowment, free health services, prenatal and baby clinics. Clause 18 called for facilities where

the mental and physical well-being of children is developed, and delinquency prevented by the existence of day nursery and nursery schools and supervised playground facilities, We recommend that the Commonwealth Government ... formulate a National Programme for promoting the welfare of children ... [and] educate systematically public opinion in the best standards of child care, [and] subsidise a national scheme for the establishment of a network of child care centres wherever needed (Radi, 1990: 35 - 38).

The surprising modernity of this demand exemplifies Jessie Street's actions to disrupt the trivialising stereotype of feminist philanthropists because of her willingness to risk her Establishment status. She criticised philanthropy on its role in supporting the status quo and persisted in her socialist, feminist principles in the face of accusations of being a traitor to her class and country, one who had abandoned husband and family and who 'defended and help[ed] persecuted and despised minorities' (Radi, 1990: 10). Her concern for detribalised Aborigines was linked to her own childhood by her happy memories of having been taken swimming by

the Indigenous people on 'Yulgilbar', the family property which had been 'taken up' by her grandfather in the 1830's.

Their illiteracy and the deplorable conditions under which they live always disturbed and puzzled me. Why should such kindly, lovable people be so under-privileged ... even as a child I resented their living conditions (Street, 1958, cited in Radi, 1990: 253).

She is remembered in the oral tradition of the Bundjalung people of Baryulgil as having 'helped the Aboriginal people. She taught us to speak good English' (Weir, M.R., pers. comm., 31/3/2001). Jessie Street's lasting contribution to Indigenous political power was in forming the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement in 1957. Her concern was to develop a national body 'concerned with the development of full citizenship for Aboriginals, and their protection generally' (Read 1990: 261). This organisation initiated a successful Referendum in 1967. Peter Read, while commenting that 'well-meaning but autocratic intervention in Indigenous affairs is now dead' (1990: 264) characterised her as an intellectual pathfinder amongst whites for her postcolonial insight decades before its time that: 'Aborigines are part of the world's entrapped colonised indigenous minorities' (Read 1990: 266).

Because of her principally national and international focus, Jessie Street spent significant amounts of time overseas. This allowed space for women who opposed her political radicalism e.g. Bessie Rischbieth, to occupy positions of prominence and to eventually displace her from leadership (Roe, 2000). The involvement of these 'Empire feminists' with Indigenous issues at the turn of the 19th to the twentieth century was tainted by maternalism and sexual prudery (Moreton-Robinson, 2000: 102). However, flawed as their intervention was,

White Australian feminists are perhaps the first group of white women who took an interest in issues to do with Indigenous women (Moreton-Robinson, 2000: 95).

Bessie Rischbieth, the leading Australian feminist in the inter-war years (while Jessie Street was overseas) fully fitted the description of a 'Lady' and an 'Empire feminist' (Roe, 2001). Her sincere religious faith in Theosophy motivated her intervention in both early childhood education and in Indigenous affairs. She mounted a radical but not leftist critique, based on an extreme version of protestantism, of the materialist and exploitative status quo (Roe, 2001). She was a leader in the Federation of Women Voters, the West Australian Anti-Slavery Society, in which capacity she supported the 'civilising mission' of the Western Australian Protector of Aborigines (Moreton-Robinson 2000: 99-100), and the Women's Services Guilds whose brief also covered maternal and child welfare and Kindergartens.

Discursive formations of community, the social institutions resulting from assumptions of European superiority, were often experienced by Indigenous peoples as reproducing regimes of rejection, hatred and cultural genocide. These included practices of erasure, exclusion,

discrimination, child removal, family and cultural dislocation in the name of child 'care and protection'. First and second wave feminists in the disciplinary community of early childhood education have been largely complicit with a few exceptions, in practices of racial discrimination and erasure. In a period when discursive formations of equal opportunity were constructed which benefited white women, Indigenous women claim that their voices were muted or ignored (Huggins 1998; Moreton - Robinson 2000; O'Shane 1998).

Ahead of her time in Indigenous affairs, Jessie Street had also anticipated by a generation a concept of early childhood care espoused by 'second wave' feminism (Lake 1990: 21). For these feminists child care was a precondition of fundamentally challenging the sexual division of labour not only in public life, but also in the home and therefore the nuclear family. In the 1960s civil rights movement (Bourke et al 1998: 264) notions of compensatory education, some employing deficit constructions of Indigeneity, became prominent. Philanthropy, in the form of such organisations as the Save the Children Fund and the Van Leer Foundation, entered the realm of Indigenous early childhood education for fringe-dwelling Indigenous people in NSW country towns in the mid- sixties (Franklin, 1995; Teasdale, 1981). In 1968, four categories of children were identified nationally in an Australian Council for Educational Research report as lacking access to existing early childhood services: 'economically disadvantaged' children, migrants, Aborigines and children needing full day care (Brennan, 1998: 57). A watershed occurred in the 1967 referendum when discourses of fairness and equity were extended to include Indigenous peoples in the Australian community.

Second wave 'femocrats' in the 1970s ushered in a heyday in Australia for a variety of child-centred, community based, government funded early childhood services. In a move which paralleled and may even have arisen out of the 1970s white feminist child care movement, Indigenous-initiated services in urban areas, for example the early childhood service 'Murawina' (starting in 1979 in inner city Redfern, Sydney), were established (Watts, 1982: 35). Institutions in Indigenous early childhood education that arose out of the equity discourse in New South Wales include Multipurpose Aboriginal Children's Services (Brennan 1998), Save the Children Preschools (Franklin 1995) and three experimental compensatory education-based van Leer Projects (Teasdale & Whitelaw 1981). Equity arguments have ceased to exert significant power in the subsequent phases in Australian early childhood of professionalisation in the 1980s, privatisation and marketisation in the 1990s and 2000s.

In advocacy for widespread public validation of the importance of early childhood education, there is a double effect. Certain discourses of care and protection have been transformed into discursive formations of surveillance and control. While effective early childhood advocates

co-opt mainstream discourses (eg economic rationalism) in order to gain power and resources from the community at large, there is a danger of being in turn co-opted. This can take the form of internalising hegemonic storylines to the point where it is no longer possible to make a fundamental critique of, or to advocate for changes to the status quo. Foucault (1977) theorised the transformation of society from a model of external control towards a *disciplinary society* where physical force is replaced by a kind of brainwashing or *care of the self* through visibility: through Bentham's *Panopticon* (Foucault 1977: 201).

The design of the Panopticon consisted of a tower in the centre surrounded by a ring-shaped building composed of cells, each housing a prisoner. The Panopticon allowed for the continuous observation of inmates, while simultaneously requiring few supervisory resources (McHoul & Grace 1997: 67).

In this model of self-discipline through visibility, the power of dominant storylines is internalised as 'truth' by all members of the community, including those the community wishes to control. I suggest that the field of early childhood education has become subjected, through its visibility, to disciplinary power in, and as, a *disciplinary society* (Foucault 1977: 209).

A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas ... on the soft fibres of the brain is founded the unshakeable base of the soundest of Empires (Foucault 1977: 102- 103).

Early childhood professionals *who [are] subjected to a field of visibility ... inscribe ... in [them]sel[ves] the power relation* (Foucault 1977: 209).

Constructions of women

Jill Blackmore (Blackmore & Kenway 1993: p. 31) points out how women becoming educators followed their traditional familial caring functions and femininity, associated with caring and nurturing, irrationality and emotion, into the public domain. From the start, childhood education conflated mothering with educating so teachers became 'mothers made conscious' (Steedman, 1985). Women came to primarily teach children up to the stage prior to induction into public life, which was then undertaken by the objective, rational, authoritarian male as senior teacher and administrator.

Deborah Tyler, exploring the 1930s foundations of child-centred pedagogy in the discourses of developmental psychology and child psychoanalysis, found that *the mother's nature was regarded as the most untrustworthy factor in the battle to apply scientific facts to child development* (Tyler 1993). To produce the 'perfect child of science', mothers must learn to control their own 'primitive modes of affection' so as to support the child in leaving infancy behind. Three categories of mothers were constructed. The scientific 'intelligent' mother was a triumph of knowledge over nature ... she had to contain her love. The 'over-anxious mother'

mishandled the knowledge she possessed and created problems that would otherwise not exist. The 'ignorant mother', at best, knew little about child development and at worst, persisted in a 'refusal to co-operate' with the kindergarten's requests and advice. Children's success was measured by their independence (Tyler 1993: 52-66).

Constructions of children

Where I work the child care centre, like all child care centres in New South Wales, is surrounded by a 1200mm 'child-proof' fence. In one sense the fence constitutes a protection against the dangers of the outside world (e.g. traffic, child molesters, uncontrolled animals, refuse). In other senses it subjects women and children to a high degree of visibility and regulation while separating them from the mainstream of life. The current Australian *Code of Ethics* in early childhood constructs childhood as 'a unique and valuable stage of life' and children as vulnerable. This could be read as making a case for the development of uniquely safe and caring environments for a complex construction of young children based on disciplinary power, *where it is not necessary to use force* (Foucault 1977: 209). This disables a rearrangement of social priorities to make all places safe for women and children and confines these potentially unruly categories of people to a situation where they cannot disrupt the status quo.

The anthropologist Annette Hamilton, in her (1981) study of Anbarra child-rearing in Arnhem Land, proceeded from a viewpoint widely held in the field of early childhood development and education, that early childhood was a critical period in the child's growing up, that would predetermine lifelong outcomes for each child. As Plumb (in Gale 1983) noted: *Aborigines have not yet, as Western Europeans have, invented childhood* (Gale 1983: 35-39). In the Anbarra schema an emphasis on formal learning seems to have occurred later in the children's lifespan. 'Education' was not considered necessary for young children. The idea of a special, innocent and carefree 'child' member of the community seemed not to feature in this Aboriginal culture. This corresponded with a construction of children as being educated through full participation in their social context, without being constructed as 'other' by adults (Burman 1998: 20).

Women and children at home, for a long time remained below the *threshold of description* (Foucault 1977: 192), where there was a certain freedom in being so unregarded and unimportant. In ways detailed by Anne Brewster (1996: 11), the Indigenous clan or the family (in its privacy and invisibility) can in a limited sense constitute the *last barricade* between powerless people and the oppression of the state. I extend this metaphor to infer that the family,

or the child care centre, can act as a site for resistance and for conserving subjugated knowledges.

Mechtild Hart (1992: 182) theorises an epistemology of *subsistence knowing*, exemplified by the work of mothering: *the activities of mothering do not permit a clear separation between caring for the body and caring for the mind, and between attending to 'the natural' and attending to 'the cultural'* (Hart 1992: 182).

In several postmodernist contexts, writers have referred to a kind of 'doubleness' in the area of cultural, classed or gendered difference.

Teresa de Lauretis (1987: 6) characterises the gender system as *systematically linked into the organisation of social inequality* and suggests that in order to exert agency, to resist this process of subjectification, a *view from elsewhere* is required, i.e. a view from outside the hegemonic discourses which construct gendered selves. She proposes the concept of a *doubled vision*, which operates as:

a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses: those other spaces both discursive and social that exist, since feminist practices have (re)constructed them, in the margin (or 'between the lines', or 'against the grain') of hegemonic discourses and in the interstices of institutions, in counter-practices and new forms of community. These two kinds of spaces are neither in opposition to one another nor strung along a chain of signification, but they coexist concurrently and in contradiction. (de Lauretis 1987: 26)

Peter McLaren (1995: 254) writes: *language maps not only our subjective identifications but installs us in asymmetrical relations of power.*

Several writers from a wide range of disciplines have used a *doubled vision* analogy or metaphor to express the ability to strategically move in and out of gendered, racial or cultural difference (Cantwell 1993; Carter 1992; de Lauretis 1987; Hart 1992). McLaren (1995: 21) cites Terry Eagleton's (1990) expression of the paradox of maintaining a *doubled vision* of social difference (de Lauretis 1987: 6).

A politics of difference or specificity is in the first place in the cause of sameness and universal identity- the right of a group victimised in its particularity to be on equal terms with others as far as their self-determination is concerned ... In a further dialectical twist, however, this truth itself must be left behind as soon as seized; for the only point of enjoying such universal abstract equality is to discover and live one's own particular difference (Eagleton 1990: 10-11).

In this storyline it is the *movement between* (de Lauretis 1987: 26) sameness and difference which enables agency. Foucault, in describing power as a productive as well as a repressive force in society, points out that its operations are *mobile and transitory* (Foucault 1977: 194). Examples from this *elsewhere* (de Lauretis 1987: 26) can be found in Indigenous- controlled

early childhood services which, rather than employing an attitude of fixed resistance to dominant discourses, inhabit both spaces at once. They comply with government requirements while employing a *doubled vision*. They accept partnerships where they are offered, and hold in tension opposing storylines of sameness (read equality) and difference (distinctiveness).

I suggest that leaders in early childhood education can learn from the embodied practices of Indigenous leaders to move with a *doubled vision* of our gendered or racial difference strategically in and out of hegemonic and oppositional discourses, aiming within early childhood sites *to make the work of raising children the primary, and the work of producing commodities for the market the secondary one* (Hart 1992: 205).

I have found in practice and have formed a hope that in women's concern for nurturing, educating and passing on community values to the next generation that a point of contact and common interest is possible in the early childhood field between white feminists and Indigenous early childhood leaders. Early childhood spaces as sites of resistance can be shared by both Indigenous and feminist leaders, by reclaiming our *primitive modes of affection* (Tyler 1993) towards our children and the *work of mothering* (Hart 1992). However, in order that partnerships can be made, it is necessary to heal the hurt between white feminists and Indigenous women.

Healing the Hurt

Contact Zone

Kerith Power 2002

You're such a storyteller, we work together well
And in these seven years I've often heard you tell
Of your grandfather's land, how he worked it with his hands
Till the time when the fences hemmed him in.
You're such a visionary, we work to make it true
I sometimes think we could be sisters, me and you
But I've never dared to tell you my grandfather's story too
In the times when they hunted black men down;

Refrain:

You and I walk together in a contact zone;
Dangerous ground, dangerous ground.

You're such a thinker, reading opened up your world
You escaped like I did when we both were country girls
Into those realms of gold, where we let our dreams unfold
In the times when impossible seemed real.
You had to steal your books, because your skin was brown

Read them on the school bus home a long way out of town;
But not one book I read told me every step I tread
In my home country was someone's sacred ground;

Refrain:

You and I walk together in a contact zone;
Dangerous ground, dangerous ground.

1967 came. I voted with the crowd
Civil rights had been restored, I thought we could be proud
But when your son was born alive, four other babies died
Another generation's struggle had begun.
You were in the background for me till I was forty-two
All those years I never met or touched someone like you;
And oh, the depth of shame at the deeds done in my name
When the lies and the secrets filtered through;

Refrain:

You and I walk together in a contact zone;
Dangerous ground, dangerous ground.

Elder, teacher, matriarch, I'm proud to be your friend
In our children's children will we see the story's end?
Respect and understand each one's belonging in the land
In the time when they come into their own?

Refrain:

You and I walk together in a contact zone;
Dangerous ground, dangerous ground;
So they may walk together in a contact zone;
On common ground, on common ground.

Indigenous and feminist leaders in early childhood education: A Strategic Partnership

Exploring the possibilities for leadership partnerships between Indigenous women and feminists in Indigenous early childhood education, I found that white feminists who acknowledge the deep hurt our positioning inflicts, and are prepared to move outside the comfort zone of white privilege are enabled to explore with Indigenous women what can be achieved. Indigenous women and white feminists have a mutual need for strategic partnerships in advocating for choice in new globalised contexts which threaten to further disempower both groups. From the bureaucratic and political successes achieved by white feminists through affiliation and networking, more Indigenous women may be able to adapt successful 'femocrat' strategies of using 'whitefella rules' to achieve their sociopolitical ends, while from the experience of cultural survival white women may learn from Indigenous women the valuable learnings that could be gained from women who know how to survive hard times, techniques of resistance which ensure that valued knowledges and affinities are preserved.

The rural preschool teacher/director wields a good deal of influence and power, i.e. *positioned leadership* (McConaghy 1999) in her local community. Alternative views of our multiple futures in early childhood

settings could include such leadership concepts as *leadership by matriarchs* locally based in landscape and community, enabling possibilities for coalition building between reconceptualised, anti-racist feminisms and Indigenous women's leadership in early childhood education.

Trying to change things in the communities seems so much harder than anywhere else. It's like walking on Jupiter. The gravity weighing down on personal and collective action is so much greater. Anyone who has lived and worked in a community knows this phenomenon. You know exactly what we are talking about here. We need to understand why (Pearson 1999: 10).

What stands in the way of Indigenous and non-Indigenous alliances? I suggest that a factor is the deep hurt and shame occasioned by gendered and racial difference that can be healed only if two things happen: first, white feminists need to acknowledge our complicity and the benefits we have gained in a racist society, and second, Indigenous women need to give up a victim stance and acknowledge the agency that can be exerted by strategic rather than rigidly essentialist constructions of Indigenous identities.

In previous and forthcoming work (Power 2002, 2003) I describe research methodologies that address the shame of both the victims and the beneficiaries of oppression by means of showing respect, as I have done in this presentation, both for oneself and for the self-constructions of others. Sometimes this might mean offering a critique from outside of the oppression of beliefs and identity constructions that seem to get people stuck in powerlessness. This can only be done if the outsider has earned trust and respect from those people.

Finding common ground

Walls and Windows

Judy Small 1983

Did you sing your children lullabies to calm their fears at night,
Did you hold them gently till they went to sleep?
Did you plant in them the seeds of hope for new and better lives,
Did you make them promises you couldn't keep?

Do you think of me as enemy, or could you call me friend,
Or will we let our differences destroy us in the end?
The walls that stand between us could be a window too
When I look into the mirror, I see you.

And do you have sons who fight for peace, the way I'm told mine do?
Do they send you photographs from foreign lands?
Do you chill to see the missiles and do they haunt your dreams,
Do you wonder whose the power, whose the hand?

Do you think of me as enemy, or could you call me friend,
Or will we let our differences destroy us in the end?
The walls that stand between us could be a window too
When I look into the mirror, I see you.

Oh, may we live to see the day when walls of words and fear
No longer stand between the truth and dreams;
When walls of windows rise into the darkness, and we dare
To look into the mirror, and see peace;

Do you think of me as enemy, or could you call me friend,
Or will we let our differences destroy us in the end?
The walls that stand between us could be a window too
When I look into the mirror, I see you.

Indigenous early childhood leadership

Australian literature specifically on the subject of Indigenous leadership in early childhood education is sparse: three academic articles co-written by Indigenous educators address issues of leadership (Dobson et al 1997; Puruntayemeri 1996; Roberts & Watson 1996). The commonalities between these articles, written by teachers in three diverse Indigenous communities, include notions of partnership between school and community, respect for the knowledge of elders and group rather than individual decision-making and accountability. My own recent work in collaboration with Dianne Roberts was directed towards exploring, in a collaborative methodological framework, shifting and multiple constructions of early childhood Indigenous leadership in one site. From outside of the early childhood literature I sought statements from Indigenous women leaders and found many commonalities with women's early childhood leadership.

Problematizing early childhood leadership

Leaders are tough, abrasive financial entrepreneurs managing the new competitive education markets ... In the case of educational leadership and of the scope of women's influence upon it, the 1960s and 1970s provided the contextual conditions for the 'progress' of women and for any associated models of democratic leadership which were gender related. The changed cultural and ideological conditions of the 1980s and 1990s have made that progress much more problematic (Grace 1995: 21-22).

An image of leadership as *tough, abrasive* and *entrepreneurial* seems foreign to early childhood educators. It illustrates the gendering of storylines of leadership which have marginalised early childhood leadership literature within the body of literature on educational leadership. In my research I sought to explore these differences of positioning in terms of both gender and race. I traced links between Indigenous leadership based on situated knowledges, community self-determination and control, practices of subjection and resistance, sharing of power and responsibility and an *emerging practice* (Henderson-Kelly & Pamphilon 2000: 8) of leadership in early childhood education. I examined academic early

childhood discourses of leadership. I explored the different naming, expression, directions and recognition of Indigenous women's leadership which takes place predominantly out of sight of non-Indigenous people and is therefore not readily visible by hegemonic methods of analysis or validation.

Through reading between the lines, in the 'space-off' of my fieldwork and of Indigenous people's autobiographies, I identified storylines of Indigenous women's leadership as falling into two main categories: those that employ, co-opt and contest 'mainstream' discourses/ knowledges, or positioned and situated leadership that employs and maintains traditional and contemporary subjugated discourses/ knowledges. Storylines included leadership by default, group leadership employing co-operation and collaboration rather than individualistic status seeking, leadership by matriarchs, positioned leadership exercising resistance to hegemonic values through silences and storytelling, passing on *subjugated* (Brewster 1996) and *subsistence knowledges* (Hart 1992). Consultative and co-operative, rather than regulatory regimes of truth, may fit more closely to Indigenous leadership styles. I found that Indigenous women leaders have valuable insights to offer to the construction of a diverse and socially just Australian community: valuing a sense of responsibility to place and community (Burney 2000); countering *the virulent ignorance and arrogance of white supremacy*, the *generational ignorance which has left [us] bereft* (Holt 2000); and offering a vision of *multiple futures ... within the same environment* (O'Donohue 2000: 213).

Applications of post-modernist, post-structuralist and post-colonial theory to Indigenous leadership in early childhood education seem absent from the Australian Indigenous educational literature. The publication *We Are Bosses Ourselves* (Gale 1983) was a watershed text in the conceptualisation of Indigenous women's leadership in all social arenas including education. Its avoidance of essentialism and its themes of unity within diversity in Indigenous women's self-identifications enable many of its insights to maintain relevance at the time of writing. In regard to early childhood education, women's roles as nurturers and bearers of culture in both traditional and contemporary settings were strongly stated. In Indigenous general education the debates seem to have been centred on a binary struggle between Indigenous and mainstream voices and even the Indigenous voices seem to be heavily colonised (McConaghy 1998). A notion of *positioned leadership* (McConaghy 1999) may fit with practices of Indigenous early childhood leadership. This notion incorporates 'postcolonial'¹ insights into the site of Indigenous educational leadership. *Positioned leadership* includes the understanding that

power produces discontinuous spaces- there might be other places on the map of resistance ...

¹ Some Indigenous people objected to the term 'postcolonial' (e.g. Hine Waitere-Ang, pers.comm., 1999), believing it to imply that colonialism was a past phenomenon when they experienced its effects daily. It referred rather 'to a notion of Australia as characterised by shifting power relations and emergent identities' (McConaghy, 1999: 1). Martin Nakata, the first Torres Strait Islander to attain a PhD, referred to 'ongoing colonial times' (1998: 19) and I have adopted this term in order to show respect for these Indigenous perspectives.

locating these spaces... [enables] educational leaders to undertake their own analyses of educational and social phenomena and negotiate their own ... positions (McConaghy 1999: 16-17).

As one member of the local Indigenous community said after her experience of helping in a local non-Indigenous school and having to demand brown and black instead of pink paint for the Indigenous children in that school to paint their families:

Now Dianne Roberts, she's really doin' a good job. She's startin' at that little pre-school age with the kids too, doin' their Aboriginal thing- dances and their story time, tellin' them to be proud of what they are, never be ashamed. She's drumming all this into their heads ... We were really ashamed of what we were but now the kids are comin' through (Cohen in Franklin 1995: 86).

Academic storylines constructing and disciplining the field of Australian early childhood leadership have not to date listened to or included Indigenous storylines in its reconstruction. Insights from feminist poststructuralist theory include the notion outlined by Bronwyn Davies (1999: 70) of how individual people are discursively assigned to a category and may take up or refuse these storylines as one's own. Davies used this line of reasoning to break up the powerlessness of the category of being female in a discursive regime where being male conferred greater power or agency. Here I apply her line of reasoning to the category of race.

Storylines of race have caught people up *in ways of being/desiring from which they have no escape unless they can reinscribe, discover new storylines, invert, invent, and break the bounds of old structures and old discourses* (Davies 2000: 72). I think that in an analogous way, my Indigenous research partners have challenged and changed the subordinate and powerless aspects of subject positions that were constructed for them in a colonial society. Adopting powerful shifting positions of personal and communal agency, some matriarchal Indigenous leaders are enabled by a *doubled vision* of race to walk strategically in and out of a fixed oppositional positioning to grand narratives of race and by this means tap into mainstream resources for the benefit of Indigenous children, while resisting cultural erasure and marginalisation.

Whether radical or moderate, Indigenous early childhood educators equate control and self-determination, in other words, early childhood leadership, with services under Indigenous -control in order to achieve *cultural safety* (Eckermann 1998). However, I maintain that ... educational success for children, ... needs to build on and go beyond a feeling of safety. It also needs to incorporate a desire and capacity to meet and cope with risk, with intellectual and societal challenge, a refusal to accept deficit constructions of Indigeneity and insistence on mainstream qualifications to enable both adult and child members of the Indigenous community to move beyond an enclave mentality, to take up full membership in a wider community.

Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed a *mobile and transitory* mode of resistance that moves with a *doubled vision* strategically in and out of hegemonic discourses, modelled on the leadership of women, who like Dianne Roberts, have enabled their visions of socially just and culturally appropriate early childhood services to survive. I followed Indigenous protocols of respect for the land and honouring my elders before examining what may heal the hurt and develop common ground in order to build partnerships between white feminists and Indigenous women leaders in early childhood education.

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