WRITING WORDS—RIGHT WAY!

Literacy and social practice

in the

Ngaanyatjarra world

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PART I

CHAPTERS 1 – 4
CHAPTER 1  

Literacy in the Ngaanyatjarra world—setting the context

Introduction

In this ethnography of literacy in a remote Australian Aboriginal community I consider that literacy cannot be understood independently of the social, cultural, political and historical forces and traditions that shape it, nor can it be analysed in isolation from the social practices that surround it and the ideological systems in which it is embedded. 1 I focus on the Ngaanyatjarra region of Western Australia (WA) and analyse literacy practice in English and the vernacular Ngaanyatjarra. I use an ethnohistorical perspective to shed light on the social practices, cultural conceptions and social meanings associated with reading and writing in the contemporary context.

Most literacy studies in the ‘newly literate’ remote Australian Aboriginal context have paid scant attention to how literacy is used in everyday life, or to the social and cultural values, habits, attitudes and norms associated with literacy practice. Australian studies tend to concentrate on technical literacy skills and pedagogy. Overwhelmingly the literature is oriented toward children and schooling: methodology, curriculum, policy, outcomes and the determinants of ‘educational success’ or ‘failure’. Additionally, our understanding of adult literacy in remote areas is primarily anecdotal and focuses primarily on Vocational Education and Training (VET) outcomes. 2 Rarely do accounts incorporate a historical or cultural purview to consider the implications of literacy acquisition from a longitudinal or ethnographic perspective in these recently preliterate groups. 3 In fact, there is a striking paucity of ethnographic research on literacy outside instructional settings in remote Aboriginal Australia. 4

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1 See (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton et al. 2000; Besnier 1995; Graff 1987; Kulick and Stroud 1993; Street 1984; Street 1993a; Street 1995).
2 There have been no thorough surveys of English adult literacy in remote Aboriginal Australia and adult education research tends to be vocationally-oriented. A 1989 survey of Australian adult literacy (Wickert 1989) did not include the Northern Territory. A 1993 study of adult literacy in urban situations in the Northern Territory (Christie et al. 1993) compensated for the omission of the Northern Territory from Wickert's study, however this latter study did not include any survey of remote Aboriginal communities. Likewise the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey of aspects of literacy excluded adults living in remote or sparsely settled areas (Skinner 1997), see also (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004). For an over view of Indigenous adult Vocational Education and Training policy and reviews see: (ANTA 1998; ANTA 2000; Gelade and Stehlík 2004; Long et al. 1999).
3 Histories of Aboriginal education and literacy learning in remote Aboriginal Australia include: (Christie 1995b; Gale 1997; Milnes 1987; Richardson 2001). See also (Nakata 2000; Nakata 2002).
4 Exceptions tend to include studies by sociolinguists or anthropologists including: (Austin 1986; Biddle 1996; Biddle 2000; Ferguson 1987; Foley 1997; Goddard 1990; Kral 2000; McKay 1982; Rhydwen 1996).
Background

This thesis has arisen out of my own twenty year journey in Aboriginal education and an increasing unease with the normative cultural assumptions that pertain to literacy in the remote Aboriginal context. It is set against a nadir in the public discourse around literacy and Aboriginal education, and pessimism about the future of Aboriginal youth in remote communities. In this discourse youth are portrayed as failing in the education and training system: general academic performance is below national literacy and numeracy benchmarks and ‘far below age’. Adolescent learners are not engaging with education and training institutions and absenteeism and poor school attendance are pinpointed as the nub of the ‘problem’. As a consequence, youth are left ‘unemployable’ and descending into a vortex of anomie, substance abuse and violence in ‘outback hellholes’. A moral panic around Aboriginal literacy has ensued; illiteracy, we are told, is ‘threatening the continuity of an ancient culture’. We also told of the ‘collapse’ of literacy and numeracy since the idealised ‘mission times’, irrespective of context-specific differences. Solutions to the ‘problem’ of illiteracy include: reforms to the welfare system, more comprehensive reporting on individual literacy levels, additional community sector literacy support and incentives for individuals to participate in education, training and employment.

I do not wish to underplay the extent of social disadvantage in the remote Aboriginal world, but rather to question responses that are based on normative cultural assumptions.
I seek to reach an understanding of learning, literacy and human development that takes account of, and gives valence to, differing social and cultural practices and the webs of meaning that surround oral and literate practices.

Research location
The research site in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Fig. 1.1) was chosen because the context provides a unique complex of factors in which to study the introduction of literacy to a previously preliterate group and its impact on successive generations. Although one of the last Aboriginal groups to come out of the Western Desert—the first wave of Ngaanyatjarra/Pitjantjatjara came out in the 1930s and the last of the Ngaatjatjarra/Pintupi in the 1960s—this group encountered an unusual sequence of relatively benign post-contact experiences. Literacy was first introduced to the Ngaanyatjarra at the Warburton Ranges Mission in the 1930s. Depending on family history, the current generation of children represent either the second, third or fourth generation to encounter literacy.

As outlined in the methodology in Appendix A, the longitudinal perspective taken in this thesis is enhanced by ethnographic interviews and observations. The full accounts from three to four generations of literacy learners in eleven family groups can be found in the Family Narratives A–K in Appendix B. The research is strengthened by an already existing relationship with the Ngaanyatjarra communities. I have worked on education and literacy projects in this region over the past decade, including an intensive period of PhD fieldwork over twelve months in 2004 and three return visits in 2005 and 2006.

15 There is relatively little published anthropological writing on the Ngaanyatjarra region. Ngaanyatjarra Council has been hesitant about research per se as a consequence of the publication of unauthorised material by an earlier researcher (Gould 1969). As a consequence there is little published material on the area: (de Graaf 1968; Dousset 1997; Fletcher 1992; Glass 1997; Jacobs 1988; Thompson 2000). Other published material includes exhibition catalogues (Plant and Viegas 2002; Proctor and Viegas 1990; Turner 2003), language texts (Glass and Hackett 1979 [1969]; Glass and Newberry 1990 [1979]; Glass and Hackett 2003; Glass 2006; Obata et al. 2005) or internal unpublished reports (Staples and Cane 2002; Thurtell 2003). Other academic research has been education-related (Heslop 1997; Heslop 1998); health-related (Cramer 1998; Simmons 2002; Shaw 2002); or language-related (Glass and Hackett 1970; Glass 1980). Anthropologists including David Brooks and Jan Turner have written numerous reports for Native Title and other purposes and both have commenced PhD study in anthropology.

16 The narratives are reconstructed from the transcripts of interviews with Ngaanyatjarra people. Interviews have been sorted into generational groupings within families. Pseudonyms have replaced real names of Ngaanyatjarra interviewees.

17 I first worked in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in 1997 (Kral 1997) and have worked on a range of education related projects with Ngaanyatjarra Council and Ngaanyatjarra Community College and conducted a review of education and training (Kral and Ward 2000). I subsequently worked with Ngaanyatjarra people to develop a cultural awareness course for Ngaanyatjarra College. I also worked with Elizabeth M. Ellis and community members gathering information to develop a [draft] Ngaanyatjarra language and culture curriculum. The PhD research grew out of this established relationship. Throughout the fieldwork period I collaborated with the Warburton Arts Project and worked with the youth arts project.
Aboriginal people in the Western Desert region of Australia lived a relatively unchanged existence for thousands of years prior to contact with European culture. Anthropologists talk of a 'Western Desert cultural bloc' comprising a single social system and relative cultural homogeneity that extends from Woomera in the south-east to Kalgoorlie in the south-west, then north through to Wiluna, Jigalong and Balgo. Unlike the circumstances of many other Aboriginal groups, remoteness protected the Ngaanyatjarra from the profound ravages of the colonial encounter and from the dislocation and trauma of the 'stolen generation' experience. David Brooks, an anthropologist who has worked with the Ngaanyatjarra since 1988, notes that because the Ngaanyatjarra as a group have never left their country, nor has their country ever been annexed or occupied by outsiders, 'the difference in the quality of the “people to country” bond is palpable' and this is a significant factor in the strength of the Ngaanyatjarra today.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands in the east of Western Australia comprises some 250,000 sq. kms. (or approximately 3% of mainland Australia) fanning out from the tri-state border with South Australia and the Northern Territory. It encompasses parts of the Gibson, Great Sandy and Great Victoria Deserts and the Central Ranges (and falls within three Shires: Ngaanyatjarra, East Pilbara and Laverton). Significant landforms in the area include the Warburton Ranges and Brown Ranges, and the Rawlinson and Peterman Ranges around the NT border. The harsh desert terrain has long provided the Ngaanyatjarra with water, food, medicine, implements, and shelter (Fig. 1.2). The Ngaanyatjarra Lands (hereafter the 'Lands') now operates as a cohesive and co-operative set of eleven communities under the umbrella of the Ngaanyatjarra Council which has given some 2500 Aboriginal people in the Lands a symbolic and real sense of security. The Aboriginal leadership of the Council is strong, participation is high and the outcomes are tangible. The overall administrative needs and service provision are met within the organisational structure of the Ngaanyatjarra Council. The health needs of the people are met by the community-controlled Ngaanyatjarra Health Service, and land and legal issues are dealt with by the

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18 Veth (1996) cited in (Rose 2001: 35) reports that archaeological research from the Western Desert indicates a human presence before 24,000 years ago. Richard Gould refers to archaeological excavation at the Puntutjarpa rock shelter in the Western Desert and dates human occupation of this site at some 10,000 years, with observations of Ngaatjatjarra people occupying the same general vicinity during the 1960s (Gould 1980: 35).

19 (Berndt and Berndt 1959; Berndt and Berndt 1980; Tonkinson 1978b).

20 See (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997; Read 1981) for accounts of the 'stolen generation'.

21 (Brooks 2002e: 78).

22 Each of the communities elects a community 'chairman'. The 'governing committee' of the Ngaanyatjarra Council comprises each community chairman plus the elected chair of the Ngaanyatjarra Council.

23 Ngaanyatjarra Council is the umbrella organisation for a number of Ngaanyatjarra service delivery organisations: Ngaanyatjarra Health Services; Ngaanyatjarra Services Accounting and Financial Services; Ngaanyatjarra Services Building Division; Ngaanyatjarra Services Works Division; Ngaanyatjarra Air; Ngaanyatjarra Agency and Transport Services;
Fig. 1.1 The Western Desert region

Map by Brenda Thornley. © The Institute for Aboriginal Development, 2006.
Fig. 1.2 Rockholes along Warburton–Laverton road

Source: Inge Kral.

Fig. 1.3 Aerial photo of Warburton 2004

Source: Inge Kral.
Native Title Unit. The Ngaanyatjarra Community College, based in Warburton, delivers adult vocational education and training. The primary source of local employment is through the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) scheme.24

The only major outside body to deliver services is the WA Department of Education and Training (WADET). There is a remote community school in each community implementing a mainstream curriculum model and there are no qualified Ngaanyatjarra teachers. At the time of research in 2004, schools provided a ‘secondary-tops’ programme up to Year 10 only.25 Literacy instruction in school commences in Standard Australian English, even though learners may speak a Western Desert vernacular or a non-standard dialect of English. Residents of the Lands are predominantly Ngaanyatjarra speakers, but the speech community also comprises speakers of other mutually intelligible Western Desert dialects (predominantly Ngaatjatjarra and Pitjantjatjara) and many adults have multilectal competence in the local dialects and English (see further language description in Appendix C). People are variously referred to as Yarnangu (Ngaanyatjarra/Ngaatjatjarra), Agangu (Pitjantjatjara) or Wangkayi. 26 In this thesis I generally refer to people as ‘the Ngaanyatjarra’, unless specifically referring to Ngaatjatjarra or Pitjantjatjara speakers.

In this study I focus primarily on one community, Warburton (Fig. 1.3). I chose this community because it has been the locus of continuous contact with European practices since a United Aborigines Mission (UAM) was established there in 1934. Today Warburton is the largest of the Ngaanyatjarra communities with a population of some 600 Aboriginal residents with non-Aboriginal residents numbering between 50–80.27 Community facilities include a church, store, clinic, school, college, an arts project, a youth Drop in Centre, swimming pool and a roadhouse. Local government services are provided by the Shire of Ngaanyatjarra (including a regional art gallery and café). This is a comparatively functional and well-resourced community with a number of non-Aboriginal residents who have a long-term commitment to the region, and it has developed a national profile as a
'model community'. The Warburton population now comprises three broad social groupings:

1. Descendants of the original Ngaanyatjarra mission families from the Warburton Ranges region. In these families young children are still only the fourth generation to experience formal schooling.

2. Descendants of families who moved away in earlier times and attended school and worked in the Mt Margaret Mission, Laverton, Kalgoorlie and Cosmo Newbery region of the Eastern Goldfields (Fig. 1.4). These families tend to speak English as their first language.

3. Predominantly Ngaatjatjarra speaking families who came out of the Gibson Desert or Rawlinson Ranges during the 1960s comprising middle-aged adults who were born in the desert, and at most only two generations who have participated in formal education.

As a consequence, the Warburton, and broader Ngaanyatjarra Lands, ‘speech community’ is not homogeneous.

Literacy and illiteracy

The ‘taken for granted’ nature of literacy in Western society (and English literacy in Anglo-European countries such as Australia) and its ‘primacy’ in everyday life, masks its complexity. Illiteracy is seen as a ‘problem’ that needs to be remedied by improved policy and instructional methodology. School literacy practices, in particular, are bounded by culturally normative expectations of correctness, neatness, organisation and time management. They are also informed by prescribed stages of child learning development and evaluated against standards determining individual success or failure. In Australia a process of ‘literacy and numeracy benchmarking’ assesses all school learners against normative standards of English language, literacy and numeracy. The English literacy and

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28 In an editorial (The Weekend Australian 4–5 February 2006: 16) reference was made to Warburton as a ‘model community’, also see Nicolas Rothwell’s report (The Weekend Australian February 4–5 2006: 5). On Regional ABC Radio, Kalgoorlie (September 9 2004) Fred Chaney described the Ngaanyatjarra Lands as ‘the best administered Aboriginal communities in Australia’. This is further illustrated in the Howard government’s willingness to establish a Regional Partnership Agreement with the Ngaanyatjarra Council for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands region, see: http://www.indigenous.gov.au/rpa/wa/ngaanyatjarra.pdf

29 The notion of ‘speech community’ emerged from linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics and was developed by Hymes (Hymes 1972; Hymes 1974) and Gumperz (Gumperz 1982). Romaine (Romaine 1994: 22) asserts that a speech community is ‘a group of people who do not necessarily share the same language, but share a set of norms and rules for the use of language’.

30 (Graff 1987; Graff 1994 [1982]).

31 The Multi-level Assessment Programme (MAP) is a mandatory national programme of benchmarking literacy and numeracy data on students in Years 3, 5 and 7, see (MCEETYA 2004). Data is aggregated nationally and at a State level. It is found that Indigenous students from metropolitan and regional areas achieve at a higher level than students from remote and very remote regions (Frigo et al. 2003). Data from the remote schools in the Western Australia Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (WALNA) is conflated with data from urban, regional schools (Commonwealth of Australia 2005b). WALNA data is not released on a school by school basis, hence data from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands schools are conflated with data from the entire Goldfields District, inclusive of urban schools with a non-Indigenous school
Fig. 1.4 Department of Native Welfare (Western Australia) – Divisions, Offices, Hostels and Church Missions

Source: Department of Native Welfare Newsletter Vol. 2 No. 2 1971.

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numeracy of Aboriginal students from remote schools are also benchmarked using the same assessment tool. Generally, most remote Aboriginal children are found to be below the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks set by their English as a first language speaking peers. The process of literacy benchmarking is bound by normative assumptions about, and simple conceptualisations of, literacy—including the notion that literacy is a technical skill acquired primarily in instructional settings. Underlying the benchmarking process is an implicit assumption that—after only a few generations of schooling and exposure to English language and literacy practices—remote Aboriginal learners (who generally speak their own vernacular as a first language) will be commensurate with their mainstream counterparts.  

This assumption is problematic because, in effect, it locates Aboriginal learners in the discourse of failure outlined above, with minimal explanation of why literacy levels differ so greatly. In this discourse little account is taken of how literacy has evolved over many centuries, in many societies, from its origins in oral traditions through the transformation of social and cultural practices, and the invention and adaptation of the material resources, that support the particularities of Western literacy.

**The development of Western literacy**

It has taken many thousands of years for literacy in Western society to evolve to the stage where it is now. Writing systems were developed between 3100 B.C. and 550 B.C. and ‘alphabetic’ literacy was used in classical Greek and Roman schools and civic contexts, and to a lesser extent during the Dark Ages. However, in Britain and Western Europe the cultural shift from ‘memory to written record’ took place over more than two centuries (between 1066 to 1307 according to historian Michael Clanchy), during which time a familiarity with literate rather than oral modes slowly took hold. Significantly, the shift from oral to literate habits and ways of thinking and acting (i.e. the shift from trusting memory and the spoken word above the written word, and from ‘habitually memorizing things to writing them down’) took time to develop. Literacy gradually gained acceptance and influence over many centuries. During which time oral processes were used to successfully spread the written Word of God through oral preaching and teaching to semiliterates and illiterates. Prior to the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in population. It is therefore difficult to attain a correct picture of the English literacy and numeracy benchmarking in the Ngaanyatjarra remote schools. Outcomes for the Goldfields District (encompassing the Ngaanyatjarra Lands schools) can be found at: [http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/wa1na/pdfs/PerformanceReport.pdf](http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/wa1na/pdfs/PerformanceReport.pdf).

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32 Literacy assessment systems have been critiqued nationally and internationally, see (Christie et al. 1993; Levine 1998; Rogoff 2003; Wickert 1989).
33 (Graff 1987).
34 (Clanchy 1979).
35 (Clanchy 1979: 3).
1447, reading and writing were separate skills. Reading was more often linked to speaking and hearing, emphasising the continuing connection with oral traditions. Reading remained for a long time an ‘oral, often collective activity’ rather than the private, silent activity it tends to be today. Reading and dictating were commonly coupled together and the skill of letter-writing was in the art of dictating to scribes, mainly monks, who formed the small group of those able to write. For many, writing was thought of and used merely as a mnemonic device for a long time. In medieval England to be 'litteratus' (literate) meant knowing Latin, but not necessarily having the ability to read and write. Before literacy could grow and spread beyond the small class of clerical writers 'literate habits and assumptions, comprising a literate mentality, had to take root in diverse social groups and areas of activity'. By the thirteenth century increasing mercantile, business and civil activity gave literacy a practical application beyond clerical purposes and royal administration. In 1476 Caxton introduced the printing press to England, and 'print not only encouraged the spread of literacy', it also 'changed the way written texts were handled by already literate groups'. Print gradually replaced the oral aspects and memory arts of scribal culture and introduced a push for language standardisation. Ong argues that 'print' was a major factor in 'the development of the sense of personal privacy that marks modern society' and set the stage for 'completely silent reading'. By the fourteenth century many English towns had elementary or grammar schools and by the fifteenth century there were lending libraries and evidence of everyday writing and record-keeping practices. Yet England remained neither a 'wholly literate' nor a 'wholly illiterate' society. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the term 'literate' was used not so much as a marker of self-identity, but as 'a descriptor to dichotimize the population into literates who could read in the vernacular languages and illiterates who could not'.

The link between literacy and religion is significant and has remained so in the ‘nearly three millennia of Western (alphabetic) literacy’. The sixteenth century Reformation most strikingly linked literacy to ‘religious practice’ and ‘constituted the first great literacy

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36 (Clanchy 1979:).
37 (Clanchy 1979: 227; Graff 1987: 35).
38 (Graff 1987: 5).
39 (Clanchy 1979: 97).
40 (Olson 1994: 61).
41 (Clanchy 1979: 149).
42 (Graff 1987: 55).
44 (Ong 1982: 130–31).
45 (Graff 1987: 96).
46 (Schofield 1968: 312–13).
48 (Graff 1987: 10).
campaign in the history of the West, with its social legacies of individual literacy as a powerful social and moral force.49 Harvey Graff postulates that in the wake of the Reformation in Sweden, for example, ‘near-universal levels of literacy were achieved rapidly and permanently’, without the ‘concomitant development of formal schooling or economic or cultural development that demanded functional or practical employment of literacy’. A ‘home and church education model’ was fashioned that trained a ‘literate population’.50 However, as Graff points out, the Reformist educational process of rote memorisation of the alphabet and catechism left many ‘less than fluently literate’; even so some ‘effect’ of literacy ‘must have taken hold’.51 The eighteenth century ‘Enlightenment’ consolidated the ‘ideological underpinnings for the “modern” and “liberal” reforms of popular schooling’ and literacy came to be seen as ‘the root of schooling for the populace’.52 For many, literacy was not necessarily ‘a formal, distinct or institutionalized activity’, nor an event synonymous with childhood or youth.53 In the 1700s in the United States being ‘literate’ was defined as ‘being able to sign one’s name or an X to legal documents’. By the 1800s it had become ‘the ability to read and recite memorized passages, not necessarily with comprehension’ and by the early 1900s being able to read ‘began to require literal understanding of unfamiliar passages’.54 The spread of the ideals of liberal democracy and capitalism was to push more people towards functional literacy skills and literacy became tied to the uneven pace of social and economic development. Industrialisation introduced the need for literacy for practical purposes and the growth in technology made available a greater volume of printed material.55

Prior to the late 1800s families were expected to care for children and, moreover, teach them to read at home. At that time the home and the workplace were less separated so childcare took place side by side with learning through observing and participating in adult processes and ‘making sense of the mature roles’ of their community.56 The concept of the school class or grade emerged gradually between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe.57 With the introduction of compulsory schooling in England and the United States in the late 1800s learning shifted from acquisition in a familial context embedded within community and church life to institutionalised learning.58 During the nineteenth century

50 (Graff 1994 [1982]: 159).
51 (Graff 1987: 141).
52 (Graff 1987: 14).
53 (Graff 1987: 237).
56 (Rogoff 2003: 130–140).
57 (Aries 1962).
literacy and schooling became 'more closely allied', and schooling, in effect, institutionalised literacy learning.\(^{59}\) Schooling developed largely as a 'hegemonic inculcation of the moral bases of literacy'.\(^{60}\) The new middle-class promoted literacy as the basis of moral order.\(^{61}\) Schooling became a 'socializing agent' aiding the 'inculcation of values thought required for commercial, urban and industrial society'.\(^{62}\) In particular, education promoters and social reformers attempted to instil 'the moral bases of literacy, particularly in children of the poor' in their attempts to avert idleness, pauperism and immorality.\(^{63}\) Graff also suggests that illiteracy came to signify that, within the underpinning philosophy of 'linear, progressive or evolutionary change' the training required for civilization and progress remained incomplete.\(^{64}\) Literacy also came to represent emancipation and enlightenment with the political mobilisation of the working class. This led to the demand for access to literacy as a right and the later rise of popular literacy movements among the poor and disenfranchised.\(^{65}\)

Until at least the mid-nineteenth century rote repetition and oral reading dominated in the classroom and attention to meaning was neglected, so students 'were not learning to read well'.\(^{66}\) By the end of the nineteenth century schooling supported sequenced approaches to learning to read and write and valourised individual achievement, and 'in its drive to instruct, measure and prescribe the individual, the school jettisoned much of the learning in communities'.\(^{67}\) By the last quarter of the twentieth century, literacy skills such as 'making inferences and developing ideas through written material' were expected, 'prompted in part by widespread use of information technology in the workplace'.\(^{68}\) Simultaneously, as Heath posits, critics in the developed world pointed out the failure of schools 'to move large numbers of students beyond a minimal level of competence in literacy' and educators were chided for 'letting standards slide from past eras of mythical high achievement'.\(^{69}\) Writers have suggested that a moral panic regarding the twentieth century 'literacy crisis' and the purported decline in literacy standards has ensued.\(^{70}\) Heath suggests that the critics of literacy achievement focus almost completely on schools even though 'closer looks at the history of literacy in the industrialized nations of the West make it clear that developing a

\(^{59}\) (Graff 1987: 261).
\(^{60}\) (Graff 1987: 324).
\(^{61}\) (Collins 1995: 82).
\(^{62}\) (Graff 1987: 263–75).
\(^{63}\) (Graff 1987: 261–4).
\(^{64}\) (Graff 1987: 323).
\(^{65}\) (Freire 1993 [1970]; Hoggart 1957).
\(^{66}\) (Graff 1987: 326–7).
\(^{67}\) (Heath 1991: 4–5).
\(^{68}\) (Rogoff 2003: 260–261).
\(^{69}\) (Heath 1991: 4–5).
sense of being literate, rather than simply acquiring the rudimentary literacy skills of reading and writing, entailed far more than schools alone could give.  

The ‘literacy myth’

Early literacy studies in the social sciences were influenced by behaviourist and cognitivist theory. Exponents of what Brian Street terms the ‘autonomous’ model of literacy tended to conceptualise literacy in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character. In the ‘autonomous’ model certain inherent properties of alphabetic literacy are believed to explain the differences between preliterate and literate societies and individuals and to cause changes at a societal and individual level. In the early development of anthropological thought ‘literacy’ was emblematic of the ‘great divide’: the binary division between ‘civilised and primitive’, ‘literate and illiterate; and the determinant of difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The oral-literate dichotomy was a major preoccupation of early anthropological thought, exemplified in the distinction between the ‘great tradition’ of the literate, religious and urban, and the ‘little tradition’ of the oral, magical and rural. From this purview, literacy reached its ‘apogee’ only in the West and in the non-Western world illiteracy was a signifying feature of inferior or primitive cultures. Moreover, on the literacy continuum from preliterate to literate, Jack Goody suggests that the newly literate acquired only a form of ‘restricted literacy’.

In the autonomous model, according to Street, literacy is conceptualised as:

[A] universal constant whose acquisition, once individual problems can be overcome by proper diagnosis and pedagogy, will lead to higher cognitive skills, to improved logical thinking, to critical inquiry and to self-conscious reflection. Moreover, as Street continues, literacy has ‘been seen as a “neutral” mechanism for achieving functional ends, a sine non qua of the state whatever its ideological character, a technology to be acquired by sufficient proportions of the population to ensure the mechanical functioning of its institutions’. Graff questions such ‘normative assumptions’ suggesting that for the last two centuries conceptions of the value of reading and writing

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70 (Graff 1987; Heath 1991; Street 1995).
71 (Heath 1991: 5–6).
72 (Goody 1968; Goody 1977; Olson 1977a; Ong 1982).
73 (Street 1993b: 5).
74 (Besnier 1995: 2–3).
75 (Goody 1968; Ong 1982).
76 (Redfield 1971 [1956]).
77 (Besnier 1995: 1).
78 (Goody 1968).
79 (Street 1993b: 11).
'have been intertwined with post-Enlightenment “liberal” social theories and expectations of the role of literacy and schooling in socioeconomic development, social order, and individual progress.\textsuperscript{80} He terms this the ‘literacy myth’ and posits that the ‘data of the past strongly suggests that a simple, linear, modernization model of literacy as a prerequisite for development…will not suffice’.\textsuperscript{81} Embedded in the ‘literacy myth’ are assumptions about the superiority of Western culture where literacy is associated with ideological promises emblematic of modernity and progress, and linked to economic growth and development.\textsuperscript{82}

When colonisation was at its apogee the late 1800s and early 1900s Western schooling was utilised to ‘civilise’ the peoples of the colonies and progress the evolutionary process. These attitudes paradigmatically influenced early anthropological attitudes to Aboriginal society in Australia and provided the intellectual and philosophical backdrop to colonial, missionary and later assimilationist attitudes to Aboriginal education. They also continue to underpin the perceived relationship between literacy, modernity and progress. The historical legacy of colonisation has recently led to anthropological concern with development and alterity (i.e. ‘the concept and treatment of the alien objectified other’) and a post-colonial critiquing of the notion of ‘Otherness’.\textsuperscript{83} Post-colonial theorists and human development researchers have questioned the ‘illusory’ aspects of Western education and the idea of a linear cultural evolution based on the premise of a single developmental trajectory towards the same desirable endpoint.\textsuperscript{84}

The notion of individualism, and concerns with ‘self’ or ‘selfhood’ are concepts particular to Western culture. Western academic theories of human development have enshrined the moral concepts of ‘autonomy, individual rights, justice as equality’.\textsuperscript{85} ‘The dominant Western ideology of individualism has imbued formal education with ‘liberal assumptions about the role of schools in a meritocracy, where upward mobility is assumed to be an outcome of talent and effort’.\textsuperscript{86} In his influential study of education and working class students in England, Paul Willis counters the ‘common educational fallacy’ that ‘opportunities can be made by education, that upward mobility is basically a matter of individual push, that qualifications make their own openings’.\textsuperscript{87} Graff’s notion of the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Graff87} (Graff 1987: 3). See also (Graff 1979; Graff 1994 [1982]).
\bibitem{Graff94} (Graff 1994 [1982]: 152–159).
\bibitem{Collins95} See (Collins 1995; Dyer and Choski 2001; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Rival 1996; Rogoff 2003; Street 1995; Street 2001).
\bibitem{Jessor96} (Jessor et al. 1996; Rogoff 2003; Serpell 1993).
\bibitem{Levinson96} (Levinson and Holland 1996: 4). See also (Hoggart 1957; Varenne and McDermott 1999b).
\bibitem{Willis77} (Willis 1977: 127) [emphasis in original].
\end{thebibliography}
‘literacy myth’ resonates with what Australian researchers also describe as the ‘illusion’ that the ‘ideology of fair competition’ is ‘neutral and based on meritocratic performance’ where success or failure is dependent on individual hard work and effort.\(^88\)

In ‘mainstream’ Australia, successful schooling is contingent upon an assumed and shared understanding of the ‘normal biography’, that is ‘the clear and persistent pursuit of a credential’ and the ‘cultural logic’ that follows.\(^89\) This ‘cultural logic’ is the assumed linearity of the transition from school to work, this ‘sequenced pathway’ appears ‘normal’ but is problematic even in mainstream Australian contexts.\(^90\) This linear trajectory has even less relevance for young adults in remote Aboriginal Australia where schools are teaching for mainstream labour market employment outcomes that simply do not exist.\(^91\)

Current Aboriginal education discourse enshrines the normative values and culturally-bound assumptions of participation, equity and upward mobility associated with Western pedagogy.\(^92\) It takes for granted that the receiving culture will aspire to upward mobility and the future goal of individual participation in the wage labour market. Yet, in remote Aboriginal Australia a number of generations after the inception of formal schooling the assumption that schooling leads to employment is implausible.

**Ethnographies of literacy**

This thesis draws on the theoretical foundations that place ethnographies of literacy at the interface between anthropology and sociolinguistics. An ‘ethnography of literacy’ looks at social practices, social meanings, and the cultural conceptions of reading and writing, and how they are embedded in the broad range of ideas that the term anthropology encompasses.\(^93\) Ethnographies of literacy fall into two categories: those with an

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\(^88\) (Smyth and Hattam 2004: 148). See also (Falk 2001a).

\(^89\) (Smyth and Hattam 2004: 145). Mainstream—the cultural practices, traditions, values and understandings of literate middle-class 'Western' i.e. European Australian society.

\(^90\) (Smyth and Hattam 2004: 152).

\(^91\) In the current political climate in Aboriginal affairs we are told explicitly by the political architects of ‘mutual obligation’ that ‘education is the passport for people who want a better future’, furthermore we are assured that ‘this is not assimilationist’ but is about providing Aboriginal people in remote communities with ‘real choices and the opportunity to determine their own destiny’ (Vanstone 2004). See also (Pearson 2000; Pearson 2001). In a Media Release announcing improved school retention rates for Indigenous students (March 8 2006) the Federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Mal Brough MP stated that ‘Good education opens the door to employment opportunities and lays the foundation for better choices and opportunities in life'. [http://www.atsia.gov.au/media/media06/0906.aspx](http://www.atsia.gov.au/media/media06/0906.aspx).

\(^92\) Recent federal government initiatives such as the 'Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme' and the 'Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme' are underpinned by an ideology that asserts that individuals ‘just need the opportunity to succeed’. In this frame individual Indigenous youth are selected and ‘given the same opportunities to make informed choices’ and ‘to realise their full potential’ and ‘value the opportunities that education can bring’ (Julie Bishop, Federal Minister for Education Science and Training, launch of the 'Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme' Parliament House, Canberra October 9 2006).

\(^93\) See (Szwed 1981) for an early use of the term 'ethnography of literacy'.

anthropological focus on the acquisition of literacy in newly literate cultures and those with a more sociolinguistic focus on everyday oral and literate practices.

**An anthropological perspective**

Early studies explored the ‘impact’ of literacy on the receiving culture and some perceived that, in the introduction of literacy, ‘preliterate’ people perceived the written word to have magical powers.\(^9^4\) Other studies have explored the acceptance or rejection of literacy in the local vernacular, or the introduced language, by exploring whether literacy has ‘taken hold’ in preliterate cultures and under what conditions.\(^9^5\) In some studies ‘schooling’ and ‘literacy’ are situated as distinctly separate concepts and the cognitive ‘consequences’ of schooled and non-schooled literacies are explored.\(^9^6\) More recently, researchers in newly literate cultures have investigated why literacy has acquired certain cultural meanings and how value has been attributed in a range of different situations to focus attention on ‘the creative and original ways in which people transform literacy to their own cultural concerns and interests’.\(^9^7\) Studies include Besnier’s investigation of the social, ideological and textual characteristics of literacy on a Polynesian atoll, and Bloch’s study of schooling and literacy in Madagascar.\(^9^8\) Also Scollon and Scollon’s work in an Athabaskan community in Alaska, and Reder, Green and Wiklund’s Alaskan research on literacy development and ethnicity in Alutiq. Kulick and Stroud have studied the conceptions and uses of literacy in Gapun in Papua New Guinea and Clammer studied literacy and change in Fiji.\(^9^9\) Some researchers suggest that Indigenous peoples have taken on literacy to suit their own cultural needs.\(^1^0^0\) Others consider that introduced literacy can have disempowering consequences in minority language, newly literate contexts.\(^1^0^1\) Significantly, these studies situate literacy acquisition as a social and cultural process within the dynamic of social change and foreground the ‘culturally shaped’ nature of literacy acquisition and use in newly literate groups. They also address the lacuna in our knowledge about literacy in such contexts.\(^1^0^2\) Besnier posits, nonetheless, that relatively little ethnographic information is available on how literacy takes root in newly literate societies and Kulick and Stroud note that more ethnographic studies

\(^9^4\) See (Levy-Bruhl 1923; Parsons 1967; Wundt 1916). See also (Wogan 1994).
\(^9^5\) (Ferguson 1987; Huebner 1987; McLaughlin 1989; Spolsky and Irvine 1982; Spolsky et al. 1983)
\(^9^6\) (Luria’s famous study of literates and non-literates in Central Asia in the 1920s found differences in the ability to use decontextualised or abstract thought, with preliterates using more concrete and contextualised thinking (Luria 1976). See Cole and Scribner’s study of the Vai in Liberia (Cole and Scribner 1981) and Street’s study of ‘Maktab’ literacy in Iran (Street 1984). See also (Akinnaso 1992).
\(^9^7\) (Street 1993b: 1).
\(^9^8\) (Besnier 1993; Besnier 1995; Bloch 1993).
\(^9^9\) (Clammer 1976; Kulick 1992; Kulick and Stroud 1993; Reder and Green 1983; Reder and Wiklund 1993; Scollon and Scollon 1981).
\(^1^0^0\) (Aikman 2001; Besnier 1995; Kulick 1992; McLaughlin 1992; Rival 1996).
\(^1^0^1\) (Muhlhausler 1990; Muhlhausler 1996).
\(^1^0^2\) (Kulick and Stroud 1993: 56).
of literacy are needed to understand how people in newly literate contexts have shaped the creative and cultural uses of literacy and why.\textsuperscript{103}

A further related point I wish to note is that in many colonial contexts Christian missionaries (often influenced by the Protestant tradition in relation to the written Word and preaching in vernacular) have shaped the literate world for preliterate groups. In Alutiq, literacy was introduced in Cyrillic through the Russian Orthodox Church, concomitant with the development of specialised Indigenous leadership roles within the church.\textsuperscript{104} Subsequent 'outside' literacy practices were introduced by the American schooling system, the bureaucratic requirements of the state and the English language Baptist church. In Gapun, missionaries introduced Christian literacy in the mid-1950s and the link between literacy and the Church remains strong with few uses for literacy outside formal schooling and the Christian domain. Kulick suggests that the villagers' ideas about literacy and Christianity 'form a framework into which all aspects of the modern world are fitted'.\textsuperscript{105} Additionally, 'the very concept “book” is essentially Christian in nature' suggesting an 'isomorphism between Christian and European styles and values'.\textsuperscript{106}

The contextual complexity of proselytizing through Christian text has been explored in other post-colonial contexts.\textsuperscript{107} Besnier claims that on Nukulaelae no social arena is as 'suffused with literacy' as religion.\textsuperscript{108} Harries' social and cultural history of black African workers in South Africa and Mozambique in the late 1800s incorporates an analysis of the role of missionaries and the embedding of literacy as cultural practice within Christian domains.\textsuperscript{109}

As I outline above, it has taken more than a thousand years for literacy to become widespread in Western society and for written English to become standardised, yet Western society still cannot claim to have achieved universal literacy.\textsuperscript{110} In contrast, literacy has only relatively recently been introduced to Aboriginal people in remote Australia without the prior and parallel development of meaningful social and cultural textual practices. Hence if we compare the Aboriginal context with the historical conditions outlined above 'the development of Aboriginal literacy has been rapid and spectacular in the extreme'.\textsuperscript{111} Literacy in the remote Aboriginal context emerged out of the arbitrary

\textsuperscript{103} (Besnier 1995; Kulick and Stroud 1993).
\textsuperscript{104} (Reder and Green 1983; Reder and Wikelund 1993).
\textsuperscript{105} (Kulick 1992: 175).
\textsuperscript{106} (Kulick 1992: 170).
\textsuperscript{107} For instance in South Africa (Harries 1994; Prinsloo 1995) and Latin America (Ebacher 1993).
\textsuperscript{108} (Besnier 1995: 116).
\textsuperscript{109} (Harries 1994).
\textsuperscript{110} (Crystal 1995; Strang 1970).
\textsuperscript{111} (Hoogenraad 2001: 129)
conjuncture with either church or state ideology and in some instances it made more sense than in others. Literacy learning has been influenced in some communities by the Christian Reformist tradition from Lutheran Germany, or Bohemia and Moravia, emphasising a ‘deeper reading’ of Christian text in the vernacular; and in others by the Calvinist Puritan emphasis on universal schooling. Literacy learning has also been intertwined with the state’s desire for individuals to progress towards citizenship and participation in the labour market economy. The impact of Christian missions on Australian Aboriginal society has been documented. Few accounts, however, focus on language or literacy issues.

Finally, fundamental to an anthropological perspective on literacy is the notion that ‘illiteracy’ is not primarily a technical skills issue, but is ‘relational’ or ‘ideological’. Street asserts that many people who would be labelled ‘illiterate’ within the autonomous model, do in fact derive meaning from and make use of different literacies in various contexts. Thus the definition of what constitutes literacy needs to be broadened to see what is accomplished with literacy, rather than what is deficient. Other theorists have explored literacy and disempowerment, that is, how literacy or illiteracy can stem from the inclusion or exclusion of individuals or groups from societal power. Too often blame is placed on the ‘victim of illiteracy’ for ‘failing’ to take responsibility for becoming ‘literate’. The presence or lack of literacy ‘skills’ may, however, be the result of a real or perceived life context that makes their acquisition either worth, or not worth, the effort. An alternative literacy discourse emphasises the multiplicity of ‘literacies’ that the term literacy encompasses to signify that there can be no single definition of literacy. As literacies are ‘situated’ and context dependent, a singular criterion for what literacy competence entails is unattainable as competence differs according to domain and function. Street contends that, as linguists such as Ralph Grillo propose the acceptance of ‘language varieties’ outside the dominant norm, there is also a need to accept ‘literacy varieties’.

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112 See (Graff 1987: 251; Olson 1977b).
113 (Bos 1988; Edwards 1999; Hilliard 1968; Leske 1977; McDonald 2001; Stevens 1994; Swain and Rose 1988).
114 See (Christie 1995a; Elkin 1963; Ferguson 1987; Gale 1997). See (Disbrey 1997; Edwards 1999; Kral 2000) for further discussion on the influence of religious tradition on vernacular literacy in Aboriginal missions.
115 See (Cook-Gumperz 1986a; Smith 1986).
117 (Street 2001; Prinsloo and Breier 1996).
118 See (Gee 1996; McDermott 1974; McDermott and Varenne 1995; McDermott and Varenne 1996; Ogbu 1990a; Varenne and McDermott 1999b).
119 (Chopra 2001: 60).
120 (Smith 1986: 270).
121 See (Street 1994) and (Grillo 1989). In Aboriginal Australia non-standard varieties of language include, for example: Kriol (Rhyltaven 1996) and Torres Strait ‘Broken’ (Shnukal 1992 [1988]).
A sociolinguistic perspective

Over recent decades studies in education anthropology and sociolinguistics have shifted the emphasis away from a traditional, cognitivist view of literacy as a set of technical skills possessed, or conversely lacked, towards studies of the social and cultural behaviour associated with literacy.122 Education anthropologists have drawn on theory from anthropology, sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication and discourse analysis to examine ‘the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing’.123 Researchers have used developments in sociolinguistic and anthropological research to look at the relationship between language and literacy use in social context.124 A sociolinguistic perspective on literacy arose as researchers also began to look outside of schools to family and community to better understand and provide programmes to support learners from non-mainstream cultural, linguistic or socioeconomic backgrounds. This perspective was significant in that it started to shift the discourse beyond deficit theories that attributed school failure to individuals, family environment, or non-standard language use.125 Research began to take account of the discontinuities between school and home, especially in minority contexts where non-standard language forms were used, with linguists arguing that no language was deficient.126 As sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists were unable to separate language from sociocultural practices, a less stark divide between orality and literacy emerged.127

Culture, language and literacy

Linguists and anthropologists have also opened up new understandings of the interrelationship between culture and literacy with the application of ethnographic methods to the study of communication. Theories of ‘ethnography of communication’ blended anthropology and linguistics and explored the links between culture, language and

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122 The tradition of sociolinguistics or linguistic anthropology stems from reservations about Saussure’s distinction between langue (the ideal language form) and parole (actual language use) (Saussure 1959) by Bronislaw Malinowski and Raymond Firth. Malinowski’s work on language in social context influenced a later generation of linguists like Michael Halliday, Ruqaiya Hasan and other systemic functional linguists (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday 1978). Links between language, culture and society are associated with work by Gumperz and Hymes (Gumperz and Hymes 1964; Gumperz and Hymes 1972) that was in part influenced by Boas’ linking of language learning as a requirement in anthropological field work. See also (Duranti 1997; Foley 1997; Grillo 1989).

123 (Street 1993b: 1). Education anthropology emerged from studies within cultural anthropology (Goetz and LeCompte 1984) See (Foley 2002; Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Spindler 1974; Wolcott 1985; Wolcott 1991) for an overview of the international literature. See also (Levinson et al. 1996; Levinson 1999; Levinson et al. 2000; Ogbu 1979; Ogbu 1990a; Varenne and McDermott 1999b; Wolcott 1967). Education anthropology is little explored in the Australian Indigenous education literature, see (Schwab 1998; Schwab 2001b). For writing on ethnography of communication see (Gumperz and Hymes 1964; Gumperz and Hymes 1972) and discourse analysis see (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough 1995).

124 See (Cook-Gumperz 1986b; Levine 1986; Maybin 1994; Prinsloo and Breier 1996).

125 See the notions of ‘restricted code’ and ‘elaborated code’ in (Bernstein 1973) wherein school failure in marginalised groups is attributed to their lack of access to a so-called ‘elaborated code’.

126 See Labov’s study of Black English Vernacular (Labov 1972), now commonly referred to as African American Vernacular English by linguists.

literacy. Meanwhile, Vygotsky's 'activity theory' focused on learning and human development and emphasised socially mediated learning, introducing the concept of the 'zone of proximal development' underlying the notion of scaffolded learning. Theorists have embraced activity theory and drawn on anthropology and sociolinguistics to present a situated and social perspective on participatory learning that broadens learning beyond formal instruction, advancing the notion of learning and literacy as purposeful, context-specific and socially organised practice.

Despite the generally accepted assumption that schooling is 'a more effective and advanced institution for educational transmission', theorists such as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger have turned away from formal schooling to explore the concept of 'situated learning' through participation in situated activity. A divide has grown between educationalists who see schools as the primary site for learning and researchers who foreground a 'fundamental distinction between learning and intentional instruction'. Lave and Wenger emphasise the significance of 'shifting the analytic focus from the individual as learner to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive process to the more-encompassing view of social practice'. Schooling, they assert, 'does not exist alone', however 'conventional theories of learning do not offer a means for grasping their interrelations'. Lave and Wenger situate learning within the 'trajectories of participation in which it takes on meaning' where the learner is a member of a sociocultural community, or a 'community of practice'. In 'communities of practice' situated learning 'takes place in a social world, dialectically constituted in social practices that are in the process of reproduction, transformation, and change' and human lives are seen as trajectories through multiple social practices across the life span.

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128 See Gumperz and Hymes on 'ethnography of communication (Gumperz and Hymes 1964; Saville-Troike 1982)
129 See (Vygotsky 1978). The notion that learners are mentored, through interactions with more experienced adults or peers and are assisted to work beyond the 'zone' that they are performing at alone, thus also activating the non-formal learning acquired in the family or community. Scaffolded literacy is a term applied to a method developed by Australian researchers for teaching literacy in Aboriginal schools around remote Australia (Rose et al. 1999). See also YACHAD Accelerated Literacy Programme http://www.yalp.org.au and the National Accelerated Literacy Programme http://www.cdu.edu.au/sspr/NALP.html
130 See (Cole et al. 1971; Cole and Scribner 1981; Engenstrom 1990; Lave 1988; Lave 1996; Rogoff and Lave 1984; Rogoff 1990; Rogoff et al. 1993).
131 (Lave and Wenger 1991: 61). See also (Gee 2004).
132 Other approaches that incorporate the concept of learning through situated activity are variously termed 'practice-engagement' (Reder 1994); 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger 1991); 'guided participation' (Rogoff 2003) or 'intended participation' (Rogoff et al. 2003). See also discussions of 'out-of-school' (Hull and Schultz 2002) or 'community-based' (Heath 1983; Heath 1994; Heath and Smyth 1999) learning.
133 (Lave and Wenger 1991: 43).
135 (Lave and Wenger 1991: 52). Other writers (Barton and Tusting 2005) have critiqued the communities of practice paradigm for lacking a linguistic perspective more adequately covered by the term 'speech community' from sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication (see footnote (f.n.) 28).
Barbara Rogoff also proposes that learning is 'a process of changing participation in community activities'. Human development, she considers, is 'a process of people's changing participation in sociocultural activities of their communities' where '[p]eople of each generation, as they engage in sociocultural endeavours with other people, make use of and extend cultural tools and practices inherited from previous generations'. James Gee also takes issue with traditionalists who 'advocate a sequential, skills-based approach to reading instruction'. His argument is that although learning to read can be an instructed process, it works best as a 'cultural process'. He asserts that youngsters who 'must learn reading primarily as an instructed process in school are at an acute disadvantage', suggesting that, irrespective of all the social and cultural factors interrelated with literacy, 'traditionalists would have us believe that poor readers, young and old, have failed to learn to read well because they have received poor skills instruction early on in school'.

The application of a social theory of learning resonates in the remote Aboriginal world. While not discounting the importance of schooling and good teaching, it draws learning away from the focus on individual attainment of outcomes. A social theory of literacy learning embraces a participatory emphasis on learning that is of relevance to the social community to which learners belong. It also pays attention to the transformational aspect of learning and identity formation and is cognisant of the social, cultural, historical and political influences that impact on the formation of a community of practice.

An ethnography of literacy in the Ngaanyatjarra context

This thesis is an ethnography of literacy. It is also a study of the social process of learning. It is about finding out how people acquire literacy, what people do with text and how literacy is used in everyday contexts. This is not a study of pedagogy, so from this stance there is no judgment of 'success' or 'failure' in the acquisitional process. Nor is there an attempt to analyse pre-contact systems of graphic representation or traditional ways of 'reading' the environment. My intention is to draw a distinction between 'literacy' and 'schooling', and to explore the introduction of alphabetic script and the development of literate practices. An ethnohistorical approach to anthropology is used to show 'the way in

137 (Rogoff 2003: 284).
138 (Rogoff 2003: 52) [emphasis in original].
139 (Gee 2004: 10–14).
140 I take from second language learning research the distinction between 'learning' and 'acquisition' (Krashen 1976) where second language 'acquisition' is an informal process that develops through interaction and immersion in language events. Second language 'learning' is an incremental process of individual skill acquisition reliant on formal instruction.
141 Some writers evoke a reading of the landscape (Benterrak et al. 1984; Rumsey 1994; Rumsey 2000) See also (Biddle 1996; Biddle 2000; van Toorn 2006).
which the impact of external forces is internally mediated, not only by social structural arrangements...but also by cultural patterns and structures. 142 This ethnography brings an anthropological and sociolinguistic perspective to literacy to gain insights into how literacy has been acquired, developed and maintained over successive generations in a range of contexts in one remote Aboriginal region. This thesis posits that literacy cannot be removed from the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts of use since the Ngaanyatjarra encounter with Western practices began in the 1930s. It is a consideration of the acquisition of literate behaviours and practices and how they have been transmitted and transformed across the generations.

True ethnography confronts us with alternative worlds of value and meaning, with different universes of preference and constraint. It tests the limits of our capacity to suspend our disbelief and to access hidden, unconscious or marginalized aspects of our own subjectivity. It draws us a picture of moral communities where people have different ideas about the desirable functioning for human beings. 143

I aim, through ethnography, to shift the stance away from the current frame that locks remote Aboriginal people into a history of failed policies by exploring a countervailing position that seeks to understand how one remote group, the Ngaanyatjarra, came to be in their present position and how the scope for future possibilities can be widened. 144

This thesis is based on the premise that the learning of technical literacy skills in school is an important component of the literacy learning process. However, a singular focus on pedagogy obscures the less obvious realisation that we must also be cognisant of practice and the broader sociocultural factors associated with literacy acquisition, maintenance and transmission in the newly literate context of the remote Aboriginal world.

**Practice theory**

'Practice theory' underpins the interpretive framework of this thesis. I draw on it to trace how some Ngaanyatjarra have acquired the social practices of European Australians and how these have been interpolated into cultural processes over successive generations.

The concept of 'practice' draws on anthropological conceptualisations. Practice theorists commonly use Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' to reflect on the nature of social reproduction and transformation. 145 In Bourdieu's theory of practice, habitus is 'both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu 1977, 1990 (1980)).

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143 (Shweder 1996: 18).
144 See (Gibson-Graham 2006).
145 (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1990 (1980)).
of practices'. \(^{146}\) Habitus is also understood as ‘a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions’. \(^{147}\) Like Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of habitus, sociologists Berger and Luckman use the term ‘habitualization’ (i.e. the process of forming habits) to describe how frequently repeated action—‘practice’—becomes ‘cast into a pattern’, then reproduced with ‘an economy of effort’ and the meanings associated with ‘habitualized actions’ become embedded as ‘routines’ or ‘taken for granted actions’. They suggest that individual processes of ‘habitualization’ precede any institutionalisation and ‘institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions’ built up through a ‘shared history’. They suggest that new roles and routines are likely to be ‘reciprocally typified’ only if they are relevant. Routines are transmitted to the next generation only when ‘habitualization’ and ‘typification’ become ‘historical institutions’ experienced as ‘possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact’, having an objective reality. The final stage —‘legitimation’—is when transmitted practices become taken for granted cultural processes. \(^{148}\)

Bourdieu describes the process of acquisition as a practical ‘mimesis (or mimeticism)’ which implies an overall relation of identification where individuals cultivate the art of becoming something else and take on a mimetic form in the ‘social space’. \(^{149}\)

> Between learning through sheer familiarization, in which the learner insensibly and unconsciously acquires the principles of an ‘art’ and an art of living, including those that are not known to the producer of the practices or artefacts that are imitated, and explicit and express transmission by precept and prescription, every society provides structural exercises which tend to transmit a particular form of mastery. \(^{150}\)

In any consideration of underlying cultural processes Sherry Ortner suggests that,

> [A]nthropologists must use the cultural frames and structural contradictions of the local society as a kind of lens through which to view the practices and policies of the larger system, because it is these cultural frames and structural contradictions that mediate both the meaning and the impact of the larger political and economic forces in question. \(^{151}\)

It is commonly asserted that literacy has been imposed on newly literate societies by missionaries or representatives of the state to allow previously preliterate groups to ‘see the light’ and begin the linear progression towards modernisation. This perspective is, however, too narrow and does not take account of the complexity of diverse contexts nor the agency of individual members of the receiving culture. The notion of ‘agency’, from

\(^{146}\) (Bourdieu 1989: 19).

\(^{147}\) (Bourdieu 1977: 82–3) [emphasis in original].

\(^{148}\) (Berger and Luckmann 1975 [1966]: 70–45).

\(^{149}\) (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]: 73; Bourdieu 1989).

\(^{150}\) (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]: 74–5).
Bourdieu, has been incorporated into the anthropological tradition by so-called ‘practice theorists’ who emphasise the impact of social influences on agency.\textsuperscript{152} By drawing on Ortner and others, this ethnography of literacy seeks to understand ‘practice’ and the ‘configuration of cultural forms, social relations, and historical processes that move people to act in ways’ that produce or determine certain effects.\textsuperscript{153} From Ortner we understand that ‘human action or interaction’ as an instance of practice can only be considered in relation to the structures that shape it: ‘[p]ractice emerges from structure, it reproduces structure, and it has the capacity to transform structure’.\textsuperscript{154} Marshall Sahlins notes similarly:

\begin{quote}
Culture may set conditions to the historical process, but it is dissolved and reformulated in material practice, so that history becomes the realization, in the form of society, of the actual resources that people put into play.\textsuperscript{155}
\end{quote}

In this thesis I present literacy as an instance of practice. I discuss the introduction and transmission of literacy by using the cultural frames of Ngaanyatjarra ‘local society’ and return to Ortner’s notion of the underlying ‘cultural frames’ or ‘cultural schemas’ that determine the reproduction of literacy practice in the new habitus.\textsuperscript{156} I explore the introduction of literacy and whether it has been ‘put into play’ as a resource within enduring Ngaanyatjarra cultural processes (i.e. the ‘structures of the long run’).\textsuperscript{157}

**Literacy as social practice**

Theorists from the so-called ‘New Literacy Studies’ (NLS) have drawn on developments in sociolinguistic and anthropological theory and ‘practice theory’ to take an ‘ethnographic perspective’ on literacy.\textsuperscript{158} Their approach embodies the view that reading and writing ‘only make sense’ when studied in the context of social and cultural, as well as historical, political and economic practices ‘of which they are but a part’.\textsuperscript{159} Ethnographic methodology is used to document literacy activities in communities and link the meanings of local events to broader cultural institutions and practices.\textsuperscript{160} The NLS researchers conceptualise literacy not in terms of skills and competencies, but as integral components of social events and practices. The term ‘literacy event’ has been utilised by Shirley Brice Heath to encompass speech events that have social interactional rules around text.\textsuperscript{161} Brian Street points out that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{151} (Ortner 1989: 83).
\item \textsuperscript{153} (Ortner 1989: 12).
\item \textsuperscript{154} (Ortner 1989: 12).
\item \textsuperscript{155} (Sahlins 1981: 7).
\item \textsuperscript{156} (Ortner 1989: 60).
\item \textsuperscript{157} (Sahlins 1981: 9).
\item \textsuperscript{158} (Gee 2000; Maybin 2000; Street 1993b).
\item \textsuperscript{159} (Gee 2000: 180).
\item \textsuperscript{160} (Barton and Padmore 1994; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton et al. 2000).
\item \textsuperscript{161} (Heath 1983: 386; Heath 1982a).
\end{itemize}
'literacy practices' incorporate 'literacy events' and he employs the term 'literacy practices' as a broad concept 'referring to both behaviour and conceptualisations related to the use of reading and/or writing'. Janet Maybin considers that the notion of literacy practices provides an important conceptual and methodological framework for looking at the inter-relationships between individual activities, understandings and identities; social events and the interactions they involve; and broader social and institutional structures. According to David Barton and Mary Hamilton, literacy practices are what people do with literacy every day and thus 'cultural ways of utilising literacy' may be more abstract and 'cannot be wholly contained in observable tasks and activities'. They suggest that the following set of propositions embraces the notion of 'literacy as social practice', a concept I return to throughout the thesis:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

Axiomatic to this thesis is Heath's notion that being literate involves more than having the individual technical literacy skills that 'enable one to disconnect from the interpretation or production of a text as a whole, discrete elements, such as letters, graphemes, words, grammar rules, main ideas, and topic sentences'. Being literate also depends upon 'an essential harmony of core language behaviors and certain critical supporting social relations and cultural practices' and an individual's 'sense of being literate derives from the ability to also exhibit literate behaviors'. Throughout this thesis I draw on the anthropological and sociolinguistic underpinnings embodied in the ethnographic approach taken by the NLS theorists. I consider that literacy cannot be studied independently of the social, cultural, political and historical forces that shape it, nor can it be analysed in isolation from the ideological systems in which it is embedded and the social practices that surround it.

162 (Street 1993b: 12–13).
163 (Maybin 2000: 198).
164 (Barton et al. 2000: 8).
165 (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 7).
166 (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 3).
167 (Heath 1991: 3). [emphasis in original].
168 (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton et al. 2000; Besnier 1995; Kulick and Stroud 1993; Street 1984; Street 1993a; Street 1995).
Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into two parts: *Part I* (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and *Part II* (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Throughout the thesis I interweave intergenerational narratives to illustrate literacy as a ‘generational cultural process’. I draw on data from eleven Family Narratives (Appendix B), plus interviews with other key informants and other data (see Appendix A). Throughout the thesis Ngaanyatjarra words are used and translations not self-explanatory in the text can be found in the glossary in Appendix D.

In *Part I* I present a diachronic perspective on literacy. An anthropological approach is used to explore change, transmission and transformation in the evolving social practices, social meanings and cultural conceptions of reading and writing in the Ngaanyatjarra world. I trace the introduction, transmission and development of literacy and learning across the generations to consider the interconnection between a complex of factors, of which pedagogy is but a part. I explore the development of literate habits, assumptions, dispositions and behaviours as the shift towards a literate mentality starts to take hold and the Ngaanyatjarra begin using written language for their own social and cultural processes. Throughout *Part I* the normative assumptions associated with introduced European practices are brought to the fore as I explore how Ngaanyatjarra people negotiated the profound period of social and cultural change from the 1930s up to the present. I incorporate Barton and Hamilton’s proposition that ‘literacy practices are culturally constructed, and like all cultural phenomena, they have their roots in the past’, thus, any contemporary understanding of the ideology, culture and traditions in which current practices are based must be underpinned by an historical approach as a background to describing the present. The historical forces that shaped literacy in the Ngaanyatjarra world thus provide insights into the ideological frames that have created the habitus—the normative practices—associated with literacy today. Practice theory is ‘a theory of the conversion, or translation, between internal dynamics and external forces’ and a dimension ‘concerns the ways in which a given social and cultural order mediates the impact of external events by shaping the ways in which actors experience and respond to those events’. I use a practice-oriented approach to focus on the intersection between ‘experience, performance, and interaction’ and how the habitus of a colonising culture may

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169 (Rogoff 2003).
170 (Barton et al. 2000: 8; Clanchy 1979; Heath 1991).
171 (Barton and Hamilton 2000: 13–14).
172 (Bourdieu 1977).
be taken on and transformed into practices that are also redolent of the underlying cultural values and processes of the receiving group. 174

Thus, underpinning Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are the precepts that literacy is 'historically situated' and 'culturally shaped'. 175 In Chapter 2 I situate the Ngaanyatjarra encounter with the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) from 1934 onwards. I introduce the first generation of Ngaanyatjarra people to experience European practices during the 'mission time'. I consider the changing spatial and temporal patterns and sociocultural processes associated with schooling, dormitory living and the emerging Christian community at Warburton Ranges Mission. I reflect on how the Ngaanyatjarra took on Western practices including literacy. I explore the nature of social relatedness and the notions of trust and compulsion as elemental to this experience. Chapter 3 explores the Ngaanyatjarra encounter with the state during 'Native Welfare times' from the 1950s to the early 1970s when an ideology of assimilation was implemented to increase literacy and educate Aboriginal people to meet the standards of employment and citizenship required by the nation state. During this period people also encountered the cash economy, social services benefits and the social chaos wrought by access to alcohol. Chapter 4 focuses on the new Federal policy of Aboriginal self-determination after 1972. I assess the impact of earlier learning and literacy experiences on the 'self-determining generation' and consider how literacy was used to address pressing social and cultural needs such as the establishment of outstation communities and the emergence of the Ngaanyatjarra community of interest.

In Part II (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) I use a synchronic perspective to focus on the present and explore the interwoven nature of literacy in the 'practice of every day life'. 176 The questions I investigate are primarily: 'how have people engaged with literacy?' and 'what are the everyday literacy practices?' I use ethnographic observations of everyday life interwoven with the personal narratives of up to three generations in the eleven families to explore the histories, values, attitudes, and feelings associated with individual and community literacy practices, and the meaning attributed to text. I explore everyday life using an 'anthropological' approach. Writing about Aboriginal literacy rarely, if ever, considers the anthropological aspects of literacy such as social and domestic space, 'habits and attitudes of time and space usage', 'literate systems' or the 'materiality' required. 177 By focusing on literacy and spatio-temporal determinants of social practice, I consider the ways in which

174 See (Ortner 1984).
175 (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Kulick and Stroud 1993).
176 (de Certeau 1984).
they are 'in accord with and mutually reinforce other cultural patterns'. In Chapter 5 I explore how changed social and spatio-temporal patterns and boundaries impact on the practice of everyday life and examine how these affect literacy. I examine literacy events and practices existing in a range of contexts outside pedagogical parameters and demonstrate the manner in which literacy has permeated the practice of everyday life.

Intergenerational change and the transmission of cultural values and practices are themes that run through Part II. I incorporate a generational approach from human development studies to explore change from a 'life span development' perspective. Researchers in human development are 'interested in the ways individuals develop identities, particularly as they move from one life stage to the next' and the historical, political, economic, and cultural circumstances under which such transitions occur and contribute new meanings to 'patterned' developmental changes.

In Chapter 6 I focus on aspects of language socialisation and literacy learning and transmission in family and community settings. Linguists have studied the impact of sociocultural change on language shift, socialisation and transmission. Researchers have investigated how children in mainstream and cross-cultural contexts are acculturated into the ways that adults in their home environment use spoken and written language. Studies have highlighted the importance of literate and oral practices in the family as antecedents to successful literacy learning at school. Ethnographic studies of family, or intergenerational, literacy have enhanced our understanding of the social and cultural contexts that create opportunities for literacy development and transmission. In the anthropological frame, intergenerational literacy transmission is interpreted as cultural production and reproduction emphasising 'a continued process of creating meaning in social and material contexts'. Rather than assuming a focus only on children and

177 (Heath 1983: 393). See also (Charnofsky 1971; Hall 2000; Purves and Jennings 1991; Young 1988).
181 See (Eckert 1988; Romaine 1984; Schieffelin 1990). Linguists have examined language shift and language death in endangered language contexts in Aboriginal Australia (McConvell 1991b; McConvell and Thieberger 2001; Rigby 1987; Schmidt 1990). See discussions on language shift and younger speakers in Ngiyampaa (Donaldson 1980) and Dyrbal (Schmidt 1985) and teenage speech in a Torres Strait language (Dixon 1980), Twi (Lee 1987) and in the closely related Piranjjatjara dialect at Areyonga (Langlois 2004). Language socialisation has been studied in Aboriginal communities (Bavin 1993; Hamilton 1981; Kearins 1983; Laughren 1984; Lowell et al. 1996; McConvell 1988) and with the Ngaanyatjarra (Jacobs 1988).
182 Important 'cross-cultural' studies include: (Duranti and Ochs 1986; Ochs 1982; Ochs 1988; Ochs 1993; Ochs 1990; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Schieffelin 1990; Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986; Watson-Gegeo and Boggs 1977).
184 (Levinson and Holland 1996: 13).
schooling, an intergenerational approach takes account of the knowledge, beliefs, habits and values and practices that are transmitted to children through participation in informal activities, or observation of adult roles and practices. Australian research has affirmed the importance of children seeing reading and writing as elemental to everyday life at home and in the community (not merely as something done by and with teachers, only within the environs of school). Literacy and 'school-readiness' has become an education policy issue. This is also reflected in the community sector.

In mainstream Australia early literacy learning is synchronised with participation in purposeful institutional, social and community practices and contexts that require literacy. Whereas, in remote Aboriginal communities the historical and social circumstances of literacy learning differ and the cultural processes (i.e. the habits and attitudes associated with everyday literacy practices that underpin success at school) are still evolving. The arenas of adult literacy use are less transparent and the correlation with early literacy learning less apparent and more research is needed in this important area.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the penultimate chapter, I focus on the adolescent generation. 'Adolescence' has been the subject of studies in anthropology, sociology and human development. Youth culture is commonly represented as problematic or 'at risk'. In this discourse, a moral panic is often associated with youth who face 'the scourge of illiteracy'. Writers note how the school system often fails marginalised young people who become locked into a 'culture of refusal' and no longer engage with education because of the perceived incongruity between schooling and everyday life.
there is a cultural logic to the pursuit of credentials and the assumed linearity of the transition from school to training and employment in the labour market economy. The normative logic of this sequenced pathway holds little ‘cultural logic’ in the remote Aboriginal world where different social meanings are attached to the adolescent maturation period.

Australian researchers have flagged the notion of ‘Indigenous learning communities’ to address the limited engagement of Aboriginal youth with education and to explore the potential linkages between families, schools and communities. An alternative international discourse emphasises the creative agency and adaptive strategies of marginalised youth. Ethnographic research in the United States focuses on the potential that youth organisations have to support and stimulate non-formal, non-institutionalised learning, including literacy learning, in non-mainstream contexts. Importantly, the research suggests that arts-based projects and organisations in particular, offer ‘the greatest range and depth of opportunity for building information and honing skills – technical, communicative, and interpretive’ by giving young people ‘opportunities to create, demonstrate, practice, respond, improve, and perform in risk-laden tasks and projects’. Writers suggest that arts-based projects provide a context for sustained learning that schools cannot match and are judged by youth themselves as desirable places to spend time. Researchers comment that adolescents look ‘wholly different’ when they find engagements that ‘galvanize their natural strengths’ and ‘reinvigorate belief in their own potential’. A synergy can be found between the research findings and current learning theories, outlined above, that emphasise participatory ‘situated’ or ‘collaborative’ learning. Wenger aptly asserts that what is needed are ‘inventive ways’ of engaging learners in ‘meaningful practices’ by ‘providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and of involving them in actions, discussions and reflections that make a difference to the communities they value’.

193 (Smyth and Hattam 2004).
194 (Schwab and Sutherland 2001; Schwab 2005).
198 (Damon 1996: 469).
199 For ‘situated’ learning see (Barton et al. 2000; Gee 2004; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and for ‘collaborative’ learning see (Chavajay and Rogoff 2002; Rogoff et al. 2003).
200 (Wenger 1998: 10).
Anthropological writing in the Western Desert region commonly presents a ‘traditionalist’ body of work. \(^{201}\) Although some writers do address the consequences of change; John Stanton’s research at Mt Margaret and Lee Sackett’s work at Wiluna have both informed this thesis, as has Fred Myers’s study of the Pintupi. \(^{202}\) Myers suggests that approaches that look at ‘the new Aboriginal cultural formations’ and Aboriginal practices ‘contextually in historical process’ illuminate the way in which meanings are reshaped and contested. \(^{203}\) Francesca Merlan also explores the intercultural space of ‘engagement and influence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and institutions’. \(^{204}\) Her formulation of the ‘cultural’ takes account of the ‘processual character of interrelationship’ between the two groups and emphasises ‘the processes of reproduction as well as non-reproduction’ of sociocultural patterns and interaction. \(^{205}\) Few studies in the Aboriginalist literature have considered the impact of change on the normative life trajectory for Aboriginal youth. \(^{206}\)

In Chapter 7 I show that the developmental trajectory of Ngaanyatjarra youth is diverging from both cultural and mainstream norms. This generation is within a process of cultural transformation utterly dissimilar to anything their parents or grandparents experienced. Although their core cultural values reside in the traditional Ngaanyatjarra world, their contemporary identity is being moulded by Western influences and, unlike previous generations, they are experiencing everyday life as increasingly self-regulatory. I explore a youth arts case to show how young adults, many of whom may not be considered highly literate when measured against mainstream standards, are adapting oral narrative skills and using text in multimedia events. This case study illustrates how new influences are shaping the literacy practices that youth engage in.

\(^{201}\) (Gould 1969; Gould 1980; Myers 1986; Tonkinson 1978b).

\(^{202}\) (Sackett 1978a; Sackett 1990; Stanton 1983; Stanton 1990), see also (Folds 2001; Tonkinson 1974). Other writing on ‘change’ include (Berndt 1977; Rowley 1972a; Sansom 1980; Taylor et al. 2005).

\(^{203}\) (Myers 2002: 117).

\(^{204}\) (Merlan 2005: 167). See (Martin 2003) for an exploration of the concept of ‘strategic engagement’.

\(^{205}\) (Merlan 2005: 169).

\(^{206}\) In the Australian Indigenous literature youth issues have been addressed either within a traditionalist life cycle paradigm (Burbank 1988; Burbank 1995; Hamilton 1979; Hamilton 1981; Myers 1986; Tonkinson 1978b) or within the context of social change (Ivory 2003; Robinson 1990; Robinson 1997b; Robinson 1997a; Tonkinson 1974). Other anthropologists have explored the social meaning of petrol sniffing (Brady 1992), youth crime (Putt 1999) and the tension between cultural continuity and change in response to new media and globalisation (Hinkson 1999; Hinkson 2004; Michaels 1986).
Introduction

Chapter 2 begins with an outline of the policy context of the so-called ‘protectionist’ era to underpin the ensuing discussion on the nature of the Ngaanyatjarra encounter with the European world. I contextualise the arrival of the United Aborigines Mission by first describing the mission experience at Mt Margaret Mission in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia. I then consider the nature of the Ngaanyatjarra engagement with introduced European practices including literacy at the Warburton Ranges Mission. I also reflect on the westerly drift of the Ngaanyatjarra out of the Western Desert and into the Eastern Goldfields region.

The ‘protectionist’ era

In 1915 Auber O. Neville became Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia. Under his ‘exacting administration’ Aboriginal people in this Western Australia were so well protected by the Aborigines Department that they ‘virtually became prisoners in their own land, denied even the most basic right to control their own lives or the lives of their children’.207 The desperate situation of Aborigines in the south and criticisms of maltreatment of Aborigines in the north led to the 1934 Moseley Royal Commission on the ‘native problem’ and the introduction of the Native Administration Act 1936.208 Although enacted to further ‘protect’ Aboriginal people, the 1936 Act in fact gave the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) more power over the daily lives of Aborigines in part because the Commissioner of Native Affairs (CNA) became the legal guardian of all ‘native’ children, whether illegitimate or legitimate, until they reached the age of 21.209 The 1936 Act succeeded in ‘eroding individual rights’ as the Commissioner ultimately had control over Aboriginal marriage, employment, education, place of residence and the enforced separation of mixed-blood children from their families.210

Under protectionist policy the ideological dimension of literacy was utilised to separate Aborigines into groups according to caste criteria. Full-blood people, for example, were

207 (Maushart 2003 [1993]: 333). In outlying regions the Aborigines Department was dependent on honorary protectors some of whom were police who undertook a problematic ‘dual role’ as both ‘protectors and prosecutors of Aborigines’ (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 91–2).
209 (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 350; Biskup 1973: 170) The Aborigines Act 1905 (WA) was the cornerstone of Aboriginal policy in Western Australia until 1936. It had replaced the Aborigines Act 1897 (which had replaced the Aborigines Protection Act 1886) based on recommendations from a WA government inquiry headed by Dr W.E. Roth.
categorised into three tiers: 'detribalised' and living near towns, 'semi-tribalised' and living on pastoral stations, and 'uncivilised' and living in a 'tribal state'.\textsuperscript{211} A 1937 Commonwealth and State Ministers Conference on Aboriginal Welfare supported the policy that 'full-blood natives' should be educated to a 'white standard' only if 'detribalised'.\textsuperscript{212} The Native (Citizenship Rights) Act (1944) was to give Aborigines the right to apply for a certificate of citizenship 'provided that they were adult, literate, of industrious habits and good behaviour, and completely severed from tribal or communal associations'.\textsuperscript{213} Accordingly, upon recommendation of several government officers, an Exemption Certificate to exempt that person from the 1936 Act could be attained to remove education, employment and town residence restrictions.\textsuperscript{214}

Semi-civilised full-blood natives can be kept under benevolent supervision in regard to employment and social and medical services in their own tribal areas, and education is not particularly necessary for them. Nor is education necessary for tribal or uncivilised natives. They should be safeguarded in their tribal areas and there is a doubt in my mind as to whether it is even necessary to disturb their social state by attempts at Christianity.\textsuperscript{215}

In other words, Western Australian policy in relation to ‘full-bloods’ living in a tribal state was that they were 'better left alone'.\textsuperscript{216}

\textbf{Aborigines, literacy, and the state}

The 1871 Elementary Education Act had 'theoretically' provided education for all Aboriginal children within a three mile radius of a state school, but this was never properly implemented and Aboriginal students were excluded from state schools well into the 1930s.\textsuperscript{217} The Aborigines Act 1905 had made Aboriginal education the responsibility of the Aborigines Department.\textsuperscript{218} The Department admitted that it was aware that it had a 'statutory responsibility to educate Aboriginal children', but claimed that it was 'powerless to do very much' due to 'lack of finances'.\textsuperscript{219} Separate schools for 'detribalised' Aborigines were advocated, but departmental cutbacks meant that this was not an option, so schooling took place primarily on missions or settlements.\textsuperscript{220} By 1940, WA was the only state in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{211} (Jebb 2002: 161).
\item \textsuperscript{212} Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Affairs (CNA) 1937: 3–4.
\item \textsuperscript{213} (Bolton 1981: 151).
\item \textsuperscript{214} (Stanton 1988: 298).
\item \textsuperscript{215} Annual Report CNA 1945: 8.
\item \textsuperscript{216} (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 156).
\item \textsuperscript{217} (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 136–43, 307–10.)
\item \textsuperscript{218} (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 136–43).
\item \textsuperscript{219} Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines 1936: 8.
\item \textsuperscript{220} (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 168–9). Institutions such as Moore River and Carrolup Native Settlement embodied Neville's policy of separating children from families and assisting the inevitable assimilation of 'mixed bloods' into European society. Children sent to Moore River generally never saw their families again as depicted in the book (Pilkington 2002) and subsequent film 'Rabbit Proof Fence'. By 1920 settlements aimed to provide Aboriginal children with basic literacy and numeracy and to prepare them for training as domestic and farm labourers, although the standard of education on settlement schools dropped after 1921 as the focus was oriented around vocational teaching programmes (Haebich 1992)
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Australia in which the Education Department did not provide teachers for Aboriginal reserves, missions or settlements. It was not until the passing of the Education Act in 1945, that the state displayed its intent to educate its Aboriginal population. From 1947 the staffing of settlements schools with trained teachers was supported, as was non-segregated schooling despite some ongoing European community opposition.

After 1948, following the Bateman Report, better educational opportunities prevailed under the reforming influence of the new Commissioner of Native Affairs (CNA) Stanley G. Middleton. At this stage, the adult full-blood population of WA was reportedly ‘almost completely illiterate’. After being excluded from state education, school attendance was now to become compulsory for all Aboriginal children aged six to fourteen living within a three mile radius of a school. However it wasn’t until 1951 that there was a ‘willingness’ on the part of the DNA to also ‘accept responsibility’ for the education of children in missions. In 1953 the Education Department established a section responsible for Aboriginal education and compiled a “Provisional Curriculum for Coloured Pupils in Caste Schools”. This coincided with pedagogical research determining that ‘motivation and environment’ were apparently retarding Aboriginal students, not ‘innate incapacity’.

Mt Margaret Mission

In all, Neville’s administration had led to a worsening of conditions in settled areas, including the Eastern Goldfields region of Western Australia. Some 30 years after European contact the Aborigines of this region were considered by the Chief Protector to be the ‘most degraded’ in the state. In 1921 Rodolphe S. Schenk established an Australian Aborigines Mission (renamed United Aborigines Mission (UAM) in 1929) at Mt

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221 (Milnes 1987: 272).
224 (Department of Native Welfare 1967: 32).
225 (Bateman 1948).
226 WA SRO Ace 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 10/8/51 UAM to A/DCNA.
227 (Biskup 1973: 242).
228 (Bolton 1981: 154–5).
229 (Milnes 1987: 151). The Eastern Goldfields opened up after gold was discovered in Kalgoorlie in 1893 and mining settlements grew in Kalgoorlie, Leonora, Laverton and Wiluna (Howitt 1990; Stanton 1990). A railway line to Kalgoorlie was laid by 1896 to service the goldfields, with a branch line to Laverton constructed soon after. The goldrush reached its peak around 1904 and went into decline thereafter. Pastoral development followed in the wake of mining when pastoralists were enticed into the Eastern Goldfields with offers of cheap leases of land from the government. In the Laverton-Leonora districts early stations to be established were Nambhi (1899), Banjiwarn (1903), Laverton Downs (1918) and Bandya and Carnegie (1921) (Department of Conservation and Land Management 1994: 21). The influx of Europeans onto Aboriginal land, its occupation by pastoralists and the resulting loss of access to traditional food sources saw Aboriginal people living on the fringes of European settlements or gravitating to ration depots established for indigent or ‘destitute’ Aborigines (Rajkowski 1995).
Margaret some 30 kilometres south-west of Laverton in the Eastern Goldfields. Although following a tradition of colonial mission intervention in Aboriginal Australia, his impact over the next 32 years was to prove relatively benign. Mt Margaret, in fact, provided a refuge from the adverse conditions in the Goldfields, in part because Schenk objected to the forced removal of children to institutions such as Moore River Settlement which 'won the gratitude of the locals'. At Mt Margaret some families were able to maintain contact with their children and by 1931 full-blood children were also placed in the mission.

Schenk’s fundamentalism underpinned his attitude to literacy, by drawing on the ‘Protestant impulse towards literacy’. He believed ‘that the native who could read and understand the Bible stood a better chance of becoming and remaining a firm Christian than one who was illiterate’. It may also be speculated that his approach was grounded in the ‘liberal social theories and expectations of the role of literacy and schooling in socioeconomic development, social order, and individual progress’ in colonialist Australia. Schenk believed that if Aboriginal people are ‘not educated, they will always need others to speak for them—they will never be able to speak for themselves’. A school for five to twelve years olds—the first school for Aborigines in the Goldfields—opened in October 1926 within the prevailing atmosphere that saw the state denying education to Aboriginal children. Mt Margaret was viewed as a ‘model mission

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230 The Australian Aborigines Mission (founded in 1893 under the name Christian Endeavour Mission) originated from LaPerouse Mission in NSW (Milnes 1987: 160). This group had established their first children’s mission in Perth by 1909 (Haebich 1992 [1988]: 109), and later spread throughout the state. By 1935 the UAM, as it was now named, was the largest missionary society in Western Australia, with five mission stations under its management (Biskup 1973: 124) and the only mission group in the Goldfields region.

231 See (Harris 1994 [1990]; Swain and Rose 1988).

232 (Powell and Kennedy 2005: 57). Aborigines of the Eastern Goldfields were aware of Moore River Settlement and would have heard of incidents such as that in 1921 when police ‘protectors’ rounded up a group of Aborigines in Laverton and sent them by train to Moore River. The story of their escape is remembered by successive generations (see Family J) and has been documented in the literature (Dowley 2000; Morgan 1986).

233 (Milnes 1987: 190).

234 (Graff 1987: 251). The UAM had its roots in early missions that entered Australia and were products of the Protestantism of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, Calvinist Purtanism in England and the German mystical piety of Bohemia and Moravia. In 1833 missionaries from Germany were solicited to work among the Aborigines of NSW when no English clergy would. A Moravian-Presbyterian partnership later began in Victoria (Disbray 1997; Edwards 1999). The UAM was ‘initially supported by the Baptist, Methodist and Congregational churches’ but after 1940 the Methodists and Congregationalists withdrew, leaving only ‘fundamentalist organisations supported mainly by Baptist, Church of Christ and Brethren churches’ (McDonald 2001: 52–8).

235 (Marks 1960: 86).

236 (Graff 1987: 3).


238 (Milnes 1987: 178). P.D. Milnes has traced the history of Aboriginal education in WA with particular reference to the Goldfields district. His study emphasises the role that the missions, in particular the UAM, played in providing education for Aboriginal people in the Goldfields district when state education was not an alternative. Although government schools had opened in Coolgardie in 1894 and Kalgoorlie in 1893 (Mossenson 1972: 72), by World War II the missions in the Goldfields were still the main providers of education for Aboriginal children (Milnes 1987: 288). By 1946, only nineteen children of Aboriginal descent and three full-blood children were attending state schools in the Goldfields (ibid: 289) including seven children from Mt Margaret who had earlier been transferred to Laverton School (ibid: 232).
settlement’ distinguished from many other missions because of the ‘remarkable achievements’ in literacy and numeracy. Educational achievements were attributed to Mary Montgomery Bennett who ran the school from 1932 until 1941. Although untrained, Bennett was considered an ‘outstanding aboriginal educator’ and in 1935 published *Teaching the Aborigines*. For his part, Schenk wrote the *Educability of a Native* (1936) with the intention of publicising the successes of the Mt Margaret method, garnering public support and increasing awareness that Aboriginal people were ‘capable of being educated’ (Fig. 2.1). By 1938 Schenk was asking the government to supply mission schools with properly trained teachers. This request was not, however, to be granted until 1949 when the Education Department supplied a head teacher. A literate environment was fostered early and by 1937 a library had been established and Schenk reported that ‘as a result of Mrs Bennett’s teaching the children now read for pleasure as they never did before’. Even Schenk’s business dealings with Aboriginal workers were textually mediated; he used written job and payment records believing that non-readers would seek out literates to assist and check payments. Christianity also provided a locus for social activity that pivoted around written text and by 1938 eleven religious meetings were held each week.

According to the anthropologist A. P. Elkin, who visited the mission in 1930, Schenk was extremely fundamentalist and regarded all Aboriginal custom and belief as ‘works of

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1947–1948 a further eleven Aboriginal students enrolled at Laverton School. In other locations in the Goldfields children enrolled in state schools were from families who had been granted Citizenship Rights. For other children mission schooling was the only option (ibid: 322). So Mt Margaret remained the main school for Aborigine children in the district.

239 (Stanton 1990: 220; Stanton 1988: 294).
241 M.M. Bennett was an educator, writer and humanitarian (Bennett 1930) who had earlier worked at UAM missions at Gnowangerup and Forrest River for short periods (Bolton 1981).
242 (Biskup 1973: 133). When Bennett commenced teaching neither the Education Department nor the Aborigines Department provided any school resources so all materials were bought using donations from the ‘Christian public’ (Morgan 1986: 138). According to Morgan, by 1934 Bennett had brought the children up to ‘Standard 2’ examination level of the WA Education Department as set by the Correspondence School (Morgan 1986: 168). At the end of 1935 an elementary (or ‘primary’) school programme was provided up to the average age of Standard 3 pupils (around 13 ½ years old) (Schenk 1936). Classroom activities include dictation, writing, copying, reading flash cards, numbers and arithmetic (Bennett 1935). Schenk aimed to show the high standards achieved in literacy and numeracy using the methodology introduced by Bennett, to prove that their method was ‘approximate as nearly as possible to State School standards’ (Schenk 1936). In 1940 a Mt Margaret student won the ‘Batman Essay Competition in which 401 Aboriginal students throughout the Commonwealth competed (Marks 1960: 86–7).
244 (Biskup 1973: 133).
245 (Morgan 1986: 266). This was in part because at the time the Commissioner Neville declined to permit Education Department teachers on settlements, thus it would have been an anomalous for the Education Department to provide teachers for mission schools while not providing them for state institutions (Marks 1960: 87). In 1940 a Mt Margaret student won the ‘Batman Essay Competition in which 401 Aboriginal students throughout the Commonwealth competed (Marks 1960: 86–7).
246 Annual Report CNA 1937.
247 (Milnes 1987: 172).
Schenk, however, departed from UAM policy by promoting secular education, not just the singular 'God is good, God is love' approach of other UAM missionaries. Anthropologist John Stanton comments that Schenk believed that 'the best future for Aboriginal people lay in their education and vocational training, and ultimately in their conversion to Christianity'. This emphasis on vocational education was to give Aboriginal people 'a high degree of independence unparalleled elsewhere'. After initially offering food for free, Schenk adopted a 'no work, no food' policy where workers were paid cash for labour from dingo scalp collection and sandalwood pulling, or paid on a piece-work basis for raffia, carpentry and cleaning. By 1928, with the closure of ration depots in the region, Mt Margaret became the central rationing station for the district, attracting large numbers of Aboriginal people into the mission. With a growing population to support, Schenk's philosophy was underpinned by necessity as the mission was in receipt of no government subsidies other than rations and could not rely on regular financial support from the UAM. Schenk’s emphasis on ‘learning to work’ as a prerequisite to integration into the wider community led to carpenters, mechanics, shearers and miners in numbers unequalled by any other mission—young girls were also trained as domestic workers, typists and nurses.

Schenk also tried to secure employment on pastoral stations in the region (and when he could not the mission undertook to provide paid mining work). Significantly, Schenk sought to ensure that men who had learned to be shearers and station hands on the mission were then paid reasonable wages when they worked on pastoral stations. In 1930, 23 Mt Margaret men found three months mustering work on stations and were the 249 (Elkin 1979).
251 (Stanton 1990: 220).
252 (Biskup 1973: 132).
255 UAM missionaries were encouraged to open stations in situations so financially impossible that other mission societies refused. Financial support from their home church and other societies was then sought to maintain missions (Marks 1960: 80). See also (Morgan 1986; Smith 1933).
257 In the 1930s mining was revitalised in the Goldfields as the price of gold rose and in 1935 Schenk started a small battery. He took advantage of a loophole in the Mining Act which 'prohibited the employment of aborigines on mining tenements, but failed to debar them from acquiring such tenements'. Schenk encouraged them ‘to apply for small mining leases, and crushed their ore for a small fee’ (Biskup 1973: 132).
258 (Marks 1960: 89). Under the Aborigines Act 1905 freedom of movement was restricted and labour was controlled in an effort to develop and expand the pastoral industry. This gave the Chief Protector the right to remove Aboriginal adults to any district or institution and only people under an ‘employment permit’ were given an exemption from these removal powers (Jebb 2002: 77). Stanton states that pastoralists ‘had the support of the Aborigines Department in securing permits for the employment of Aborigines’. In return, the Department subsidised workers at ration depots during the summer ‘lay-off’ season. Pastoralists were thus ‘absolved’ from having to provide for their work-force all year round, and the cost of Aboriginal labour was ‘even cheaper’. Schenk criticised these practices, and pastoralists complained that he was ‘influencing local Aborigines in his demands for better conditions’ and attracting them to Mt Margaret ‘with the
Fig. 2.1 Education publications by M.M. Bennett (1935) and R.S. Schenk (1936)

Teaching The Aborigines
Data from Mount Margaret Mission, Q.A.

NOTES BY M. M. BENNETT

"The outstanding problem of the native reservation may be said to be the establishment of a plan obvious to the native which makes for his social and material betterment. Without it, his detention in a reservation becomes merely a period of imprisonment, with it he may be encouraged towards development."

Dr. Glenn's Report

"The only way to save the remaining blacks is along the way of Christ."

Dr. Charles Duguid

THE EDUCABILITY OF THE NATIVE
BY R.S. SCHENK

"Each bright flower is lifted"

OBTAINABLE AT

R.A. B. OFFICES
1603 KASMERTON ST., MELBOURNE, VIC.
KEIBRICK BOOK DEPOT, MELBOURNE, VIC.
140 ELIZABETH ST., SYDNEY, N.S.W.
22 GASLER PLACE ADELAIDE, S.A.
AND FROM
M.T. MARGARET MISSION
MORGARS, Q.A.

Chapter 2
first Aboriginal men in the Goldfields 'to be paid one pound a week and keep'. In a submission to the 1934 Moseley Royal Commission Schenk stated that: '[e]ver since the pastoralists agreed to pay wages, we have had trouble with some...they hate the natives to be enlightened, not only because they want wages, but because they demand better treatment'. Schenk explained that Mt Margaret people had high expectations having already 'earned their own houses and furniture', so when the manager of Glenorn Station, fed them on the woodheap they objected and asked for a table somewhere. At the same place they also objected to getting tins from the rubbish for mugs, being sworn at like dogs by the overseer; and after doing good work some were refused wages till I threatened to summons.

It is at this point that I introduce the first of the families from the narratives found in Appendix B. I begin with Family A, a family with a strong connection to Mt Margaret Mission. Around the time that Neville was allowing some Aboriginal children of mixed descent to remain at Mt Margaret instead of sending them to Moore River, Valcie was born at Cosmo Newbery Station in 1930 (see Fig. 1.1). As a child of mixed descent Valcie was picked up by Neville's 'protectors' and placed in the Graham Home dormitory at Mt Margaret.

Mt Margaret school was good because the government was against the Aboriginal children being taught, going to school, and the missionaries that came to Mt Margaret, well they taught us in school, taught us from infants to up...It was a good education because they was teaching us something no-one else wanted to teach us.

Valcie later worked at the mission as a domestic and around 1950 married a Mt Margaret man—one of the early workers at Glenorn Station. Their son Wesley describes his father's station experience:

Like my father...when he tell me how he got where he was. He left the mission home and he went and worked on a station just out of Mt Margaret towards the west called Glenorn Station. And when he went there...the blokes teaching him and seeing what a good worker he is and make him a windmill man, he was in charge of the windmills. And they have him sitting outside and they provide him with a feed, but he sit outside because he's Aboriginal so he can't sit inside. But he didn't care, he's still working, working hard. The blokes trust him and end up he getting all the young fellas from mission home working, they all go and work under him. Just to prove to that white man that he can work as hard as him and he can have the skills to be able to do whatever. So then he started teaching all the young boys from Mt Margaret Home bringing them out. He tell the boss there that there's a good source of employment, young people you can employ, from this place. So they all started getting skills from working round stations. And then eventually he moves...
inside and eats at the table with them. But that's proving the point that he can do it. And that's what happened to a lot of Aboriginal people, you know, they put the effort into proving that they can do it, because they had to or they'd be left in the scrap heap.

Schenk's philosophy embraced the whole community until his retirement in 1953. His philosophy was to influence the attitude to education, training and employment at the UAM mission stations established subsequently at Warburton Ranges and Cosmo Newbery.

The Ngaanyatjarra world

In this section I provide a cultural overview of the Ngaanyatjarra world prior to contact with European society. I then turn to a discussion on the impact on the Ngaanyatjarra of the mission at Warburton Ranges.

According to anthropologist David Brooks, in pre-contact times there were perhaps 2000 Ngaanyatjarra people, widely dispersed over a large region of the Great Victoria Desert. Brooks suggests that the Ngaanyatjarra probably spent most of their time in bands of around 12–20 people and the ‘tendency’ was for senior men and their families to roam on their own country 'with sets of brothers usually sharing a common broad country'. Each brother would have one or two wives; the children and probably a grandparent, perhaps a widow or two and perhaps a couple of young men, who would sleep separately from the groups. Survival in the physically harsh environment of the Western Desert provided a 'subsistence challenge'. In times of rain people moved through the broader stretches of country to forage for food and other resources. In times of drought people were less mobile and exploited a tighter locus of water sources. Tonkinson describes the 'rhythm of desert life' as an 'irregularly alternating aggregation and dispersal of social groups'. Large gatherings of people would come together for ceremonial Business, usually young men’s manhood-making ceremonies (now referred to as the '[Law] Business'). These would take place perhaps twice a year in locations where food and water were sufficiently abundant and last only a few weeks. With the Ngaatjatjarra, Gould speculates that due to

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263 (Brooks and Shaw 2003: 2–3).
264 Myers suggests for the Pintupi, a closely related Western Desert language group located to the north-east of the Ngaanyatjarra, that the range of movement for a family over a year was 'within an area of 3,000 square miles' (Myers 1986: 77). The Pintupi belong to the same broad Western Desert cultural bloc as the Ngaanyatjarra and speak a mutually intelligible dialect of the Western Desert family of languages. Myers' work is useful for drawing analogies between the two groups, however, there are cultural distinctions and differences deriving from the colonial encounter.
265 (Gould 1969; Hamilton 1979; Myers 1986).
266 (Tonkinson 1978b: 29).
267 Noticeable by its absence in this Chapter and in Chapter 7 are descriptions of events surrounding manhood making ceremonies and the Law Business among Ngaanyatjarra adolescent males. As I describe further in the post script at the end of the Methodology in Appendix A, these aspects were deleted from the thesis at the last minute by community request. For further reading see (Myers 1986; Peterson 2000; Sackett 1978; Tonkinson 1974).
268 (Brooks and Shaw 2003: 5).
the harshness of the Gibson Desert ‘gatherings of more than 150 were probably uncommon’. Myers suggests that the unreliability of rainfall necessitated a ‘continual interdependence’ among a network of people across the Western Desert, and ‘social isolation’ was ‘ecologically impossible’. The Ngaanyatjarra had knowledge of people and country across a wide area. Ritual and ceremony involved a complex network of relationships extant through marriage, economic exchange and the reciprocal transmission of knowledge.

In Western Desert Aboriginal culture ‘a strong element of internal dynamism in the religious life’ contrasts markedly with the ‘dominant ideology of nonchange’. Fundamental to social unity and cultural life was, and still is today, the tjukurpa (‘dreaming’) and the Ancestral Beings who created the landscape enacted in the annual performance of ceremonies that reproduce the Ancestral Beings’ original acts:

The Dreaming Beings also created the animals and plants which provided food for people; and they gave names to these animals and plants and to all things. They taught people how to hunt, gather, cook and share out the various types of food; as well as how to make implements such as spears, water carrying vessels and the like. They laid down the roles to be played by people, men and women in the course of their life cycles, and the methods by which the successive transformations through the life cycle were to be achieved. They established different groupings within the body corporate of Ngaanyatjarra people as well as various roles to facilitate the conduct of an orderly life in the sphere of material production and to govern social relationships generally. All these creative acts which the Dreaming Beings performed were sacred (miirl-miirlpa or mquiryaka); and as well as performing them for the first time they taught the people to regularly reproduce their original acts, and thereby to keep the energising sacredness alive.

For the Ngaanyatjarra, country is ‘first and foremost’ a matter of tjukurpa relationships:

It is in and through the cycle of sacred creation, which was initiated by the Dreaming Beings and continued through the generations by living people, that Ngaanyatjarra people’s common relationship to the land is constituted and maintained. This relationship, which has spiritual and emotional dimensions, and entails responsibilities and obligations as well as rights and interest, is in a sense the birthright or inheritance of all Ngaanyatjarra people.

An ‘idiom of human relatedness’ is applied to all the ‘creative products of the Dreaming Beings, to the living beings which yarning use for food and to the country itself’. Immense ‘social value’ continues to be placed on ‘relatedness with others’ in the Western Desert. In the Ngaanyatjarra world social ‘relatedness’ is to tjarnupiri or yungarapiri (‘relations’) and the social system organised through the Law. During the annual Law Business ceremonial activity kin across the Western Desert are tied into a system of

269 (Gould 1969: 102–3).
270 (Myers 1986: 27).
271 (Tonkinson 1978b: 19). See also (Myers 1986).
272 (Brooks 2002c: 12).
273 (Brooks 2002c: 18).
274 (Brooks 2002c: 14).
reciprocal rights and obligations where the Law provides a set of socially sanctioned norms of conduct or rules that govern behaviour in the broader moral community.  

The flouting of any kind of rule threatened not only the matter immediately covered by the rule, but the fragility of the whole fragile edifice. And it was fragile, because in the absence of institutionalised authority the whole way of life could only be maintained through the support of the individual.  

The breaking of rules resulted in retribution through spearing or **warrmarla** – ‘revenge parties’. This regulatory capacity was further reinforced by fear of the dark, sorcery and supernatural forces and elders carried authority.

Still today, undergirding all social practice, is the normative continuity of the kinship system at a symbolic level and as a framework of protocols that governs relatedness between affinal and consanguinal kin. Distinctive features of relatedness are found among consanguinal or ‘close’ kin and similar kin terms are applied to affinal or ‘distant’ kin (Fig. 2.2). Overall ‘relatedness’ between Ngaanyatjarra people (and across the broader Western Desert) is held together by the underpinning structure of a classificatory section system. The six section system of the Ngaanyatjarra is of the Aluridja type and acts as a ‘guide’ to protocol in sorry camps, funerals, in the structure of some ceremonies, and as a framework for marriage options. In this system:

- A *Tjarurrnu* man can marry either a *Panaka* or a *Yiparrka* woman (and has *Purungu* children).
- A *Purungu* man can marry either a *Karimarra* or *Milangka* woman (and has *Tjarurrnu* children).

Whereas,

- A *Panaka* man can only marry a *Tjarurrnu* woman (and has *Karimarra* children).
- A *Karimarra* man can only marry a *Purungu* woman (and has *Panaka* children).
- A *Yiparrka* man marries a *Tjarurrnu* woman (and has *Milangka* children).
- A *Milangka* man marries a *Purungu* woman (and has *Yiparrka* children).

The widespread ‘rule’ in the Western Desert was for marriage to ‘occur at a (genealogical and geographical) distance’. The diagram in Fig. 2.3 exemplifies the marriage options for a *Panaka/Yiparrka* man.

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276 See (Stanner 1987 [1956]).
277 (Brooks and Shaw 2003: 18).
278 **Warrmarla** were revenge party ‘soldier’ men who came in groups to raid or take wives and would make themselves black with charcoal and place sticks with white wood shavings on them in their headbands (Glass and Hackett 2003: 502). ‘Revenge’ parties can be of two types: the secret travel-by-night ‘featherfeet’ (*ginja karpilpa*); and the more open confrontational ‘warrior groups’ (**warrmarla**) (Brooks and Shaw 2003). Rose claims that revenge killings were a ‘sanction against individuals transgressing the common good’ and ‘by such means the Law has enabled the smooth running of the society on a large scale, and its reproduction through deep time’ (Rose 2001: 28). See also a ‘revenge expedition’ narrative by Thomas Murray in Glass and Hackett’s edited collection of Ngaanyatjarra texts (Glass and Hackett 1979 [1969]).
279 (Glass 2006: 132).
280 See (Goddard 1983; Hamilton 1979; Myers 1986) for discussions of the kinship and section systems in the Western Desert. For other Australian Aboriginal contexts see (Heath et al. 1982).
281 (Brooks 2002b: 35-6). This shorthand system for relatedness is often referred to as ‘skin names’.
282 See (Brooks 2002b; Glass 1997).
283 (Brooks 2002a: 37).
284 (Glass 2006: 135).

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Fig. 2.2 Ngaanyatjarra relationship terms

Family tree showing a man and his children and grandchildren

- tjurtu older sister
- nyarrumpa
- kurtja older brother
- ngayulu spouse
- kurri younger sister
- nyarrumpa
- marlanypa younger brother
- waputju son-in-law
- yurntalpa daughter
- katja son
- mingkayi daughter-in-law
- tjamu grandson
- kaparli granddaughter
- kaparli granddaughter
- tjamu grandson

Family tree showing a woman and her children and grandchildren

- tjurtu older sister
- nyarrumpa
- kurtja older brother
- ngayulu spouse
- kurri younger sister
- nyarrumpa
- marlanypa younger brother
- yumari son-in-law
- yurntalpa daughter
- katja son
- mingkayi daughter-in-law
- tjamu grandson
- kaparli granddaughter
- kaparli granddaughter
- tjamu grandson

Source: Ngaanyatjarra Learner's Guide (Glass 2006).

Chapter 2
Fig. 2.3 The Ngaanyatjarra section system for a Panaka/Yiparrka male (ego)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purungu</th>
<th>Karimarra/Milangka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ngunytju</td>
<td>mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kamuru</td>
<td>kurntlii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yukari</td>
<td>katja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waputju</td>
<td>yurntalpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mingkayi</td>
<td>yumari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- mother, mother's sister</td>
<td>- father, father's brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- uncle (mother's brother)</td>
<td>- aunt (father's sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sister's son or</td>
<td>- son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- daughter</td>
<td>- daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- wife's father,</td>
<td>- wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- daughter's husband</td>
<td>- brother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- son's wife</td>
<td>- grandfather (mother's father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- grandson (daughter's son)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- grandmother (father's mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- granddaughter (father's daughter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panaka/Yiparrka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ngayulu</th>
<th>tjaruru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kurta</td>
<td>kurnta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tjurtu</td>
<td>tjamu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marlanypa</td>
<td>kaparli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tjamu</td>
<td>tjamu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tjapu</td>
<td>kaparli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I (male)</td>
<td>- wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- older brother</td>
<td>- brother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- older sister</td>
<td>- grandfather (mother's father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- younger brothers and</td>
<td>- grandson (daughter's son)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sisters</td>
<td>- grandmother (father's mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- grandfather (father's father)</td>
<td>- granddaughter (father's daughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- grandson (son's son)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- grandmother (mother's mother)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- granddaughter (son's daughter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ngaanyatjarra Learner's Guide (Glass 2006).
The Ngaanyatjarra also have a horizontal moiety system. The group is divided into two parts based on sets of alternating generations. This generational moiety division 'unites all the people of one set of alternating generations and places them in opposition to the people of the other set'. As Brooks further notes '[n]ot only does each person inalienably belong, from birth, to one 'side' or the other, but ceremony grounds, ceremonial activity and sacred sites 'are spatially divided into two parts on this basis'.

Generational moiety division is denoted by the paired terms:

- *Tjirntukultulpa*—the 'sun side' social grouping consisting of *Tjarurr*, *Panaka*, *Yiparrka*
- *Ngumpalurrungkatja*—the 'shade side' social grouping consisting of the *Karirr*, *Milangka*, *Purungka*

From a Western Desert perspective the cyclic nature of the system means that grandkin are in the same generational moiety as one's own generation, and one's children and one's parents are in the opposite generational division. This is emphasised in the use of reciprocal kin terms for alternating generations:

- *tjamu* > *mama* > *tjamu*
- grandfather > father > grandson
- *kaparli* > *ngumyin* > *kaparli*
- grandmother > mother > grandmother

Generational moiety division remain central to the 'social and symbolic order' of Ngaanyatjarra life and is deeply embedded in cultural processes.

In the traditional maturational cycle, skill in hunting or gathering was a survival requirement for both males and females. As children grew, gender divisions increased and by the age of about ten, male and female activity started to diverge. Initially, the new couple would hunt together until childbearing commenced and the division of labour bifurcated. When mothers were foraging, toddlers would commonly be left in the camp with grandmothers or older siblings, so mobility was not hindered. Over time mothers became more knowledgeable as the grandmother generation, in turn, transmitted ceremonial knowledge and stories. With the onset of puberty boys generally spent more time with older brothers, uncles, grandfathers, camping in the *tawarra* ('male camp') and travelling on *yantjaki* ('overnight hunting trips') with the *wati* ('men'). In this way adolescent males learned to be mature hunters and how to cook and share meat with kin in the proper

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286 (Glass and Hackett 2003: 236).
288 The maturation cycles of males and females has been described in the Western Desert literature. See (Gould 1969; Hamilton 1979; Myers 1986; Tonkinson 1978b).
The maturation cycle for males also incorporates a ceremonial transition, or rite of passage, from childhood into manhood.

My purpose in briefly outlining Ngaanyatjarra cultural processes has been to signal what Sahlins terms the ‘structures of the long run’ or what Ortner terms ‘cultural schemas’,

...organized schemas for enacting (culturally typical) relations and situations’ often taking on ‘an ordering function, achieving a degree of generality and transferability across a range of somewhat disparate social situations’.290

A recursive theme throughout the thesis is the enduring influence of these deeply embedded processes in contemporary everyday practice.

Warburton Ranges Mission

As explained earlier, the political philosophy of caste criteria that prevailed in the 1930s, and into the 1940s, determined that tribal full-blood Aboriginal people were better left alone. Consequently, the Ngaanyatjarra had remained virtually unaffected by the protectionist policy that had such a deleterious impact on Aborigines in the Eastern Goldfields. This philosophy, and an antipathy that had developed between Neville and Schenk, underpinned the circumstances of the establishment of the UAM mission at Warburton Ranges in 1934.291 This philosophy was also perpetuated by Neville’s successor, Commissioner F.I. Bray, who remained ‘unwilling to encourage the breaking up of tribal families for the purpose of education...

...Young girls from Warburton Ranges are better off in their country, especially as no doubt they are betrothed tribally...natives should live their tribal lives as far as possible. They are happy tribally and what does it matter if they are lazy or if they indulge in corroborees as long as no obnoxious rites are practiced.292

By the early 1930s, other than a few ventures west by foot, and occasional encounters with explorers, prospectors and doggers, Ngaanyatjarra people remained virtually unscathed by the colonial encounter by virtue of their remoteness.293 When the UAM sought to expand

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291 After Elkin’s visit to the Goldfields region in the 1930s he lobbied to formalise a ‘buffer zone’ around the Central Reserve to preserve and protect ‘tribal’ Aborigines. Initially, this was consistent with Neville’s determination to leave full-bloods alone, but countered Schenk’s plan to expand into the Warburton Ranges area. Ultimately, the anthropological interest in preserving traditional culture departed from Neville’s determination to leave full-bloods alone (Biskup 1973: 138) and the worsening relationship between Schenk and Neville in particular. When in 1937 Schenk asked for permission to open a mission at Cosmo Newbery he was refused (Biskup 1973: 139) and the DNA opened a ration depot at Cosmo ‘to thwart Schenk’s “imperialist” designs’ (Biskup 1973: 185).
292 WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 18/6/42 Bray to Schenk.
293 The first explorer in the Warburton area was William Gosse in 1873, Ernest Giles and his party spent some eight months in the region in 1873–74 (Giles 1995 [1899]) followed by Forrest in 1874, Tietkins in 1891 and Carnegie in the 1870s (Carnegie 1982 [1898]). With the rush to the Goldfields and the development of pastoral industry around Laverton, occasional ventures into Ngaanyatjarra country were made by prospectors, surveyors and doggers. Surveyors Talbot and Clarke came through in 1916 and in 1931 government surveyors Paine and Barclay traversed a route from near Laverton.
its evangelising further east into the heart of the desert country, this was done contrary to Neville's wishes. The UAM made exploratory camel trips out into the West Australian section of the Central Aboriginal Reserve in 1933. A mission was established in 1934 by missionaries Will and Iris Wade and others at Mirrirrtjarra (Old Well) some 560 kilometres east of Laverton. The Wades were to remain at Warburton Ranges until 1958. The continuity of the Wades and other missionaries was to prove an important factor in determining the nature of the Ngaanyatjarra encounter with the new world.

The mission generation

Neville's punitive response after Warburton Ranges Mission was established against his wishes was to deny support. With the government ceding financial responsibility, the new mission was initially left to their own resources. This put pressure on the fledgling mission to be self-sufficient; as a consequence, the trading of rations in exchange for dingo scalps was a critical early endeavour. Commodities were also exchanged for evangelisation: when scalps were brought in the missionaries gave out a portions of the rations and 'the balance of the goods' was received only after a gospel lesson. In 1947 payment for a scalp was 10lb flour, ½ lb sugar, ½ lb tea and a pair of trousers or a dress.

After Middleton's appointment as Commissioner, missions across WA started to be

to Warburton (Mollenhauer 2002:65). Harry Lasseter made prospecting trips to the Peterman Ranges area further east in 1897 and 1931 (riders 1933). After 1933, the Western Australian section of the Central Reserve was declared an 'Aboriginal Reserve' and this 'buffer zone' helped restrict access by non-Aboriginals and provided the Ngaanyatjarra with a form of protection from outsider incursions for longer than in other parts of remote Australia. For example, the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara in South Australia, due to their proximity to the camel and rail route north to Alice Springs, had greater exposure to doggers collecting dingo scalps for the bounty, and to pastoralists. By the 1930s several cattle stations had been established west of this railway line, including Kenmore Park Station only some 20 miles east of Ernabella (Hilliard 1968:95-97). Nevertheless, reports of violence against the Warburton Aborigines were noted (United Aborigines Messenger June 1930:11).

294 WA SRO Acc 993 1220/61 17/1762—From CNW to MNW summary of history of Warburton Ranges Mission.

295 Will Wade and Fred Jackson first made contact with Ngaanyatjarra people in the Warburton Ranges area in 1933 at Mirrirrtjarra or 'Old Well', on Elder Creek a short distance from the present location of Warburton community (Douglas 1978). An exploratory expedition had earlier been made to Central Australia by Wade and R. M Williams (Williams 1998).

296 The early days missionaries included: Iris and Will Wade (1934–1958), Harry and Ethel Lupton (Warburton from 1935, then Cosmo in the mid-1950s); Jack Johnson (1933–34); Fred Jackson and Lindsay Lovick (based at Mt Margaret but at Warburton at various times 1933>); Charles and Bertha Payne (early 1940s); Claude (1947>); and Dora Cotterell (nee Quinn) (1950>); (Warburton then Cosmo); Ed and Edna Nash (1946>); Roy and Rita Mitchell (1939>); Syd Williams (1936, then 1951>); with Leila Williams; Albert Brinkworth (1938); Henry & Dora Walkerly (mid 1940s); Brian Morcombe (1940); Roy & Melville Nash (1947); Sam Mollenhauer (1951–1955), then with Heather Mollenhauer (1964–1966); Mr and Mrs J. M. Garriot-Jones (1946–1955); Keith and Betty Wells (1956–1961); Noel and Olive Blyth (1954–1963) (originally based at Cosmo Newbery); Ken and May Siggs (1955–1963), Harrie and Marion Green (1955>), Wallace and Claire Mack (1950s); Charles and Beryl Latham (1955>); Dick and Dorothy Hawthorn (1962>); Merv and Joy Young (1958>); Bruce Rowe (1955>); and John Lydon (1960s). (Sam Mollenhauer and Amee Glass pers. comm. 2007).

297 WA SRO ACC 993 1220/61 17/1762—From CNW to MNW summary of history of Warburton Ranges Mission.

298 In 1925 the government had introduced a system to protect the sheep industry from marauding dogs, with the Vermin Board then paying the Mission a bounty of $5 shillings per scalp for dingo scalps and in later years up to a pound each (Morgan 1986). Trading with Aboriginal people for dingo scalps was a crucial source of income at both Mt Margaret and Warburton Ranges missions. The missionaries took advantage of this economic exchange in order to purchase food and other resources that could be used both as payment for scalps collected by Aboriginal people, and in exchange for Aboriginal labour on Missions where there was no cash economy. Dingo scalps from Warburton were taken to Laverton Shire Council several times a year, a small bounty was paid for each scalp and money went into purchasing mission supplies (Mollenhauer 2002:69).

Milnes considers that Middleton thought it was cheaper for missions to support Aboriginal education than the government and this led to his decision to begin subsidising missions in 1948. In 1950, instructions were issued for the rationing of 'indigent natives' at Warburton on the understanding that 'the issue of rations to able bodied natives will be dependent on the first consideration that employment is not available'. Bulk rationing of blankets, clothing and food for around 20 adults and up to 100 children continued well into the 1960s. However rationing was clearly not enough to support the population numbers reported at the mission (Appendix E—Table AE.1) so families continued to return to country and live off the land.

In the first group to make contact with the missionaries were the families of Katherine and Arthur (Family B), Mary, Harold and Silas (Family C), Rosie (Family D), Clem and Samson (Family F), and Una and Maisie (Family H). The first group of children to be left with the missionaries for schooling included: Una's father (Family H), Silas' father (Family C), Jim's mother (Family I), Patricia's mother (Family E) and Clifford's mother (Family J). Katherine, Arthur (Family B), Mary (Family C), Joshua (Family G), Rosie, Daphne (Family D) and Molly (Family F) were also among the first generation to be left with the missionaries. Schooling soon commenced at Old Well. In 1936 Wade reported: 'the readiness with which the natives are leaving their children in the care of the missionaries and already 22 were at the Mission' (Fig. 2.4) and by 1937 ten boys and ten girls under 16 were attending school daily.

In 1936 the Old Well site comprised the Wades' corrugated iron room and two tents, one for the Luptons and the other serving as a school, dormitory and children's eating area. In 1936 the mission moved away from the flood-prone creek to a permanent site on higher ground (and the present location of Warburton community). A girl's

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In 1942, the Federal Aborigines Missions Board of the Churches of Christ had started a children's mission at Norseman (Biskup 1973: 199). With Middleton's decision to fund missions a further eleven new missions were established across WA between 1948 and 1955. This removed the dominance of the UAM in the Goldfields: Cundeelee Mission (formerly a ration depot) started under the Australian Aborigines Evangelical Mission; Mogumber Mission (formerly Moore River Settlement) under the Methodist Overseas Missionary Society and Kurrawang Native Mission under the Brethren Assemblies of Australia were both established in 1952. In 1954 Wongutha Mission Training Farm was started by Rodolphe Schenk's son R. W. Schenk, under the Council of Wongutha Mission Training Farm Inc. the Seventh Day Adventists opened Karalundi Mission, near Meekatharra, and established a mission in Wiluna in 1955 (Milnes 1987: 311).

303 (Milnes 1987: 310-311).
304 WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 30/5/50 CNA to D/Director of Rationing.
305 See (Douglas 1978).
306 WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 30/5/50 CNA to D/Director of Rationing.
307 See (Douglas 1978).
309 United Aborigines Messenger February 1937: 9. The United Aborigines Messenger newsletter was the 'organ' of the UAM. It was used to disseminate claims of achievement and success from mission endeavours throughout Australia and to assist in raising finances for the UAM missions. The mission relied heavily on donations from church groups and others to supplement clothing, building and other needs.
Fig. 2.4 First group of school children, Warburton Ranges Mission, 1936

© Ngarnmanytjatja Archive.

Fig. 2.5 Early mud brick construction, Old Well, Warburton Ranges Mission

© Ngarnmanytjatja Archive.
Fig. 2.6 Men employed in building projects, Warburton Ranges Mission 1949

© Ngammanytjatja Archive.

Fig. 2.7 Christian meeting, Warburton Ranges Mission 1939

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dormitory was built first, followed by a boy’s dormitory, to house the first generation of school children in what became known as the ‘Baker Home’.

The early aims of the missionaries were ‘to preach the gospel, to check polygamy and cruel customs in regard to young men in their corroborees; also to help to stop degrading contacts with whites’. Despite these intentions it was acknowledged that in the early days, life ‘was so bogged down by the difficulty of establishing the essentials of life that the real work of making disciples was being neglected’. Few families actually settled in the mission in its rudimentary beginnings. Some camped nearby when dingo scalps were brought in to exchange for goods, but most families still roamed in what Brooks terms the ‘hinterland’—the desert expanse between Warburton Ranges Mission in the west and Ernabella Mission in the east.

Over time, an interdependency grew between the Ngaanyatjarra and the missionaries, illustrated for instance, by the mission reliance on kuka (‘bush meat’) to feed children in the Baker Home up until the 1950s, as Una describes:

I was born here that’s why they been put me in the Home because, long time, they used to wait for truck to bring food in. But not much, you know, they was sort of waiting. There was plenty of kangaroos, and all that. But it must have been a little bit hard for them...people use to come out, that’s first thing in the morning, on maybe 5 o’clock, because the mission had to give the gun out to bring some meat for the mission. So they get lucky sometimes, some miss out. Someone comes in early, they take off and bring some kuka back, that’s for lunch.

In addition, with no government subsidies to assist with building, some adults in the early contact group provided labour in exchange for rations and so the infrastructure of the mission developed (Fig. 2.5).

Following along the well-tried and proven ways of Mr Schenk and his family at Mt Margaret, the early missionaries at Warburton introduced basic employment. Men helped to make mud bricks while women were taught elementary needlework by Mrs Wade and her fellow workers.

307 *United Aborigines Messenger* November 1938; *United Aborigines Messenger* September 1940.
308 *United Aborigines Messenger* May 1935: 3.
310 Ernabella Mission was established in 1937 by Charles Duguid and the Presbyterian Board of Missions. The missionaries at Ernabella, like their Warburton counterparts, had a relatively congenial relationship with the Pitjantjatjara and believed in education and training. A school commenced in 1940 and a grammatical description of Pitjantjatjara was published soon after (Trudinger 1943) to support the vernacular literacy programme in the school (Hilliard 1968). The two missions shared some similar characteristics as both were located on traditional country and Aboriginal people were not relocated to the mission, although no dormitory system was established at Ernabella. During the ‘mission time’ speakers of the eastern dialect Pitjantjatjara intermittently spent time in the west at the Warburton Ranges Mission, and likewise, speakers of the western dialect Ngaanyatjarra spent intermittent periods at Ernabella Mission in South Australia. A craft employment initiative for the women of Ernabella Mission in 1948 was inspired by a visit from M. M. Bennett (Hilliard 1968) and has continued up to the present at Ernabella Arts (Partos 1998). Bennett was friends with Charles and Phyllis Duguid as they were allies in the campaign for the advancement of Aboriginal people throughout the 1930s and 1940s (Holland 2005).
311 (Mollenhauer 2002: 69).
After 1945, with the establishment of a garden and the introduction of sheep, goats and cows, farm-related training and employment ensued. Between 1947–1957 men were also employed hewing and carting stone for building work (Fig. 2.6) and women were preparing meals, baking bread, sewing and mending clothes for children in the Home. 312

Why did families in the early days of the Warburton Ranges Mission leave their children to be cared for by these emissaries from an alien cultural world? The early days of the mission coincided with the 1930s drought and this may have attracted large numbers to the mission with an expectation that food could be found. 313 The extent to which coercion accounted for parents leaving their children at the mission has been explored and evidence of some parental resistance is noted. 314 In correspondence from the Minister in 1940, allegations were made that ‘native children are retained at the mission as a means of securing the services of the parents in obtaining dog scalps’. 315 Given the scarcity of resources in the early days this allegation may have had some veracity.

Ngaanyatjarra accounts are, however, generally positive and give agency to Ngaanyatjarra people’s comprehension of the changes they were encountering. A man who was placed in the Home in the 1930s recollects:

[W]hen I was a little boy…my mother and father…asked the missionary if they could look after me and they said: ‘Yes, we’ll look after him’. I remember my mother said to me, said to that pirimpya (white people), in language she said: ‘Yuwa, tiitji ngaanyana kanyila purikala nyawa’. That means: ‘Look after this little boy and see how he gets on’. She said that, I still remember that. 316

Silas perceives that families left their children in the Home in exchange for food, and the missionaries ‘stepped in to look after the children’. Joshua suggests that ‘parents didn’t worry about kids because they were all safe home.’ Mary believes that her family was happy to leave her in the Home in the 1940s: ‘they been putting us in the Home, they don’t want to carry long way, walk around, he got another one, my sister’. Molly (Family F), was born in 1940, and aged about ten when her family brought her in to the mission: ‘they was happy…they just brought us and left us in the Home’. Her narrative provides an insight into how some families acted as intermediaries. They shared the symbols of the new world and encouraged bush relatives to bring their children into school: Harold’s mother ‘always

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312 United Aborigines Messenger October/November 1991: 10–11.
313 (Burnside 1979: 258).
314 (Plant 1995). At the time Vicki Plant was the Ngaanyatjarra Council Native Title Unit historian.
315 WA PRO, A1674 73/5, Central Australian Reserve 17614, Letter to the Aboriginal Advisory Committee from the Minister for Native Welfare, 27/1/1940, quoted in (Plant 1995).
316 (Plant and Viegas 2002: 41).
used to go there with a little bit of clothes for her families, she brought us back, she told us: 'Come back home, come back, tjiti pirni schooling there'...

...My old uncle he came over and said: 'This girl want to go in the school.' So they put me in. It was new, we used to sleep on iron bed...I think I felt alright, we had friends there. We had 'Mary' there...our family, that's why I wasn't worried, they was in school there, those big girls. My brother was in the Home too...and my cousin...they was in school. Big mob of them...I was happy because we had a lot of family was in the Home...I had my little niece there...she was in school with her sister...Big family, I know them.

Katherine says that the Baker Home was walykumunu ('really good'), but it was also 'really strict one, not allowed to go out, not allowed to swear or anything, we have to get the biggest, biggest hiding, strap, ngarltu! farra, put us down flat, can't sit down'. Others recall being belted with a strap for wetting the bed or running away to find family out bush.

Arthur, who was born around 1949, recalls stories about 'warrmarla time' when people were still fearing revenge killings, so children were left with the missionaries 'to stay safe':

You know at that time, maybe before my time when I was born, before it was really hard for our families to settle, like to sit down in one rockhole. They wasn't like that, [if] they stay at the rockhole, homeland, well there's trouble, maybe trouble coming up from another tribes come down and maybe do something and go back. Well at that time it was really hard for like my families to be with our parents all the time, see. That's why you know, at the same time missionaries came, you see. Missionaries came and all that warrmarla business you know from another tribes come in, like revenge, payback and they go back. So really hard for like when we was small, they can't carry us and run, they wanna be free, just pick up what they need.

He further recalls:

It was a good Home but we still loved our mother and father and we wanted to be with them and that's another part where you are all jammed in like, and you're forced to stay not to go. That was hard too for us, but we gradually learnt what the missionaries looking after us told us.

The dormitory experience was strange and new, but as children were brought into the Home they were not isolated. In fact, they were interacting with relatives in a way that cemented social relatedness between horizontal generational groupings in families. This generation was the first to experience the institutionalised durative aggregation of mixed gender, same age cohorts under the new moral authority of Europeans that was to radically change traditional Ngaanyatarra life.

By drawing on Sahlins proposal that: '[p]eople act upon circumstances according to their own cultural presuppositions, the socially given categories of persons and things...[and] sediment new functional values on old categories'.317 It is interesting to analyse these accounts of the first encounter with things European to understand in some way the Ngaanyatarra interpretation of events. The internal trust of this small kin-based society

317 (Sahlins 1981: 67–8).
was counterbalanced by the external distrust of *malitjiya* (‘strangers or persons from another place’) and a fear of supernatural forces, often in the form of *warrmarla* (‘revenge parties’). In Myers study of social relatedness among the Pintupi he emphasises the sentiment *kanyininpa* (‘looking after’ or ‘caring for’, expressed in Ngaanyatjarra as *kanyilkun* or *miranykanyilkun*) as a core value in the framework of social relatedness—and one embedded with inherent expectations of reciprocated exchange. Drawing also on Myers’ analytical paradigm it may be surmised that a certain trust must have emanated during the initial interaction with the missionaries. If one interprets the encounter through the Ngaanyatjarra cultural frame of social relatedness (i.e. the traditional norms of reciprocity and the obligation to look after people) it is possible to speculate that people comprehended the practices as *miranykanyilkun*—that is, the missionaries’ actions were grounded within social norms of ‘looking after’ children. When the mission was moved to the permanent location in 1936 it was to overlay an important sacred site on the *marlu* (‘kangaroo’) dreaming track. The traditional owners who mediated this move were to overcome their propensity to mistrust *malitjiya* by allowing such an incursion on a sacred site. The Ngaanyatjarra tolerated the presence of the mission on their country as the missionaries reciprocated by looking after the children.

Ngaanyatjarra accounts tend to run counter to the negative image of missionaries generally portrayed in the Australian discourse. Ngaanyatjarra leaders like Silas highlight the difference even between the missions at Mt Margaret and Warburton. His retrospection is suggestive of the agency that the Ngaanyatjarra people felt then (and continue to exhibit today).

Mt Margaret was a little bit different and Warburton was a little bit different... It was way out here, you know long way, way out. But they trying to use that same policy like in Mt Margaret. But some of my uncle... and my father and all them ones, they stood up and said: 'No, we don’t want that thing to be done here in Warburton, we want to have that fairness and we want to have that free

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318 (Myers 1986; Myers 2002).

319 Brooks discusses this incident in his forthcoming PhD thesis (Brooks forthcoming). He describes how the missionaries ‘asked’ the old men to show them a good site and they ‘agonised’ over the decision because it was ‘serious country’. However, permission was granted.

320 Generalisations about missionaries forcibly removing children, inculcating them with Christian beliefs, and bestowing literacy through schooling are common in the contemporary discourse (Beresford 2003; van Toom 2006). In one survey of missions in WA (including Warburton) it is concluded that: ‘[i]n reality, the missions constituted a new frontier, in which contact between Aboriginal and European Australia was negotiated in an ideologically charged symbiosis: Aboriginal people wanted food and supplies and the missionaries sought their souls’ (Davenport et al. 2005: 164). This may have been true of Jigalong Mission, for example, established in 1945 by fundamentalist Apostolic missionaries north of Wiluna on the edge of the Western Desert. Jigalong (previously a ration depot) comprised various Aboriginal groups who had drifted towards the stations and ration depots. As the Mardu congregated at Jigalong their children were removed from the camp and placed in the dormitory for schooling. According to anthropologist Robert Tonkinson there was minimal interaction between the Mardu and the missionaries and ‘a considerable amount of mutual dislike and distrust’ (Tonkinson 1974: 118). While Aboriginal people may have been coerced into submission by the church, or the state; some circumstances are more nuanced and require closer analysis allowing for the possibility of a more complex dynamic between missionaries and Aboriginal groups.
time when the parents come in for Christmas holidays we want to go out with their parents for walkabout.’

At Mt Margaret, for some children of mixed descent, the parent-child relationship was severed, whereas at Warburton, continuity was mostly maintained. An exception was May (Family E) one of only two children of mixed descent to be removed by the state. May was removed from Warburton and taken to Mt Margaret in 1952.\(^{321}\) Silas comments that the Mt Margaret children who were taken away ‘lost their identity...that’s why they talk about the stolen generation...it’s sad story and that’s why they live in that in-between and they angry’.

It can be surmised that by the 1930s and 1940s Ngaanyatjarra people had gleaned some comprehension of the European world outside their domain. Afterall, people had been venturing out since the 1920s and stories of the ‘new world’ had seeped in.\(^{322}\) It has been suggested by the son of a missionary that the Ngaanyatjarra wanted to embolden their children with sufficient information to deal with this change. Brooks suggests that they took advantage of the missionaries to train their children to be the ‘intermediaries’.\(^{323}\) In other words, the Ngaanyatjarra were strategically arming themselves with a new form of knowledge, that is ‘getting learned’ so they could competently adapt to the inevitability of the new world. As Joshua reflected: ‘we learn us about God, and how to live in the future’.

**Literacy, Christianity and schooling—the English experience**

In this remote context the first encounters with alphabetic script may have been the incomprehensible initials and dates carved by doggers and explorers on trees and rocks.\(^{324}\)

As time went by the strange signifying system used by Europeans was reiterated in Scriptures and school texts, and on the introduced objects of Western material culture (alphabetic script on documents, flour sacks, tins, utensils, money, etc.).

Undoubtedly the introduction of literacy by the missionaries was ideologically driven and text became imbued with a specific social purpose and cultural meaning. As early as 1934 efforts were made to communicate the Scriptures to adults by missionaries ‘holding a Gospel picture roll and trying to explain the good news of God’s grace and love to these needy and benighted souls’ (Fig. 2.7).\(^{325}\) By the 1940s, however, early missionaries were concentrating on the children living in the Baker Home ‘for a deeper Christian impression

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\(^{321}\) United Aborigines Messenger May 1948: 12; (Powell and Kennedy 2005).

\(^{322}\) (Stanton 1983: 161).


\(^{324}\) Giles and other explorers marked rocks and trees with initials and dates of their arrival (Green 1983: 50).

\(^{325}\) United Aborigines Messenger October 1973: 11.
will be left on them than on their parents’. It must be remembered that at this time children in the first generation at school, (and adults) were encountering both spoken and written English for the first time.

Little is known of the teaching methodology used by the untrained missionary teachers, however it can be inferred that the missionaries carried with them the Mt Margaret philosophy and expectations of the ‘educability’ of Aboriginal people. This is encapsulated in a 1935 *United Aborigines Messenger*: ‘If you have the time and patience there is nothing the native child cannot be taught. The work done at Mt Margaret is evidence of this.’ Evangelising went hand in hand with rote learning and repetition: '[t]hey are learning texts of scripture, and one girl can repeat fifteen from memory.' Early achievements were reported in the *Messenger*: ‘eighteen scholars’ aged from four and a half to twelve learning to read and write, ‘with astonishing speed these early mis-shapen efforts spring with mushroom growth into well-shaped letters and figures that give promise of splendid writing’ and after only two months tuition ‘these little ones can read any three-lettered word quite well’ and ‘are equally good at figures’ with boys reportedly able to copy a two-page letter:

Some of the letters, now almost perfect, give us ground for great hopes for the future of these boys, that, being able to read the Word of God, their lives may be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and with a real burning love for Christ they shall go forth and preach the glorious Gospel message to their own people in their own tongue.

Results from a memory test in 1940 were ‘most gratifying’ and in 1947 the children’s work was still ‘going ahead splendidly’. A contrary report suggests that tuition consisted of teaching them to ‘thank Jesus for the slops they receive and sing hymns in school’. Clearly many children were placed in the care of the missionaries (see Appendix E—Table AE.1), however the length of time spent in concentrated schooling is a matter for speculation. Scant evidence indicates that many children were quite old when they commenced school, stayed intermittently over a few years and spent only the morning in lessons. A 1947 DNA inspection report notes that children stay ‘for an average of three

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326 *United Aborigines Messenger* May 1948: 12.
327 (Schenk 1936). Ethel Lupton was a teacher with M.M. Bennett at Mt Margaret Mission in 1935 before transferring to Warburton Ranges (Milnes 1987: 220). Untrained missionary teachers included Iris Wade, and later Dora Cotterill (nee Quinn) and Edna Nash.
328 *United Aborigines Messenger* June 1935: 3.
332 WA SRO Acc 1419 23-7-3—*Missions UAM Mission Warburton Ranges: Reports Annual Inspection 22/7/47 (Report from Constable Anderson re. annual inspection of Warburton Ranges).*
333 *United Aborigines Messenger* May 1946: 12.
weeks and go bush for several months. After the annual Christmas party families would collect their children for the summer holiday and ‘come back two moon time’—a tradition established at Mt Margaret where ‘parental love was regarded as sacred’. Arthur recalls how:

At the Christmas holiday time we go out… and our parents bring us back to school, not on the right time, but you know? Bring us anytime they coming back this way. Walking and they bring us Home here, and we go back in the Home here, and then we keep going every year, right up.

The holiday periods extended for several months, with families returning their children to the mission compound some time in the new year for schooling.

An attempt is being made to give them a standard primary education when there is absolutely nothing in their prospective lives as adults to which this education can be applied. Just how successful is that attempt is open to question when it is known that they are dismissed into the bush for nearly three of the summer months each year.

This pattern continued through to the 1960s by which stage the tradition of walking had transformed into a dependence on the missionaries transporting a comparatively sedentarised population out to windmills in a ‘big Austin truck’ with additional supplies of rations provided by the mission. Although the practice may have impacted on the continuity of schooling, it was a critical factor in the maintenance of ceremonial and physical links to kin and country and assisted in subverting the breakdown of family relationships in the mission encounter. It provided an intensive, iterative environment for maintaining Ngaanyatjarra language and absorbing the oral narratives associated with place within multigenerational family groupings.

With the benefit of hindsight, one teacher has suggested that prior to 1950 the school operated on an ‘ad hoc basis’ where ‘everybody had a go’ and it was only after 1950 that the school began to operate more consistently. Middleton’s decision in 1948 to subsidise missions carried the requirement that they teach the ‘3 Rs’ up to the age of at least 14 and provide some form of vocational training. In 1950 Dora Quinn assisted Edna Nash using a curriculum borrowed from Mt Margaret school. Despite improvements such as additional teaching staff and increased hours of schooling, a 1951 DNA inspection found

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335 (Marks 1960: 90).
339 (Marks 1960: 95-6). By the late 1950s ‘Native Educational Grants’ were provided to the Education Department by the DNW to cover the education of Aboriginal children on a per capita basis (Milnes 1987: 393).
80 children aged from four to fourteen inadequately accommodated. They were taught in ‘a small hall’ (Fig. 2.8) with poor quality teaching:

At present the whole responsibility is carried by Mrs Nash, an untrained ‘natural’ teacher, who by sheer determination and natural ability and with the help of correspondence lessons, received by one of the white children on the Mission, has hammered out a curriculum and evolved methods which are producing some results…These children have had about 18 months continuous schooling. For the first twelve months, they averaged about 1½ hours daily; latterly have been attending three hours daily. Six older girls and four older boys attend during the afternoon only. There are about 30 children in the six–nine group who are not able to attend school because of staff shortages…The only reading book available is Witcomb and Tombs Readers, which deal with objects and situations completely outside the range of experience of these children.341

Nevertheless, the UAM continued portraying a positive picture:

On looking back to their effort of twelve months ago, we realised what splendid progress they had made with their schoolwork throughout the year, and how much credit was due to those who, for love of the Saviour, had so patiently sought to teach our native girls and boys.342

The timber school ‘hall’ was replaced by a stone building in 1952 which served as both school and church (Fig. 2.9):

Word has been received from the Warburton Ranges of the opening of the new school building to accommodate probably seventy children, all the work of the missionaries and their native helpers, built principally of stone taken from the locality…The school is furnished by desks made by Mr. Sam Mollenhauer, and they are so highly appraised that he has received encouragement to make more.343

In 1956 one commentator assessed the school at Warburton as: ‘by no means adequate’ with many children not commencing ‘until they are ten or so years old’ and completing school at about Grade IV standard.344 It was also noted that: ‘if a good season occurs the parents are likely to take the child away from the Mission and keep it for periods of one or two years or more’. The school was also periodically left without teachers due to missionaries leaving to take up other work, and dormitories and classrooms remained overcrowded (Fig. 2.10).345 In retrospect it was found that the mission generation had ‘limited’ experience of schooling ‘often less than three years’.346

What do the mission generation recall of their schooling experience? Molly remembers:

School was a good school because we learnt to read and write and go there in time. You can’t miss out like when you got to be picked up by someone or force them to go to school.

343 United Aborigines Messenger April 1952: 7.
344 (Grayden 1957: 26–27).
346 (Green 1983: 35).
Fig. 2.8 Wooden school building, Warburton Ranges Mission—before 1952

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Chapter 2
Fig. 2.9 Stone school and church building, Warburton Ranges Mission—after 1952

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Chapter 2
Fig. 2.10 School girls and boys, Warburton Ranges Mission—after 1952

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Chapter 2
Fig. 2.11 Girls from the Baker Home Dormitory, Warburton Ranges Mission 1950s

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Fig. 2.12 Dormitory girls doing chores, Warburton Ranges Mission 1950s

© Ngammanytjatja Archive.

Chapter 2
Other women, including Daphne recall liking school a 'little bit' but remember getting 'sad for our parents when they go out, go away'. Mary was born in 1935 and spent virtually all her childhood and adolescence in the Baker Home (Fig. 2.11). She recalls schooling first in the 'timber building':

[Chalkangka, writetamalpajyi, slate, chalkangka writetamalpajyi, writetamalpajyi and scribblemalpajyi in the paper. And when we been getting big we come to this 'nother house. Brick house. I was writing good way... I used to read. Lovely school teacher, Mrs Cotterill used to learn us and Mrs Nash long time ago when we little girl. Mrs Mitchell used to looks after us in the school, that's our teacher, Mrs Mitchell. And after, all this other rest.

Arthur was born in 1949 and remembers school in the stone building:

Still remember it, made out of slabs from Brown Range and we used to see our parents go down helping, bringing the slabs and cracking it and leveling, starting to build. So we seen that school go up. School and it was a church too you know, where people worshipped, come to church. That's what it looked like and a cement floor, and a door, a couple of windows, maybe four windows and a store room where we had books stored away, look after the books...It was the pencil and a book we had, you know them books with lines...Many story books, story books and you know that school paper book...shows you everything about what is happening that way, stories like Walking Matilda, Once a Jolly Swagman.

He also recalls:

At that time it was really hard to bring in kids like, into school, they didn't have proper school, like a building or something like that. But they still were going to school. The school it was not like nowadays you got a heaters and fan and a cool room you do school nowadays, this was like, it was really hard at that time, you sat down and came to school as they are, as they were, you know.

Arthur considers that the missionaries 'taught us a lot of things' like 'stories in the Bible', however he concludes:

All those things, they sounded strange to us, see. At that time I was growing and knowing: 'Oh yeah?', but we didn't know what was up there or down here and all that we was slowly learning. I really liked school too, you know, at that time, go to school...You know when I was little, young, like I said, it was really hard for me, like you can only talk when your parents are down, there, see. But that's when they, when whitefellas was looking after us. And that's why we had to like, follow up every day, every school day, and we thought at the end of a week we think it's, well to me, almost forgetting about your mother and like learning what the white people do. So we had to, I really like school, I did because at the year ahead, you know, I thought: 'Oh well I'm gonna be like this, I wanna learn'. So I like school.

To summarise, mission schooling prior to the 1950s was relatively ad hoc and poorly resourced, with little continuity. Few children commenced as infants, long periods were spent out bush and schooling had ceased by age fourteen. Half-day tuition was provided in English by untrained teachers and teachers were often absent. Data on the literacy levels of the mission generation school children are absent, however, it is unlikely that 'a truly useful level of reading ability' resulted under such circumstances. However, during this early period missionaries tended to stay for long periods and built up relationships. Hence there

347 (Graff 1987: 101).
was continuity in the process of social relatedness that made sense within the Ngaanyatjarra cultural framework and people generally reflect fondly on those days.

**Habitualisation into new practices**

Once children entered the Baker Home and went to school, a reshaping of normative everyday practices commenced with the imbibing of new social, spatial, temporal and linguistic habits, routines and values.

So we are seeing real changes, and our boys and girls are aiming for a higher standard of living than mere food and water…Education is closely allied to Evangelism, and it is said “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” We now have a bathroom for the children…Containing two showers and a 6ft. galvanised bath, it has already given the boys and girls a sense of ownership and privacy unknown to the native in his camp socialism. To see the clean hands and faces, the tidy hair, as the places are filled at the meal tables, is to feel a sense of achievement. Another improvement is the manufacture of beds…

Sleeping on beds inside a dormitory, bathing, eating with utensils, sitting on chairs at tables, and wearing clothes became routine practices:

We was all in the girl’s Home and we have to get up, have a shower, go wash our faces. We used to have a bath night-time, go to sleep, get up, wash our faces, comb our hair, have breakfast, go to school.

As did routine chores after school or on Saturdays (Fig. 2.12):

We sit down and do work at the Home. Wash the plates and mop the floor. Wash the clothes with a hand, soap, cake of soap.

By the 1950s, introduced Christian temporal routines had impacted on adult practice:

Most people used to go to church, I think the main attraction was probably the rations afterwards. Each person who went to church was given a little square token usually cut out of lino as they walked out, which was exchanged at the store after the service for flour, tea, sugar and jam.

Sundays provided an opportunity for families to see their children after church:

Every Sunday they tell a story to the people, they come from the camp they hear about the Lord Jesus and get you know, ticket, little ticket from the missionary for mirrka. We used to get a ticket and get a mirrka and go back ngurraku.

After Sunday School free time was spent playing, however if children returned late they soon learned that they would be punished. Young girls were also called upon to look after the babies at the weekly ‘wijinti’ day’ ladies’ meeting where women did craft and sewing activities, sang ‘choruses’ and listened to a ‘simple message’. Molly recalls:

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348 United Aborigines Messenger May 1948: 12.
349 Gould describes how in the 1960s some adults remained less concerned about wearing clothes out bush, but in the mission a transformation had occurred where young men and women who had been to school had become clothes conscious (Gould 1969: 184).
351 United Aborigines Messenger May 1948: 12. Called ‘wijinti day’ from the mission time expression ‘parapitiya wijinti’ – ‘come around the cockwood tree, referring to the Thursday women’s meeting in the mission (Glass and Hackett 2003: 530).
[When] they used to all come to the meeting, ladies, we used to look after all the little ones, kids... All the ladies used to come to the meetings because, because you know why? Because there's a scone, scones going out, they make a lot of scones for the ladies meeting where they sing, learn, same way, they preach, the missionary ladies preach.

From the 1940s adults in the first contact families who participated in direct interactions with missionaries slowly started to take on English first names (and later surnames). Prior to missionisation, people were known by 'bush names' or nick names (and often still are), or known by one's mother's name plus the suffix -kurnu, as in 'child of'. Personal names were given, but rarely used as a vocative, rather an indirect mode was preferred practice: demonstratives (e.g. wati ngaanya – 'this man here'), 'skin' names (e.g. 'that Milangka') or kin terms, (e.g. Cliffordku kurtaku katjaku yurntalpa – 'Clifford's older brother's son's daughter'). Kin terms—vocatives of social relatedness—are still commonly used in direct address. Naming, in effect, inserted one into a collective web of social meaning where 'almost everyone was a known person and strangers were rarely encountered' and 'the knowledge and use of names is part of the “system” itself (and not only an interface)'.

By 1950 the mission was reportedly 'influencing' some 500–700 Aboriginal people in the Central Reserve area with the aim of uplifting them: 'to take their place as citizens of Australia, through evangelisation, education and the establishment of local industry by the natives for their own benefit'. In effect, however, two socio-spatial worlds were emerging. Bourdieu uses the term 'social space' to mark the spatial and social distance existing between groups of people. I use this notion to explore how the mission generation became ‘habitualised’ into the introduced practices, habits and attitudes and imbibed a constructed 'sense of one's place' in the newly defined 'social space' of the mission. A habitus was being constructed around speaking English, wearing clothes, eating rations (as opposed to bush foods), and the re-formed temporal and spatial rhythms. It can be construed that European conceptualisations of 'cultural, social or symbolic capital' started to accrue value in the new habitus. The imbibing of Western values by some Ngaanyatjarra people led to an emerging gap between them and the majority 'nomadics' who remained outside the mission compound. While most families remained predominantly nomadic, a few families sensed that they were 'accepted' by the missionaries—acquiring in effect, a 'sense of one's place' in the new social space. Silas recalls that some families would 'hunt for their living', however his family got food from

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354 (Bourdieu 1989: 16–17; Berger and Luckmann 1975 [1966]). Bourdieu draws on Goffman’s notion of a ‘sense of one’s place’ (Goffman 1956).
'rashing out' (i.e. from rations, conceptualised as 'working for your living'), as he says 'the policy in that time, the people who want to work for their living, they was accepted'. Silas continues:

My families was a little bit different from the people who lived round the mission compound, when they was still in the wilija and still in the bush. My families was a little bit different because they was accepted by the missionaries.

The UAM maintained a focus on work creation to build up the community infrastructure. This included firewood and post cutting, well-sinking, fencing, making mud bricks, building, cutting a new road to Laverton and pastoral work (Fig 2.13), in addition to artefact making, spinning, crocheting, knitting and sewing clothes to sell in store. The first generation of dormitory trained adolescents also worked (Fig. 2.14). By 1957, out of a population of some 198, the workforce was:

52 unskilled: without any dormitory training (male=25, female=27).
17 skilled: with some dormitory training (male=10, female=7).
17 males were in regular employment: six shepherds, four building in stone, three carting wood, pans etc; 1 chopping wood; two hunting game for missionaries; one store.

Females with dormitory training were also all working as domestics in the missionary's homes except one who was a 'school monitor'. Katherine worked as a domestic, and Mary and Rosie worked in the 'hospital' and some men started working as preachers. Silas' family represents the transformation of practices. His father Horace was a preacher and his parents were the first to wed in a Christian ceremony in 1950 and, atypically, by 1951 his family was living in a cottage—the first family on the mission to do so.

Una, April and Patricia's families were also 'accepted' by the mission and went to Cosmo Newbery (after it was finally handed over to the UAM in 1953) 'to do their work with the mission mob there'. With no school at Cosmo, some children were transferred to Mt Margaret for schooling. Marlon was one of these children and recalls being locked in the dormitory from six at night, to six in the morning:

I don’t remember school, everything was new to me. I didn’t know what I was doing there, what they put me in the Home for? It felt like in a cage, you know you put a bird in the cage. I didn’t know what I was doing in there, how can I get out of that? I was locked up...We was locked up,

355 (Bourdieu 1989: 17).
356 WA SRO Acc 1419 23-7-3—Missions UAM Mission Warburton Ranges, Reports Annual Inspection 10/8/56, Superintendent to ADO Abridged Report on year's work ending 1956. Pastoral work included 100 goats for milk and meat, and 450-500 sheep producing wool for sale with men shearing, shepherding and slaughtering sheep on a piecework basis. Cows were brought from Cosmo Newbery and the men trained in the care and handling of cattle. This scheme was found to be unmanageable, and the herd was trucked out by the 1960s (Mollenhauer 2002).
358 The first 'hospital' was an old house transported from Laverton in 1953 and a hospital opened in 1954 servicing 40-100 outpatients a day.
Fig. 2.13 Young men doing pastoral work, Warburton Ranges Mission 1950s

© Ngammanytjatja Archive.

Fig. 2.14 Older girls from the Baker Home, Warburton Ranges Mission 1952

© Ngammanytjatja Archive.

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Fig. 2.15 Gathering outside Warburton Ranges Mission compound fence, 1950s

© Ngammanytjatja Archive.

Fig. 2.16 Open air church service Warburton Ranges Mission

© Ngammanytjatja Archive.

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can’t go that way, had to listen to what they tell you, if you go across and talk to the *kungka* you get a good hiding, the biggest hiding you ever got, but it never worked! All the things they do in the mission time, you don’t see that today. Mothers and fathers loved their children more than the strap, they don’t want to see their kids get a hiding, they want to let’em go loose.360

In the Home at Mt Margaret, unlike at Warburton, speaking an Aboriginal language was forbidden. Marlon reflects on his experience:

When I went to school not allowed to talk our language, get a good hiding, smack. ‘Don’t talk that language here, you talk when you get out bush.’ And that’s why we lost a lot of our culture in the missionary time, they was taking that away from us. ‘If you come to this Mission, you learn to talk English, don’t talk no other language, we want to know what you’re saying.’ We felt no good, we was frightened all the time when we talk to each other in language, then we see any white person coming up we talk in English, ‘cause if they catch you, you get a hiding. And when we came out of that mission back into our own culture it was pretty hard for us to understand what my people are saying. ‘Oh you think you’re a white kid.’ they tell me. ‘No, it’s the way I was brought up.’ It took me a long time to understand, I’m still coming to terms.361

**Literacy, Christianity and adults—the vernacular experience**

In 1952 a new direction in UAM linguistic policy commenced when missionary linguist Wilf Douglas strove to ‘break the barrier of unknown speech’ and began work on Ngaanyatjarra language.362 Prior to the 1950s, text was English and virtually no linguistic or educational attention had hitherto been paid to Ngaanyatjarra, despite an early initiative in 1941 to use newly translated Scriptures.363 Early literacy artefacts were rudimentary and scarce. Una recalls her father, who was in the first group to experience mission schooling, telling stories about using a slate and abacus at school. The initial emphasis was on ‘listening to the Word’ (i.e. ‘hearing’ rather than reading) and reiterative exposure to increasingly familiar textually mediated practices—singing and listening to Bible stories.364 Molly remembers that ‘we use our head to sing, no hymnbook in front of us, like nowadays they have hymnbook’. The ‘Good News’ was shared using Gospel pictures, as Molly describes:

> They used to have a Christian picture that’s all, all the picture. One person stand up with all the picture, lift him up another page, another page...whitefella got to be there and a dark bloke is there, like that.

Adults in close proximity to the mission also imbibed the value that Europeans attributed to the written Word.

360 Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
361 Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
362 *United Aborigines Messenger* May 1957: 12. Wilf Douglas studied the Western Desert dialects of the Eastern Goldfields (Glass 2004). His work on Ngaanyatjarra was the first serious study of the language and built on his earlier linguistic work at Ooldea (Douglas 1955). He compiled the first grammatical analysis of Ngaanyatjarra by 1957 and developed a Roman alphabet orthography. When Douglas devised the orthography it was only the second Western Desert language, after Pijintjatjara, to have an orthography and Douglas based the Ngaanyatjarra orthography on the Pijintjatjara model.
363 *United Aborigines Messenger* April 1941: 11.
Douglas was to trial the first vernacular ‘Gospel recordings’ at Warburton in 1953:365

The messages recorded on the tape were also written on paper, so that in the days following we were able to to select extracts for use in meetings, and for introducing visiting natives to the Gospel. A few small portions of Scripture...were translated, and many opportunities were given to read these to the people. It was indeed a privilege and joy to be able to read God’s Word to the older folk, in a language they understood. Even the children could barely contain themselves when a new portion was read to them in the familiar terms of the camp speech.366

After this success, the teaching of vernacular reading commenced with seven young women who were soon to leave the Home (including ‘Katherine’, April’s mother and Patricia’s mother):

Five reading Primers and much supplementary material was prepared as the lessons were given. The girls made rapid progress, and immediately started teaching the younger girls to read. By the end of five weeks they could read the five basic Primers, which had introduced them to their complete alphabet, and were able also to write simple sentences in their own language. The Primers were designed with a view to giving the young people a clearer understanding of English, also, and contained a simple English-Wangka dictionary. 367

The primers, entitled Wangka, introduced the first accessible reading materials for the literacy learner and remained the main introductory vernacular primers until 1969.368 They achieved ‘amazing results’: ‘young people who have been taught to read, now read to their own folk’; boys learned to read in a month and girls from the Home, now married, taught their husbands to read.369 It was suggested in the Messenger that the Lord ‘revealed methods which enable “primitive” folk to become “literate” in comparatively short time’ as the ‘greatest incentive to learn to read is the desire to read the Bible in the mother tongue’…

...Teenage girls were able to write short stories in their own language, after five weeks, of one hour each day. Young men who had been taught to write English in school were able to write letters in their own language after only one hour’s tuition. These letters contained free expression of thought, whereas letters written in English by the same men were stereotyped and uninteresting.370

These events were significant because they signalled the beginning of literacy in the mother tongue. A language that had previously only been heard and spoken was now signified in a written form and an awareness of the distinction between spoken and written language ensued, leading to the realisation that meaning could be exchanged in written, as well as spoken, text.371 Moreover, through vernacular Christian texts adults were introduced to knowledge and concepts that accompanied the European vision of the world. The missionaries now devoted their attention to cultivating a literate Christian community, and

365 The young men who recorded these messages were Stewart Davies, Harry Simms, Tommy Simms, Stanley West and Phillip West (Plant and Viegas 2002: 57).
367 United Aborigines Messenger March 1954: 9. The seven young women who were taught were Rachel Richards (nee Lane), Carol Holland (nee Simms), Esther Green (nee Richards), Lily Simms (nee McLean), Joan Mitchell (nee Davidson), Ruth Richards (nee Lane), and Linda Green (nee Smith) (Plant and Viegas 2002: 57).
368 (Glass 2000).
369 United Aborigines Messenger May 1957: 12.
371 (Halliday 1985).
later an Indigenous Christian leadership. Literacy was not useful *per se*, and it can be speculated that the minority emerging Christian community used literacy as an extension of their social relatedness with the missionaries and a restricted form of literacy was developing.

**Conflicting values and practices**

Preachers such as Harold, Jack, and Horace acted as ‘intermediaries’ between the missionaries and the majority ‘nomadics’ who occupied the other ‘social space’ in the hinterland and the camps outside the mission compound (Fig. 2.15). It can be construed that those who took on the role of intermediaries in fact freed others to maintain Ngaanyatjarra social, cultural and linguistic practices distanced from the Christianising influence of the missionaries (Fig. 2.16). George (whom I introduce in Chapter 3) suggests that:

> The missionaries they knew that we had our own culture but...they never interfered with the culture, cultural side. They did what they came out to do, tell the Good News, but people still had their ceremony business and all. Because old people like 'Jack' used to work, stop in the mission and 'Silas' old man, some old people who finished now, they used to work together and help...but they never interfered with the Law side.

Even though traditional Law was not eroded, ‘cultural conflict and identity split’ were acutely felt. Silas explains: ‘my family, my father especially was a tribal, tribal leader, but he balance his Law in a private way, you know the tribal ways, tribal ways and the Christianity...two ways, *yarnangu* Law strong and Christian ways’.

Nevertheless, sites of conflict and resistance developed between traditional values and practices and introduced practices that emphasised countervailing moral values. Spearfights were a feature of daily life. The cause of many fights—represented in the *Messenger* as ‘Satanic resistance to spread of the Gospel’—centred on the mission’s determination to ‘protect’ girls from polygynous marriages with older men:

> Girls of about 15 years and upwards being subjected to tribal laws, are the cause of dissenion between the missionaries and the camp natives. To counteract the natives’ demands for the older girls, the missionaries have surrounded the whole of the girls’ home block with a seven-foot-high fence ring-lock stock fencing. It would not deter anyone determined to enter the compound and serves mainly to irritate the natives, who compare it indignantly with the goat yard...The Mission policy for these girls appears to be to oppose tribal marriage practice and encourage them to marry young men raised in the Mission Homes. I doubt if their teaching are sufficiently implanted to counteract the weight of tribal influence.

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372 (Brooks 2002e: 80).
375 Extract from Memo from CNW to MNW 21st March 1957—UAM Files NTU Archive.
The generation of girls who grew up in the Baker Home imbibed a conflicting moral response to socially sanctioned norms: ceremonial obligations requiring the fulfilment of betrothals and the traditional practice of polygyny. Teenage girls were locked in the dormitory at night and the compound was fenced in to ‘protect’ them from the advances of older men.\textsuperscript{376} Molly says she (and a few other girls) shifted to Cosmo to escape the pursuit of older men. In doing so, she asserted a challenge to traditional marriage practices:

\[\text{My mother and father and all the families I left them behind in Warburton. They wasn't happy but I put my foot down and said: 'No, I’m going.' They said: 'You've gotta stop.' And I said: 'No, I've made up my mind, I want to go.' I was frightened for the man who chase me round all the time.}\]

Once at Cosmo, she and other adolescents were set on a path of ‘vocational’ training:\textsuperscript{377}

\[\text{We used to do training, housework, no school...in the morning...learning to cook, then in afternoon we used to go out...start milking cow...The boys would look after the sheep, windmill, bullock cattle...I think it was a good way. Anyway I learnt my way, good way.}\]

Molly and other girls were taught to ‘save money’ to ‘buy things you want to move out to your own house’ for a ‘glory box’ including ‘forks and knives and anything, cups, any plate and dish, tablecloth, tea towels’…

\[\text{...[The missionaries] tell us you should have this, get ready. Like a mother, you know fuss over you, if you got, if you want to get married...probably your mother might do the same to you, help your relations. Help you like that, she was like a mother to us. Helping us to get ready for anything you want.}\]

Similarly, Maisie’s narrative (Family H) highlights the contestation around diverging practices. Maisie accompanied her family to the Laverton region in the early 1950s. While her father worked on stations and her mother was in the stock camp, Maisie was left at Mt Margaret, returning to her family each summer:

\[\text{Like Christmas holidays, the missionaries say to us: ‘Alright, you children have to wait for your mum and dad to come and pick you, pack all your things ready.’ And they come and pick their child and they go and they come, we’re still waiting for our parents to come and pick us up...they came in their early days car...and my uncle came and pick us up...took us to Laverton we got our toy...and had our Christmas holiday, stayed there. When the school started, went back to Mt Margaret, stayed there.}\]

Maisie tells how the missionaries set her sights on aspirations outside the traditional paradigm. At the end of school a missionary invited her to Melbourne, ‘I had my things packed up but didn’t went, got married straight away...wanted to take me there for on holiday to look around, but mum and dad gave me away’. Maisie married an older husband and returned to Ngaanyatjarra country. So powerful was this new form of socialisation, however, that Maisie still regrets her thwarted aspirations. These examples are notable as

\textsuperscript{376} (Plant 1995).
\textsuperscript{377} United Aborigines Messenger May 1957: 11.
\textsuperscript{378} Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
they represent early challenges to the Ngaanyatjarra status quo and the beginning of a changing developmental trajectory for youth.

Christianity introduced a new moral authority. It provided comprehensible parameters to explain social action and how to live in the new world. It also provided certainty in a rapidly changing world and through vernacular literacy some adults gained an intellectual continuity that has sustained them up to the present. Ultimately, however, it can be claimed that a syncretism between traditional Law and Christianity has been reached. As Silas (who like his father before him is now a Pastor) concludes:

I can’t as a Christian man I can’t abolish my tribal ways. I can’t abolish it. I can’t throw them away. Because you know without the culture we just nobody, you know. I’m nobody without a culture. Because you know some of my people went to Mt Margaret and Laverton and all that you know, they lost that, lost their traditional way of living.

The westerly drift

Thus far I have developed a scenario which situates Warburton Ranges Mission as the locus of an aggregation of Western Desert dwellers. I now focus on the westerly drift of people to the fringe towns of the WA Goldfields and the exertion of ‘frontier agency’ (see Appendix E—Table AE.2).379 According to Stanton, Ngaanyatjarra people began drifting into the Laverton region around the 1920s, then assisted by free railroad travel for Aborigines after 1925 some drifted further down the line between Laverton and Kalgoorlie.380 Mt Margaret mission initially provided a ‘good buffer’ between the non-Aboriginal pastoral stations and townships, and the remaining ‘local’ Aborigines.381 Warburton mission substantially slowed down the westerly drift of desert people, but it did not halt the movement altogether and a ‘pattern of serial migration’ into the Laverton region developed.382 Periods of intense drought accounted for waves of migration in 1939 and 1953–1956. The 1939 drought brought many starving people out of the desert. So in 1941 Neville established a ration depot at Cosmo Newbery to provide rations and to prevent ‘bush natives from the Warburton Range area advancing further into civilisation and becoming useless hangers on around the goldfield towns and railways’.383 This did not

379 (Rowse 1998: 42). A westward drift out of the Western Desert began slowly around the 1890s coinciding with the establishment of gold mining settlements in Kalgoorlie, Leonora, Laverton and Wiluna (Howitt 1990; Stanton 1990). See also (Berndt and Berndt 1964; Sackett 1978a; Stanton 1983; Tindale 1974).

380 (Stanton 1983); WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters (May 1946) Officer in Charge at Cosmo to CNA. Free railroad travel was abolished in 1957, increasing the need for more rations further east (Annual Report CNW 1957: 44).

381 (Elkin 1979: 302).

382 (Brooks 2002a; Stanton 1983).

383 WA SRO Acc 903 901/40—Cosmo Newbery Native Station. Acting CNA C.L. McBeath to the Hon. MNA 5/9/47. During the 1930s Cosmo Newbery was a pastoral station, and from 1938 a DNA reserve (Bolton 1981: 148). From 1941 to 1947 Cosmo operated as a ‘Native Station’ ration depot before it was converted into a detention centre for Aborigines.
halt the movement and in 1942 it was found that ‘Warburton Range natives are in the Laverton district and permanently so it seems’. The government’s continuing refusal to provide rations at Warburton often led to desert people heading westward towards Cosmo for rations.

Many Western Desert people ventured west because they wanted to ‘see for themselves where flour, tea and sugar was coming from’—and some say to escape warrmarla attacks. Narrators describe long treks west either by foot, camel or, later, on the Laverton mail truck. Some remained in the Goldfields’ towns where curiosity with European life was followed by ‘familiarity’, resulting in an unintentional ‘reliance’ on the materiality of European life. Others went west ‘chasing bullock’ and found pastoral work in the Goldfields. The year 1944 was a record year for Aboriginal employment in the Goldfields with a ‘corresponding increase in wages’ as employers ‘competed’ for Aboriginal labour on sheep stations to fill positions vacated by Europeans who had been conscripted during World War II. Following the war Western Australia experienced an expansion in the agricultural and mining sector and Aboriginal people once again had to compete with non-Aborigines for employment.

In the early days when desert people entered the settled areas their movement was restricted; towns were prohibited areas and they were excluded from entering unless under an employment permit. The Governor, by proclamation, could declare any municipality ‘out of bounds for all natives except those in employment’ and a local police protector was empowered to ‘order natives to remove their camping place to a distance ‘from such town or municipality as he may direct’ or to ‘order any native out of town’. The permit system compelled Aboriginal workers to stay on the stations. Clifford (Family J) recalls stories of the ‘permit time’ handed down from family who worked around Laverton-Leonora:

That era that stage that was the law I think. But they was, well Aboriginal people weren’t accepted in town... so that’s why they mostly out on stations.[If in town] They was just told to move, go out.

in 1948 (Biskup 1973: 234). It continued in its dual role as ration depot and reformatory until it was handed over to the UAM in 1953 (Annual Report CNA 1952).

384 WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 18/6/42 Bray to Schenk.
385 WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 9/5/46 telegram from Bray to Cosmo.
386 (Plant and Viegas 2002). Michael Terry brought the first vehicle through on a survey trip in 1932 and made a track for camels between Laverton and Warburton that was used to collect stores and mail from Laverton—a trip that took about six weeks. After WWII an ex-army truck was obtained and the trip was reduced to about seven to ten days and a more direct cutline track to Laverton was constructed. Until 1957 the only tracks in the region were the Laverton-Warburton road and a camel track east from Warburton to Ernabella. By the 1960s, monthly trips were made by the Laverton-Warburton mail truck and people were able to get lifts on the truck (de Graaf 1968: 11–13).

387 (Sackett 1978a).
388 (Milnes 1987: 271).
389 (Rowley 1972 [1970]: 68)[emphasis in original].

62
Even old people, tell them go out, work. There wasn’t hardly time to hang around town all the time, they was always work on a station, station work, move to another station, sheep station.

Likewise, Jim remembers that ‘when families moved out that way they had to work…if men were caught sitting around they’d be picked up and taken to a station to work’.

Finally in 1953 Cosmo Newbery Settlement, still a viable pastoral station, was handed over to the UAM, providing a staging post for goods and people going in and out to Warburton. Under the UAM Cosmo became a training centre, especially for boys drifting westwards from Warburton. Large numbers congregating at Warburton in the 1950s experienced overcrowding and tension and so travelled further west ‘primarily for ritual exchanges and other ceremonial activities’ and, unable to return home because of the 1950s drought, remained at Cosmo for months. I return to this theme again in Chapter 3 where I discuss the relationship between education and employment in the Goldfields during the assimilation era.

Conclusion

The Ngaanyatjarra had no exposure to Western cultural practice or literate artefacts prior to the coming of the mission. Through the missionaries the causality of the new world was explained and a template for social relations with Europeans was set. Mission schooling had social meaning and Christian symbolism and sentiment—‘God is love’—resonated within an existing meaning system. Literacy became synonymous with English and schooling, and also with adult Christian practice in the vernacular. Introduced European practices, routines and habits became normative to a certain extent. The Ngaanyatjarra were able to display agency in the contact encounter, in part because of remoteness, and because the majority Ngaanyatjarra populace remained connected to country, kin and ceremonial practice for longer than in other regions. Additionally, the benign nature of the mission led to the development of a Christian community without major conflict. State intervention was also for a long time less apparent. However, as I show in the next chapter the onset of the new policy of assimilation was to alter the nature of the Ngaanyatjarra engagement with mainstream Australia.

392 (Stanton 1990: 221); Annual Report CNA 1953: 12.
CHAPTER 3 ‘Native Welfare time’

Introduction

In this chapter we meet the generation who grew up in the policy period of assimilation under the Department of Native Welfare and witnessed the expansion of the known world through state-controlled change and intervention. Some of these children were in the second generation to be raised in the mission and some were the last of the nomadics to encounter the Western world. I explore further how social, economic and political forces impacted on literacy development among the Ngaanyatjarra. I consider how the two prevailing ideologies—the Christian commitment to providing the written Word of God to adults in Ngaanyatjarra and the new state narrative of advancement through education in English—impacted on literacy development from the late 1950s to the early 1970s.

‘Assimilation’—a new policy era

When Stanley Middleton was appointed Commissioner of Native Affairs in 1948 Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia were in a dire state—with an ‘illiterate’ and ‘alienated’ Aboriginal population. Middleton was to reform Aboriginal policy by using welfare to achieve the goal of social assimilation to dismantle legal restrictions applying only to Aborigines and to bring them ‘fully into the scope of all governmental welfare benefits available to other Australians’. Moreover, he was to use the concept of ‘tutored assimilation through stages of monitored training’ to bring Aboriginal people up to a ‘satisfactory social standard’ for eligibility for assimilation, employment and ultimately citizenship. It was conceded by the state that ‘education alone’ would not achieve the desired goal of integration unless it was supported by an ‘improvement in living conditions’. The cornerstone of Middleton’s policy was the 1954 Native Welfare Act which ushered in new freedoms for West Australian Aborigines. Then in 1963 the Native Welfare Act was amended to remove the last restrictions that had regulated Aboriginal life. Public policy under the renamed Department of Native Welfare (DNW) was to see literacy inextricably linked to ‘social development’ as a determinant of citizenship and an assumed criterion for employability, and ultimately assimilation.

394 (Schapper 1970: 59).
396 Report of the Special Committee on Native Matters (Perth 1958) under the chairmanship of F.E. Gare who was to succeed Middleton as Commissioner of Native Welfare in 1961, quoted in (Schapper 1970: 27–28).
As the 1954 Act took effect another shift in the ‘pattern of serial migration’ in the Eastern Goldfields took place.\textsuperscript{397} Once the Native (Citizenship Rights) Act Exemption Certificate was abolished in 1961 a whole new range of educational and employment opportunities opened up as people were now free to reside wherever they wished.\textsuperscript{398} As Morgan notes, ‘no longer did Aborigines need employment permits’ and ‘no longer were there any prohibited areas’, and the latter aspect ‘more than any other...altered the lives of Goldfields Aborigines’.\textsuperscript{399} The lifting of legal restrictions on towns meant that schools, hospital services, employment and housing became available to Aborigines. As adults at Mt Margaret took advantage of the new freedoms and moved to urban centres in search of employment, desert people from further west began drifting into Mt Margaret, finding employment on stations, and congregating on the emerging ‘town reserves’ (see Appendix E—Table AE.2).\textsuperscript{400}

**Tutored assimilation**

By 1960 the WA Education Department had established a special section to deal with Aboriginal education.\textsuperscript{401} A concerted programme of secondary education and training with an explicit assimilationist agenda was implemented across Western Australia with the founding of technical schools, agricultural schools, pastoral training, and apprenticeships in tandem with residential hostels (see Chapter 1, Fig. 1.4).\textsuperscript{402} On January 22 1961 The West Australian newspaper announced that the DNW was establishing the hostel system with the ‘intention of cutting the “high illiteracy rate” among Aborigines’.\textsuperscript{403} A higher standard of education was seen as the best long-term solution to employment so children and adults were ‘encouraged and assisted to this end’.\textsuperscript{404} Hostels were initially operated by church groups, allowing Aboriginal teenagers from Cundeelee, Laverton and Warburton Ranges to start attending high schools in Kalgoorlie, Norseman or Esperance. After 1957, adolescents residing at Kurrawah Mission were bussed daily into Kalgoorlie for schooling at Eastern Goldfields High School (EGHS).\textsuperscript{405} In 1961 the Australian Aborigines

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{397} (Stanton 1983).
\item \textsuperscript{398} (Stanton 1988: 298).
\item \textsuperscript{399} (Morgan 1986: 268–269).
\item \textsuperscript{400} By the time Rodolphe Schenk retired in 1953 many members of the early mission group at Mt Margaret had dispersed throughout the Eastern Goldfields and over the following years increasing numbers of ‘Easterners’ arrived from Warburton Ranges (Stanton 1983; Stanton 1988). According to Stanton, however, they were ‘largely neglected’ by the mission administration and much of the mission fell into disrepair (Stanton 1988: 298). The UAM withdrew from Mt Margaret in 1976 and management and ownership was transferred to former mission residents under the Aboriginal Movement for Outback Survival Inc. (AMOS) (Stanton 1990: 219). Mt Margaret continued operating having attracted a new community (including a group from the Gibson Desert and their descendents), to fill the ‘vacuum’ left by the original inhabitants (Stanton 1983).
\item \textsuperscript{401} Annual Report CNW 1960: 30.
\item \textsuperscript{402} Boarding schools and hostels were similarly used as a strategy for ‘civilising’ Native Americans in the United States (Spring 1996) and the Indigenous population of Canada (Miller 1996a).
\item \textsuperscript{403} (Milnes 1987: 395).
\item \textsuperscript{404} Annual Report CNW 1964: 13.
\item \textsuperscript{405} Annual Report CNW 1957: 40. Eastern Goldfields High School (EGHS) had opened as a public secondary school in Kalgoorlie-Boulder in 1914 (Mossenson 1972: 115). However, it was not until Kurrawah Mission near Kalgoorlie,
Evangelical Mission (AAEM) opened a hostel in Esperance in 1961 (operated by Mr and Mrs I.S. Pedlar) for boys undertaking agricultural training—after a two year course graduates would then remain at the hostel to be employed on a station for award rates of pay.\textsuperscript{406} The AAEM also established a hostel at Condingup, near Esperance, for graduate trainee workers.\textsuperscript{407} Fairhaven Hostel in Esperance operated as a Church of Christ boarding facility for teenage girls who attended Esperance High School three days a week and spent the remaining two days at Fairhaven receiving instruction in home management, laundry, catering, poise, personal grooming and dress sense.\textsuperscript{408} Upon completion of schooling, girls also remained at Fairhaven and employment was found for them, mainly as domestics.

The DNW aimed to have all Aboriginal children receiving ‘educational benefits of some type’.\textsuperscript{409} The DNW and the Education Department opened the ‘Boulder Working Youths’ Hostel’ in Kalgoorlie-Boulder (managed by the Pedlars and AAEM) to cater for young working men.\textsuperscript{410} The DNW was also to build an additional eight hostels in regional centres across the state so Aboriginal children aged from six to fifteen could attend local schools.\textsuperscript{411} The DNW provided staff, food and clothing, the Education Department paid a Living Away from Home Allowance, and children returned home for holidays.\textsuperscript{412} Nabberu Hostel opened in Leonora in 1967 with the aim of ensuring that no children in the DNW Eastern Division were living under conditions too ‘poor’ to attend school.\textsuperscript{413} Nindeebai Hostel opened in Kalgoorlie in 1970.\textsuperscript{414}

The DNW worked in tandem with the Education Department to ‘help’ Aboriginal people to ‘get as much learning as they want’...

...The opportunities are there and it is for Aboriginal people to take them. But the decision is theirs. The wise mother and father will encourage their children to learn so that they have a better chance of a successful and happy life than they had.\textsuperscript{415}

This paternalistic discourse ostensibly placed the onus on parental responsibility for children’s schooling. Government hostels were established for:

i) children whose parents live on pastoral stations where there is no primary school;

planned to open a residential hostel in 1957 in close proximity to EGHS that it was seen by the DNA as the ideal location to accommodate Aboriginal adolescents from across the district and a large number started attending EGHS (Annual Report CNW 1955: 36); (Milnes 1987: 385). See (Bull 1961).

\textsuperscript{406} Department of Native Welfare (DNW) Newsletter, Vol.1, No.2 August 1967: 27.

\textsuperscript{407} DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.5 August 1968: 44.

\textsuperscript{408} Annual Report CNW 1966: 28.

\textsuperscript{409} Annual Report CNW 1966: 28.

\textsuperscript{410} DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.6 December 1968: 55.

\textsuperscript{411} (Long 1969: 25).

\textsuperscript{412} DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.3, December 1967: 40.

\textsuperscript{413} Annual Report CNW 1966: 27.

\textsuperscript{414} DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.9 January 1971: 47.

\textsuperscript{415} DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.3 December 1967: 39.
ii) children who continue their schooling at high or technical school and whose families do not live in the town;
iii) children who are without parents or have been removed from them under the provisions of the Child Welfare Act; and
iv) young people who have left school and are in employment.416

The hostels were to give children the opportunity to further their education and admission was ‘voluntary’. However, as Haebich suggests, ‘considerable pressure was exerted on parents to admit their children’.417 As the Commissioner remained the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children, whether illegitimate or legitimate, until they reached the age of 21, the DNW was legally able to control the movement of young people to hostels for secondary education and subsequent vocational training.418 Although certain provisions of the Native Welfare Act were repealed in 1963, the DNW retained the duty of providing for the ‘custody, maintenance and education of the children of natives’ and the ‘control, care and education of natives in native institutions’ until 1972.419

Table 3.1 Adult Native Education enrolment 1965–72

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<th>Laverton</th>
<th>Leonora</th>
<th>Warburton</th>
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<td>1971</td>
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<td>1972</td>
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<td>143</td>
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Source: Annual Reports CNW 1964–1972

Education policy initially focused on children, until the government realised that the progress of children ‘was continually foundering upon the indifference and even hostility of illiterate or non-literate parents’.420 Consequently, adult education was advocated to train adults for citizenship and to stimulate interest in their children’s education. An Adult Native Education scheme commenced in 1965 with 30 centres across Western Australia, including Warburton (Table 3.1).421 The aims were to ‘develop literacy and community obligations and to assist the native people in their assimilation into our western culture’.422 However, critics found ‘most’ adult literacy classes ‘farcical and wasteful’.423

416 (Schapper 1970: 35).
417 (Haebich 2005: 212).
419 (Haebich 2005: 205).
422 DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.2 August 1967: 35.
423 (Schapper 1970: 99). See also (George 1979; Long 1969).
To summarise, the aim of DNW policy was to ‘raise academic standards’ and ‘open wider employment opportunities’ for Aborigines who otherwise would have ‘remained illiterate’. Ultimately, through tutored assimilation Aboriginal people were to be trained to become ‘effective members of the nation’ where ‘citizenship was the goal’.

The ‘Native Welfare generation’

Until the mid-1950s remoteness had protected Warburton Ranges Mission from the ‘tight bureaucratic system of written accountability’, ‘surveillance’ and ‘paternalistic control’ of Commissioner Middleton. Inspections had remained infrequent due to the distance from DNA administrative offices, but were to increase with the devolved responsibility to the DNW Eastern Division office in Kalgoorlie and greater allocation of field officers. In 1954 there were still an estimated 6000 ‘nomad natives’ in WA who were ‘beyond the confines of civilisation’. By the end of this era, however, the Native Welfare generation was to experience an unprecedented encounter with the state that would leave virtually every individual identified by the bureaucracy. Moreover, it would acquaint the Ngaanyatjarra with the conditions of the literate systems of state bureaucracy for the first time. Furthermore, the state would question the future viability of the mission and determine that young people be led ‘away from the Warburton Ranges to training at other centres where they could ultimately be absorbed into the white community’.

Education for what?

State intervention in education provision began with Middleton’s assertion that Warburton people must become ‘an economic asset, instead of a financial burden, to the state’:

The missionaries at Emabella in South Australia and at Warburton Range in Western Australia, are now educating large numbers of native children and evangelising many young people and adults, and the question arises as to how they can utilise this knowledge and training without some form of employment that will condition their minds economically to the impact of a white civilisation that, with the increasing population of Australia, is bound to come sooner or later.

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425 (Rowse 1998: 8).
426 (Haebich 2005: 207).
427 (Department of Native Welfare 1967: 17).
428 Annual Report CNA 1954: 60. O'Malley has questioned how it was possible that as late as the 1950s in ‘a sophisticated administrative welfare state, for a considerable area of the country (i.e. the Western Australian Central Reserves area) to be so completely ungoverned?’ He argues that such ‘ungovernment’ was made possible not because of absence or neglect of the Aboriginal populace in the region by government, but can be sourced from the state of ‘preservation’ that surrounded the Central Reserves region after World War I. By this he means the cultural protection initiative suggested by anthropologist A.P. Elkin and others, that was supported by the West Australian government in the belief that full-bloods would eventually die out if left alone (O'Malley 1994).
429 WA SRO Acc 993 1220/61 17/762—From CNW to MN, summary of history of Warburton Ranges Mission.
430 WA SRO Acc 5296 321/74 13/12/51—From CNA Middleton to the Undersecretary for Mines.
This opened up a debate on the purpose of education in the Ngaanyatjarra context that has continued up to the present day. In 1956 Middleton affirmed the inherent right of all Aboriginal children to education, including those at Warburton:

What was to become of them after they had completed their primary education? Having deprived them of the opportunity to become proficient at foraging for their livelihood...and made them wholly dependent on our economy...were they to be left in Central Australia to become forever dependent on the charity of the Mission and the Government? On this particular point Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights puts the matter clearly, in this way: '(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be easily accessible to all on the basis of merit.' I see no reason for excluding the children of the Warburton Range.431

Middleton initially endorsed sending secondary-aged Warburton children to Cosmo Newbery Mission for training, a suggestion borne out of the need to resolve the economic sustainability of Warburton Mission.432 This never eventuated, primarily because of the opposition raised in Parliament by W. L. Grayden. The intention, nevertheless, sparked what became known as the ‘Warburton controversy’ and threw the mission into the public spotlight for the first time.433

In 1951 the Education Department finally agreed to second staff to mission schools with the cost debited to the DNA.434 In 1953, the Warburton mission superintendent J.M. Gurrier-Jones requested assistance for the school from the Education Department, as per the new policy, and in 1954 two trained missionary teachers arrived, but the government provided few material resources.435 Only in 1956 were the first qualified government...
At the end of 1960 the parent generation made the decision not to return their children to the Baker Home after the Christmas holidays. The dormitory system was abolished in 1961 (and the last dormitory children passed through the school in 1965). Approximately 120 school children were placed back in the care of families at a time when some 400 people were living in wiljja or windbreak constructions in camps with no sanitary or ablution facilities. This event also coincided with a drought and the cessation of earlier self-reliant nomadic foraging patterns. An aluminium building originally planned as a mission dormitory became the new ‘government’ school, a dining room was built and children continued coming into the mission for ablutions and three meals a day, five days a week while attending school.

According to Neville Green, parents began to accept school as a government institution, however ‘the relevance of western education was never established’ and the school was dependent on the dining room to attract children from the camp every morning.

People recall the difficulty of camp life without water, sanitation or firewood. The camps kayili and kakarrara were located far from the mission according to the cardinal directions of traditional country:

We were outsiders. Some people lived right close to the mission boundary, but our families had to live out that way because we had feeling for that country. Still like that now, you can see the houses built on different sides. Just a way of life. My family all comes from the north so live that side. But all married in now. It’s our culture.

By 1965, Warburton was a community of discontent with ‘people fighting, quarrelling, stealing, threatening’, broken down equipment, lack of staff and a lack of economy. A tension was also growing between the old guard Christians and the new secular employees. The UAM was proposing that the DNW take more responsibility for the community. The future of Aborigines in the Central Reserves area was investigated and the mission difficulties acknowledged. It was recommended that for the 358 Warburton people still living in windbreaks ‘to make change’ and adapt to a future life ‘similar to any

436 (Green 1983: 15-16). J.S. Hansen (Head Teacher), C.D. Metcalfe and R.D. Jeffrey were employed as Education Department (Native Education Branch) teachers (WA SRO Acc 995 360/56—Warburton Ranges Matters 18/12/58 ADO Eastern Goldfields Inspection report Warburton Range Mission).
437 (Douglas 1978: 4–5).
438 WA SRO Acc 1419 23-7-315/162—Letter from CNW to Federal Secretary UAM.
439 (Plant 1995).
441 (Green 1983: 16). Neville Green was a teacher at Warburton School in 1966 and has documented his experiences in *Desert School*.
442 Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
444 (de Graaf 1968); United Aborigines Messenger July/August 1980: 9.
445 WA SRO Acc 1733 66/65—Warburton Range Native Matters April 1965. Correspondence: UAM Federal Secretary to CNW.
446 WA SRO Acc 1733 66/65—Warburton Range Native Matters June 1965. Correspondence: CNW to MNW.
other Australian community', they would need special assistance in 'education, housing, hygiene, training, and employment'. Electricity came only in 1962 and a 'reserve', with toilets, showers and 'huts' was established by the DNW outside the mission. Visits from government officials, anthropologists and mining explorers increased and began to shape community life and a DNW district office opened. A small scale mining venture with Western Mining Corporation commenced and the potential 'mining boom' generated optimism. With increased outside influences during this period, the Ngaanyatjarra began to locate themselves in relation to a broader sociocultural space and challenges to the indisputable authority of elders and the traditional status quo became more frequent.

*From education to employment—the narrative of 'advancement'*

In 1962 the Minister for Native Welfare in his determination to implement 'the ultimate assimilation of natives in Western Australia' indicated that, despite all the money that had been spent on education at Warburton, there was little to show for it and the resumption of nomadic life was likely. He considered it necessary to expose young people to 'civilised areas' where they could have access to training 'to fit them more for employment'. His aim was to 'lift them up' by giving them 'at least a handyman type of training for the boys—those with aptitude something better—and for the girls, domestic science and home crafts'. Contemporaneously, government officials and the UAM had concluded that there was no need for 'emergency measures' regarding sending children away as they 'would not benefit from secondary education due to the low standard already reached in primary education'. However, by 1964 the ability of some students was 'high enough to cope with High School'. Consequently, in 1964 it was decided that adolescents aged thirteen to sixteen would be sent to Kurrawang and Norseman missions.

Overall, many Warburton teenagers were sent to the hostels between 1964 and the mid-1970s, residing as secondary students and staying on as 'working girls' or 'working boys'. In addition, younger children were sent to Nabberu Hostel in Leonora. In earlier research,

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450 In 1955 a lease had been granted to Southwestern Mining Co. in the Blackstone, Jameson, Wingellina area. By the early 1960s copper shows were being worked by Ngaanyatjarra men and Warburton Ranges Minerals Pty Ltd was formed. Early in 1966 the WA government decided to permit non-native prospecting and mining under controlled conditions on 'native reserves' and this primarily affected the Warburton section of the Central Reserve and opened the opportunity for mining employment in the region (and an agreement was made with Western Mining Corporation to explore and mine minerals in the Central Reserve (Annual Report CNW 1966: 33); (Toyne and Vachon 1984; Turner 2003).
451 Title drawn from (Sackett 1990: 201).
452 WA SRO Acc 993 1220/61 18/7/62—Notes from meeting between MNIF, CNW and UAM.
findings from the 100 Ngaanyatjarra interviewees indicate that approximately 60–70% of the middle-aged cohort self-describe as having participated in the hostel programme.\textsuperscript{455} In Appendix F data from the 2004 Ngaanyatjarra Council CDEP Skills Audit indicates that of the 119 interviewees (CDEP recipients only) in the 41–61 year age group, 42% claim to have had no post-primary schooling or are unsure. This correlates with the 2000 findings, suggesting that some 60% of this cohort experienced some form of post-primary type schooling outside the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Undoubtedly, the duration for many was short and they soon returned home. Nevertheless, for a remote group it represents a significant level of adolescent schooling for the current middle-aged to older generation.

I now turn to the narratives from ‘Native Welfare time’. \textit{Joshua, Arthur, May, Molly} and others were teenagers by now and children like \textit{Una, Jim, Silas, April} and \textit{Patricia} were from families habitualised into mission life. It can be suggested that certain introduced practices and routines had been transmitted to this generation and become institutionalised through ‘a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions’.\textsuperscript{456} Others in this generation like \textit{George (Family I), Clem (Family F), Louisa (Family K)} and \textit{Marrkilyi}, whom we meet in this chapter, were in the last group of ‘nomadics’ to encounter the Western world, and literate practices, for the first time.

\textit{Joshua (Family G)} was one of the first teenagers to be sent to Wongutha Mission Training Farm as early as 1956.\textsuperscript{457}

\begin{quotation}
When I went to Wongutha Farm I learnt more, which I didn’t know here in the mission... That was in 1956...learning lots of things, what we should do and all. We had a roster up on the wall, saying what we gotta do, this week or the next week coming...our new roster. Weekends we used to go to Esperance...I played football for three years...I was learning a lot of things which I didn’t know here in Ranges...gardening...I was trying to be a mechanic...I went to places like Gnowangerup, up to Perth...We start building another building, dining room. We went to school there in Esperance, come back and do lecture in the night, learning about farm husbandry...how to run a farm...There was for young fellas that wanted to learn something.
\end{quotation}

Most others were sent away after 1964. The narratives of those sent away are in general positive:

\begin{quotation}
I went to Esperance, high school for one and half years, living at Fairhaven Hostel then work experience, I used to look after a little boy, housework, when parents at work, in town, going out
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{454} (Green 1983: 17).
\textsuperscript{455} (Kral and Ward 2000: 43).
\textsuperscript{456} (Berger and Luckmann 1975 [1966]: 70–85).
\textsuperscript{457} Wongutha Mission Training Farm was set up in 1954 by R.W. Schenk, the son of Rodolphe Schenk from Mt Margaret Mission, as an agricultural training school for boys of post-primary school standard providing a two year course in farm practices, arithmetic, social studies, animal husbandry, physics, elementary chemistry, carpentry, plumbing, mechanics and elements of saddlery, blacksmithing and welding (Annual Report CNW 1955: 25). In 1957 the Education Department gave approval for students from Wongutha Mission to attend Esperance Junior High School for woodwork and metalwork classes and the training of girls commenced in 1962. See also (Liddelow 1979).
for day working by myself then coming back. Lots of girls doing that, some used to go out to work for the week then come back at the end of the week to hostel. Learnt about work, being with whitefellas - good experience. Came back to Warburton then working for Welfare.458

Joshua’s wife Dawn (Family G) was happy at Fairhaven because her same age friends and family were there. People also recall going for only a short time or running away because of homesickness or fights. At one stage this dilemma was ameliorated when a mother went down ‘to look after all the girls’ at Fairhaven.459 In the next chapter I discuss how the separation of these youngsters from their families was the impetus for letter-writing and this represented an early instance of written language being used for social purposes.

Despite positive recollections, the coercive aspect of the Native Welfare policy is recalled. After May was removed from Warburton as a child, she was sent from Mt Margaret to Kurrawang Mission, and then to Fairhaven Hostel when she was old enough to work:

They made all the decisions for you, you couldn’t argue with them…you couldn’t think for yourself, they did all the thinking for you…we didn’t know anything at the time, we were just told to go… I was at Kurrawang three years, I went to Kalgoorlie High School.

Other narratives echo stories of running away and being picked up by ‘Welfare’ and returned to the hostel. Arthur recalls: ‘it was really strict at that time, the government, Department of Native Welfare sent us to Pedlar’s’. Clem was one of the last children through the Warburton dormitory system and in 1966 Native Welfare sent him to Kurrawang for secondary schooling:

They organised that, they got all the forms in the school…they done all that because missionaries were like parents was, we had not only the parents from when we was born, but also we had missionaries, then we had Native Welfare.

Una says that if children were not at school Native Welfare would forcibly take them there. George comments that when they were living in Laverton ‘Native Welfare would check’ so his family always told him to go to school, in the belief, he says, that ‘there would be jobs at the end’.

Clearly families had pressure placed on them by Native Welfare. Murray Wells comments: ‘I shouldn’t imagine families chose to send the kids away to school, I would have thought it was the mission influence and the expectation by agencies like Native Welfare’.460 Only

458 A number of narratives can be found in the data collected for (Kral and Ward 2000).
459 In 1976 the bilingual community newsletter Warburtonngamarti Jjukunpa—Warburton News reported children going away to school and parents going with them, Vol.3, No.2 (17/2/76); and Vol.3, No.3 (24/2/76) reports nine children going to high school and four parents accompanying them.
460 Wells—Interview 1/4/04. Murray Wells lived at Warburton Ranges Mission from 1956–1961 with his missionary parents, then at Mt Margaret Mission for nine months. He returned to Warburton in 1974 to work in the bilingual programme in the school and later worked as an itinerant outstation teacher. After teaching at Blackstone School for five
English, or 'Australian pidgin', was used in administrative dealings with Aborigines and interpreters were used 'only with great reluctance' suggesting that in some cases families may not have fully comprehended the intent of the exchange. Green considers that there was 'some uneasiness among parents but no-one really knew how to oppose such a decision, other than by a retreat to the bush', and 'the teachers and missionaries assured the parents that their children would be safe'. One woman recalls how 'heart-broken' her parents were when she went to Fairhaven. A mother who was at Laverton working 'at the sandalwood' with her husband recalls consenting to sending the children to Esperance or Leonora: 'they went in the Home stayed there, they go to high school...we sent them so they can get learn...they learn English and school'.

How did Ngaanyatjarra people interpret this event? Prior to European contact, venturing into unknown territory was feared and time was mostly spent in the company of kin, moving within relatively predictable socio-spatial parameters. As I speculate in Chapter 2, sufficient trust must have developed between the Ngaanyatjarra and the missionaries for them to have confidence in the missionaries' assurances that their children would be safe in the country of strangers. George suggests that the experience paralleled the manner in which parents first entrusted their children to the missionaries. He is aware that Native Welfare controlled the movement of children, but there was agency in the exchange as parents recognised that children would learn the English required to negotiate the new world 'on their behalf:

My parents they was really happy for me going to school, going to learn the language so I can talk to white people, English wangkaratjaku, they used to tell me, my parents. So when in time they need help I can talk on their behalf and I been doing that when I been in school, talking with my family when Native Welfare come around. They was really happy for me to go and learn in school. They been a bit worried when we been away, but they know we was in good care, we stayed in hostels and they used to come around and visit us on the weekends. Native Welfare, they put us in [Nabberu], but when we went to the hostel we had like missionary people there to look after us, go to church every Sunday. My parents they been working here in the mission, so they was really happy.

From this perspective the social relatedness established at Warburton Mission was extended to the broader Christian 'family' in the Goldfields and fears were assuaged because hostels were generally managed by 'familiar' Christians. By taking a Bourdieuan perspective it can be suggested that the habitus of the mission community was replicated in the social space within the Christian-run hostels. The replicated habitus was presenting itself 'in the form of agents endowed with different properties that are systematically linked

years, he left the Education Department. He has lived almost continuously in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands since then. In 2006 he retired as Environmental Health Worker trainer (Wells 2002).

461 (Wurm 1971: 1034).
462 (Green 1983: 17).
among themselves'. Thus hostel life represented a 'world of commonsense' with spatially-relocated, but familiar, practices.

Having established that the hostels ‘looked after’ the teenagers, the dual ideological role of the hostels must also be highlighted.

Firstly, as May’s comments reveal some hostels were sites for Christian conversion:

> That was for them, not for us. At Kurrawang you weren’t allowed to look at magazines, the only book you had was the Bible to read. You had to learn all these things from the Bible, you had to, what do you call it, memorise things, Chapters, Verses and all those things. That’s their main purpose was to drown you in Christianity, in the Bible...you weren’t even allowed to look at comics in Kurrawang.

In retrospect, May is cynical:

> The main aim of the missionaries was to convert us to their religion and to teach reading and writing for work after the mission. Some people benefited from the missionaries’ education, but lots more were just trained to be domestic servants on low-paid wages, like me.

Silas also acknowledges the ambivalent relationship, but believes that missionaries ‘wanted to give us hope to go forward into towns and cities and get a good job on that level...to grow up to be a good citizen’. Others remember paternalistic control: ‘you’re dictated to by missionaries from the word go, you’re told to put a trousers on, shirt on, this is the way you got to dress, you got to eat this food, you got to eat that and it has continued on till this day’.

In addition, the hostel training programme was also a platform for the state narrative of advancement that underpinned assimilation. Hostels were instrumental in inculcating values to assist ‘social development’ by socialising adolescents into European-style habits and routines that would counter the social, cultural and linguistic ‘deficiencies’ of the Aboriginal home environment. Adolescents were introduced to Western systems of organisation implemented using literate modes such as duty rosters and timetables in the hostels, and timesheets, forms, notices and other literacies associated with their workplace. Girls at Fairhaven reportedly made ‘remarkable strides in self-advancement’.

> Every girl is now able to obtain employment and live as an independent citizen. Several have married and have set up good homes, some in Esperance.

463 (Bourdieu 1989: 19).
464 (Bourdieu 1989: 19).
466 (Miller 1966; Makin 1977).
While at Pedlar's Hostel:

The boys... have acquired the work habit, save hard and have ambitions about owning their own place one day. Regular employment, good housing and a sense of belonging to a district that regards Aborigines as useful and wanted citizens will, we hope, fall naturally into place.\(^{469}\)

Warburton adolescents were inculcated with the notion that returning to Warburton would represent a backwards step.\(^{470}\) Critics of the programme argued that the ‘typical hostel situation...can no more provide experiences and skills for home-making, independence, and integration than could a prison’.\(^{471}\)

To summarise, the hostel experience in some ways mirrored the practices of the mission with families entrusting their children into the care of the extended Christian community. In addition, the experience of isolation was ameliorated as adolescents tended to reside with same-age, often kin, groupings. Lastly, immersion in this European environment exposed young people to a broader range of European social, oral and literate practices than experienced in the mission.

‘Testing time’—the last wave out of the desert

The Native Welfare generation included the last wave of ‘nomadics’ brought out of the Gibson Desert and the Rawlinson Ranges and into Warburton by patrol officers during the ‘testing time’ (coinciding with a drought from around 1960–1966) ostensibly to protect them from the long range rocket testing at Woomera in South Australia.\(^{472}\) Some families remained at Warburton where life was ‘beset with difficulties of adjustment’.\(^{473}\) This group:

... have from the time of their first arrival at Warburton played something of the part of a measuring stick for the other residents... the local people, who by this time had been in situ for more than thirty years, were quite antagonistic to the newcomers. Having made adjustments, some of them painful,

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\(^{469}\) DNW Newsletter, Vol.1, No.4 March 1968: 17.
\(^{470}\) (Kral and Ward 2000: 28).
\(^{471}\) (Schapper 1970 36).
\(^{472}\) Native Welfare patrols brought people into Warburton, Papunya, and Jigalong (Davenport et al. 2005; Long 1964; Nathan and Leichleitner-Japanangka 1983) between 1957 and 1966 after the Commonwealth government in co-operation with Great Britain started Blue Streak long range rocket testing at Woomera and atomic tests at Maralinga and Emu Plains, South Australia. Giles Meteorological Station was established in 1956, to support the rocket trials within a few kilometres of what is now Warakurna community. From 1957-64 access tracks through SA and WA were constructed for the Woomera Rocket Range. Len Beadell (Beadell 1967), the surveyor with the Gunbarrel Road Construction Co., constructed the ‘Gunbarrel Highway’ in tandem with the Australian Weapons Research project. The Warburton-Giles section of the Gunbarrel was constructed in 1958. The new roads opened up access to the region and a greater range of people visited: scientists, surveyors, anthropologists, etc. Over several years the desert groups were regularly visited in their home environment by Patrol Officers from the NT Administration, Weapons Research Establishment and the Department of Native Welfare and filmed by the Commonwealth Film Unit (Dunlop 1966-70). The so-called ‘desert people’ are variously referred to as the ‘Gibson Desert mob’, ‘kajatë mob’, Karlwara mob’ or ‘Pajarr people’ and came in from around the Clutterbuck Hills some 150kms northwest of Warburton. Other groups came in from the Rawlinson Ranges near the NT border. The last family groups to come in from the desert settled at Kiwirrkura community in 1984. Certain residents of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands are identified by some as ‘Pintupi’, including those at Kiwirrkura.

\(^{473}\) (Brooks 2002e: 77).
to the whitefellas expectations and way of life, it must have been uncomfortable, not to say undermining, to be confronted with what amounted to a vision of one’s own past.\(^{474}\)

First encounter stories remain fresh:

We can’t understand what this white people come, we a bit scared... first time to start the food from the white people like apple, orange and like tin-a-meat and all tinned stuff. So we get learn slowly. When we been get into missionary so we get more learn, so we get used to it.\(^{475}\)

The traditionally-oriented habits and dispositions of this group contrasted starkly with the accrued ‘social or symbolic capital’ of the mission-acculturated generation and rendered them ‘outsiders’, yet their temporal proximity with pre-contact practices imbued them with greater Law- or tjukurrpa-affiliated cultural capital.\(^{476}\)

*Darren, Mick, Kenny* (Family D), and *Louisa* (Family K) experienced this transition as children. Families camped across the creekbed in *kayili* camp (‘north’ camp, reflecting their socio-spatial origins):

We used to have to walk in the cold mornings, have a shower, have brekkie and go straight to school. We walked with a tin cut down with fire, that’s how hard it was for us, we had no vehicle *wijarta*. We were outsiders... In those days we used to be forced going to school... Government school, rough teachers... if the kids don’t go to school they get a whack on their backside or on their hands with canes.\(^{477}\)

A pattern of teasing and marginalisation was established—this has largely been ameliorated by intermarriage between family groups. Louisa’s experience at Warburton School was typical: ‘kids were cheeky to me, bad kids... they teased me in the school...’

...I went into school, but didn’t understand what was going on... it was fun, but I didn’t even really recognise it was school. I didn’t know that was the right place to learn, you know, for me. I didn’t had no ideas about that. I just went along.\(^{478}\)

Other families made the long trek west by foot or on the mail truck and reconnected with relatives in Wiluna or Jigalong who had walked out earlier.\(^{479}\) Once in town, the ‘Gibson Desert mob’ generally gravitated towards the town reserves.

**‘If you don’t go to school Welfare will send you away’— life on the reserves**

Under Middleton’s ‘family welfare’ policy the government was persuaded to give up Aboriginal settlements as it was hoped that ‘moral and political pressures would establish Aborigines in the towns’ to assimilate as members of the town community.\(^{480}\)

Paradoxically, this policy gave rise to the growth of reserves on the edge of centres like

\(^{474}\) (Brooks 2002e: 77).
\(^{475}\) Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
\(^{476}\) (Bourdieu 1989: 17), See (Sackett 1977; Stanton 1983).
\(^{477}\) Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
\(^{478}\) Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
\(^{479}\) See (Davenport et al. 2005; Peasley 1990 [1983]; Tonkinson 1974).
\(^{480}\) (Rowley 1972 [1970]: 55).
Kalgoorlie, Leonora and Laverton. As I alluded to earlier, the hostel program embraced not only mission children, but also the children of the Western Desert diaspora, many of whom were by now living on town reserves. Haebich suggests that hostels were also established for those children deemed by state authorities to be ‘neglected’. 481 Living conditions on reserves were described as a ‘sorry spectacle’, despite the Department’s attempts to improve conditions. 482 While some families on reserves maintained family routines others struggled to meet the state imposed standards of parenting and had their children removed to the hostels.

In 1965 the UAM was reporting that families were reluctant to stay at the missions:

...lack of employment, the need to be in work to get Social Benefits for unemployed, and the practice of Native Welfare issuing rations to children of parents who are indigent, i.e. between the working age and old age pension; all has a bearing on keeping them on the reserve at Laverton. 483

It is noted that during this period that the Aboriginal population in state schools in the Goldfields increased as a consequence of the numbers on the town reserves. 484 Patricia’s family had moved to Cosmo Newbery in the 1950s and Patricia was a second generation school-child. When her father found work at Mt Windarra mine the family shifted to the Laverton reserve: 485

We used to stay in the camp and go to school, stayed there for must be two years or three. We have to take our homework down to the school and do it and we have to take it back the next day in the morning to the teacher...My friends that come down from Laverton, Aboriginal kids from the class, do home work all together and they help me out...sometimes my mother helped me...And we didn’t have no houses at that time, never had a house to go to school, just from the camp.

At age twelve Patricia was sent to Nindeebai Hostel in Kalgoorlie.

Jim’s father was doing seasonal mustering while the family camped at the Laverton reserve:

481 (Haebich 2005: 212).
482 (Department of Native Welfare 1967: 23-4). By 1959 the government had put in place a three stage transitional housing scheme aimed at improving facilities on reserves and moving Aboriginal people from living on reserves to residing as rent payers in conventional suburban dwellings in regional and metropolitan centres (Long 1969). It was ‘conceded’ that better housing would lead to improved living conditions which could aid educational progress, as the current situation was precluding the chance for Aboriginal children to study at home (Miller 1966: 30). See also (Haebich 2005).
483 UAM Western Desert Report presented to the Federal Conference Melbourne, April 1965 by District Superintendent, Keith R. Morgan—UAM Files, NTU Archives.
484 Milnes found that in 1959, 14 out of the 19 children at Laverton State School were Aboriginal, however by 1962, 39 out of the 45 children at the school were Aboriginal. The proportion was so high that the Principal requested that the school be classed as a ‘Special Native School’. Similarly Leonora State School student population was one-third Aboriginal in 1960 and half by 1967 (Milnes 1987: 391). In 1964 it was reported that at Laverton School standards in the basic skills varied considerably and many pupils were ‘below average’ by ‘white standards’, falling standards were also noted at Leonora School (Milnes 1987: 398). A government school operated at Cosmo Newbery after 1960.
485 The Family Narratives indicate that a number of Ngaanyatjarra men worked at Mt Windarra Nickel Project near Laverton, see (Howitt 1990).
From the reserve we used to go to school. We went to school every day...If you don't go to school Welfare will send you away somewhere, must be down somewhere in the mission home somewhere, Kurrawang or Norseman.

George's family moved from Laverton to the Leonora reserve after Native Welfare shifted the children to Nabberu Hostel:

We moved, because they had hostel there, for kids...to do schooling, Nabberu Hostel. My parents used to go out working on station and do odd jobs. I was still in primary in '67...Native Welfare shift us kids first and family was back in Laverton. So they shift because of us...they were doing little bit odd jobs and sometimes travelling to Wiluna, going to stations.

George was at Nabberu from 1968–1969.

Many in the Gibson Desert mob had their first schooling experiences in the Goldfields, as Louisa notes:

I went to Laverton school, my grandmother took me there, she lived there and she looked after me and put me in the school. I was looking at all the kids playing games and reading books, I used to look at the books 'cause I didn't know how to read. I didn't learn to read until I was about eleven years old at Leonora School.486

Louisa and Marrkilyi were at Nabberu Hostel at the same time. As station workers, Marrkilyi's parents camped at the Leonora reserve in the off-season to be near the children. While on the reserves, if children were not attending town schools they were sent to the hostels, however some adolescents like Darren missed out: 'I went station to learn...I been learn...when I was a young fella, I got to work, I got to earn some money'. Marrkilyi recalls the police, working for Native Welfare, picking up children who ran away from school and taking them to Nabberu. Schooling was to offer a reprieve not only from the teasing at Warburton, but also from the drinking on the reserves. Mick recollects that Wiluna 'was a good school, safe place for kids, mainly Aboriginal kids...lots of fights used to happen around the hotel because of drink'. Kenny describes his experience:

I stayed here [Warburton], but I never go to school...We was trying to go to school, but they was keep on, like teasing. Every day just walk around here. Go school sometimes. But mainly I went to school up that way, Laverton, Mt Margaret, Wiluna.

Kenny recalls his parents 'drinking right through' and as a young child he was taken to Nabberu and at 14 he started high school in Wiluna:

When I tried going the next year, the school said: 'No, you're right, you can stop, go home...don't worry about coming to school.' I was 16...They was working at Desert Gold...and my mother worked in Emu Farm. They keep doing that, like that now, work, alcoholics go to the pub, get the money, go straight to the pub, get a paper like a voucher, do something and go get a feed.

486 Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
When Marrkilyi’s family moved to Wiluna they worked at Desert Farm (see Chapter 4) and the children went to school.487

We went into a world that was so different to our parents’ world, by going there, not a protective environment, they lived on reserves and were exposed to influences of drink. They had to survive but were always there for us kids, in holiday time they had to wait for the kids.488

To summarise, although marginalised from schooling at Warburton Mission most children from the ‘desert families’ went to school in Laverton, Leonora or Wiluna and they also observed their parents working on stations or at Desert Farm. Although it can be considered that some adolescents were ‘removed’ to the hostels by missionaries or government officials, most were to return to the Western Desert, as George describes:

I wasn’t taken away for years and years like some other people, they been stolen from their family, taken away and never went back. It was different with me, I just went for school, learning and came back to be with my families, in my time...all of us here been sent away for school, missionary time, we did our job, we learn, then we came back here.

I discuss the return of these young adults to the Ngaanyatjarra region in Chapter 4.

Education for unemployment

The optimism of ‘tutored assimilation’ soon faded. Improved education and training opportunities were supposed to lead to increased employment, but the rural economy changed. Alongside a confluence of other factors, including alcohol and the introduction of Unemployment Benefits (UB), the trajectory of those who had been habituated into an expectation of advancement and employment through ‘tutored assimilation’ altered.

In 1964, the Warburton principal had worked hard to raise the first four students up to a standard to enter high school at a level equivalent to non-Aboriginal students.489 Nevertheless, most Aboriginal students tended to be placed at the lower levels, as May comments:

Most of us were in the bottom class...Aboriginal people were always in the lower class, right down the bottom, so we were doing Grade 5 and 6 again. So it wasn’t really high school, only the name was there Eastern Goldfields High School.

487 In 1954 the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) established a mission school at Karalundi Mission School near Meekatharra for children from nearby pastoral stations and the Wiluna mission opened following year (Biskup 1973: 254). The school at Wiluna Mission was for children up to Grade 3, after which they were sent to Karalundi (Sackett 1978a). By 1957 Karalundi school went up to Grade VII (Annual Report CNW 1957: 47) and children who lived at the Wiluna reserve were bussed there. When Karalundi closed in the early 1970s children returned to Wiluna for schooling (Marrkilyi E. pers. comm. April 2004). Karalundi was re-established as a Christian boarding school and is now under the umbrella of the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools group. Families who returned to the Ngaanyatjarra Lands from Wiluna in the 1990s have continued the habit of sending children to Karalundi. See: http://www.aics.wa.edu.au/content/theschools/map.asp
489 (Kral and Ward 2000: 26).
Clem recalls his own experience: ‘they all went into 1J, they was all Aboriginal, but I was a bit smarter than they were and I was put into the class where there was all the white children’. In retrospect, Clem perceives that he was denied access to the employment rewards that ‘tutored assimilation’ was expected to deliver:

I thought education was really good...I was to do the second year high school...I had dreams of being a builder and I had dreams of doing this and that. I was going to stay there but the Native Welfare he talked me into agreeing to his terms...He talked me into going to Wongutha Farm...so I went down there. Then I started thinking: ‘Oh we’re learning all the farm works’...I was learning about shearing and they gave me a certificate...I stayed there, I didn’t like it...I didn’t want to do it, so I ran away...That was in 1967...I wanted to go to school more, learn to write more, all just like university things. But at that time full blood Aborigines wasn’t given the privilege to go on to further education. Only half-caste were given that privilege. And I thought: ‘Oh well, all my dark people they were stockmens.’ So I went and became a stockman...I was still 14, it was sad...Aboriginals was only given the job of stockwork then, mustering sheep. Most of the young people who worked at Wongutha Farm, they all was everywhere, in stations...then I thought only half-caste children were able to go further school at that time...I thought white children and half-caste kids I went to school with they were given better things. Native Welfare gave them the chance to stay further on for education. But calling me in the middle, when I was under-age, I should be doing the second year in high school, but that privilege that I had to go further on was cut off by the Native Welfare.

Others had gained the false impression that they had been ‘right through’ school and been ‘real workers’. The paradox was that with the DNW maintaining ‘control, care and education of natives in native institutions’ until 1972, young adults were in fact compelled by the state to participate in the hostel training and employment program. Pedlar’s Hostel purportedly accounted for a ‘rise’ in Aboriginal employment, however, contract employment was procured by the DNW or hostel managers, wages were controlled by an intermediary and workers resided in the hostels. Jim was in a bit of trouble as a young man and instead of going to prison, he was sent to Pedlar’s for nearly two years:

Working hand on the farm, shearing, mustering sheep...They paid the hostel manager and the hostel manager paid us...every Friday, they pay us. Manager take money for board.

George was a working boy at Condingup in 1972 and recalls up to ten young men working on farms and being paid only when they returned to Pedlar’s.

By 1967 ‘due to cultural and environmental factors’ it was found that few Aboriginal children in the DNW’s Eastern Division had ‘the academic ability to undertake conventional high school courses’. A number of Warburton students, but not all, were then channelled into the ‘Special Projects Schools’. As Wesley reflects:

490 (Haebich 2005: 205).
492 (Annual Report CNW 1967: 27). Milnes notes that by the 1960s the expansion of secondary education across Australia made educational qualifications based on recognised certification a national issue. This was to erect an insurmountable
The sad thing about Nindeebai is they might have been thinking they were going to school, but a lot of them had a special building, a special school called Project School out the back of Boulder and that’s where a lot of them Aboriginal kids went. They didn’t go to a proper school, I think Project School was more just physical learning, welding or something.

Progressively teenagers at Warburton began to resist being sent away and ‘established a reputation for being aggressive and unco-operative’. Green perceives that ‘discontent grew into unrest and sometimes violence erupted both at school and in the hostel’. By the mid-1970s the ‘ultimate futility of education’ was sensed: ‘[f]or some, high school offers some sort of promise, but most go for the sake of the experience rather than any ultimate opportunity that might be offered’. The transferral of teenagers for secondary schooling outside of the region began to wane:

There is an increasing dissatisfaction with the practice of sending secondary age children away from Warburton for their ‘high school’ or equivalent education. Parents, and more particularly the old people feel this is wrong...relatives express constant concern about the welfare of their children, and become so agitated about them that once they have them home for term breaks, they are reluctant to allow children to return for succeeding terms...Children become homesick and despondent to the point of manifesting antisocial attitudes aimed at drawing upon themselves the negative attention necessary to cause authorities to send them back to Warburton.

The advent of better transport by the 1970s meant that the few remaining children boarding at Esperance, Norseman and Boulder, who returned to their families for holidays, often didn’t return to school the next term. By the 1980s the Project Centre at Boulder had closed and the Education Department no longer supported sending children away for secondary schooling. According to Wells, the Ngaanyatjarra students still boarding at Nindeebai Hostel were ‘forced to go into the normal stream’ at Eastern Goldfields High School and were not able to cope with this. Nindeebai Hostel closed soon after, leaving Norseman Mission as the last residential hostel taking secondary-aged students. Nevertheless, some families were later to return to the practice of sending teenagers away for residential post-primary schooling outside the Lands (see Appendix F).

barrier to Aboriginal students, especially those from remote communities (Milnes 1987: 347). Academic standards now determined procedure through the school years and this was further exacerbated by alteration in 1963 of [Education Department] Regulation 85 which stipulated that normal practice was to maintain chronological rather than scholastic promotion between grade levels’ with all 13 year olds to be transferred to high school irrespective of academic performance (Milnes 1987: 399).

Concerns regarding the project classes were addressed in the 1984 Beazley Report on Aboriginal education in Western Australia (Beazley 1984: 334–335). The Report found ‘conflicting evidence on the relevance and adequacy’ of the ‘project’ classes. On the one hand they were perceived to provide ‘practical skills’ on the other hand they were seen as ‘dumping grounds’ with students given no opportunity to work on the mainstream ‘Achievement Certificate curriculum’. The Report recommended a full review of the ‘purpose and operation’ of the ‘project’ classes.

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Christian Aboriginal Parent-directed Schools (CAPS) commenced in Coolgardie in 1981, then at Kurrawang, followed by Wongutha in 1990 in facilities previously used by Wongutha Mission Training Farm. The CAPS system was formed by concerned Aboriginal parents who felt that the government schools were failing Aboriginal students. This initial group were Aboriginal people who had grown up at, or had links to, Mt Margaret Mission. They felt that the standard of
despite the fact that by the mid-1980s the Education Department had implemented a ‘secondary-tops’ post-primary program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands schools.\textsuperscript{501} This led to an increase in teacher numbers and drove the provision of permanent school buildings and teacher housing in the new communities, and ultimately to higher teacher turnover and a decrease in social relations between school and the community.\textsuperscript{502}

\textbf{The expectation of employment}

As we have seen, residential hostels and training programs were established to enhance literacy and social development and ‘to raise aborigines to the highest level of employment’.\textsuperscript{503}

The Department of Native Welfare is well aware that lack of regular work is one of the major factors working against assimilation. Regular, satisfying and remunerative employment nearly always leads to an improvement in all other aspects essential to assimilation—housing, hygiene, education and social acceptability generally. In the long term, most faith is being placed in the education of Aboriginal children, not only in primary schools but to higher levels in secondary schools. But the problem of finding employment for youths and adults has to be faced today so that the task of assimilation can go forward.\textsuperscript{504}

However the expectations of ‘advancement’ did not correlate with the known limited employment potential unfolding in the Goldfields.

As the 1954 Native Welfare Act took effect unskilled station work was the main avenue of employment available for Warburton people in the Eastern Goldfields sub-district.\textsuperscript{505} At the time it was suggested that the flow of Warburton people should be stemmed as there was ‘not sufficient employment’ for those already in the district. Simultaneously, it was assumed that as Mt Margaret graduates received ‘technical and professional training to fit them for alternative and more dignified employment’ this would open more vacancies in the pastoral industry.\textsuperscript{506} In 1957 R. and C. Berndt asserted that ‘not enough’ employment was available in the Warburton-Laverton-Leonora-Kalgoorlie region and the ‘whole

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\textsuperscript{501} (Kral and Ward 2000: 36-37).
\textsuperscript{502} (NLLIA 1996).
\textsuperscript{503} WA SRO Acc 1419 EG 23-1 18/8/54—ADO Eastern Goldfields to Superintendent Cosmo Newbery Native Mission.
\textsuperscript{504} (Department of Native Welfare 1967: 27).
\textsuperscript{505} Annual Report CNA 1954: 24.
\textsuperscript{506} WA SRO Acc 1419 EG 23-1 18/8/54—ADO Eastern Goldfields to Superintendent Cosmo Newbery Native Mission. Mt Margaret established a reputation for instilling confidence in Aboriginal workers and producing ‘numerous leaders’ (Marks 1960: 104) who were celebrated as ‘responsible and respected Australian citizens’ (Department of Native Welfare 1967: 46) across the Goldfields and Western Australia. A number of Mt Margaret students studied in Perth and resided at Alvan House for females established in 1951 and McDonald House for males established in 1952 (Milnes 1987: 321). Sadie Corner studied nursing and became Matron of Leonora Hospital (Marks 1960: 80). May Miller studied teaching in Perth and returned to Mt Margaret as a qualified teacher employed by the Education Department in 1954 (Department of Native Welfare 1967). May O’Brien (nee Miller) became a high profile education professional in WA and has been awarded for her work in Aboriginal education. She has continued to work with Ngaanyatjarra people in their education.
problem of employment for Aborigines in this region is a vital one, complementary to that of education'.\footnote{507} A 1964 employment survey expressed concern at the numbers migrating to Laverton, but training and the preparation of work-ready Aboriginal adults was still recommended despite the employment scarcity in the Goldfields.\footnote{508} Table 3.2 below shows the 1965–1972 population and employment figures for Warburton and Laverton, indicating that the adult population was greater than the number of jobs available in either Laverton or Warburton. The high mobility from the Central Reserves out to the Eastern Goldfields is also illustrated in the population figures in Appendix E—Table AE.2.

It was clear that by the early 1960s DNW policy regarding the economic future of Warburton was confused. On the one hand Commissioner Gare considered it ‘fatal’ for Warburton people to come west unless they were sufficiently ‘advanced’ to be absorbed into employment in other areas.\footnote{509} On the other hand, the mission was told that they must empty the desert missions and ‘get people into the Goldfields where they will get employment’.\footnote{510}

Prior to 1969 there was no wage system for Aboriginal station workers in Western Australia. Government regulation of the pastoral industry had employed Aboriginal labour on a permit system where pastoralists had to supply rations, clothing, blankets and medicines, and cash payment of wages was ‘a matter between local employers and the Aborigines’.\footnote{511} In the Goldfields, the Mt Margaret expectation regarding employment conditions for Aboriginal pastoral workers had seeped into the ethos—as indicated in Wesley’s account of his father’s working experience ‘breaking down the barriers’ described in Chapter 2—and reiterated by Marlon:

I went to school in the 50s, only had six or seven years schooling...In that space of time I was taught everything you know and when I went out to work: Where you went to school? they asked me. ‘Mt Margaret’. Squatters and managers said: ‘You know how to work better than the rest of the people.’ I said: ‘Yeah, lot of these people they come straight in from the bush, they don’t have that education, they was never shown.’ Now that I had that little bit I can come out into the world and get any type of job.\footnote{512}
Table 3.2 Estimated adult Aboriginal population and employment figures
Laverton and Warburton 1965–1972

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**Type of Employment**

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<td>10. Other (sandalwood pullers, labourers, service workers)</td>
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**Source:** Annual Reports CNW 1964–1972
Annual Reports AAPA and ALT 1973–1983
**1973 Annual Reports stopped collecting this data.**
Marlon recalls how he, Arthur and Silas had worked at Bandya Station, but ‘walked away’ because conditions were too ‘rough’:

Go out work hard all day from five to midnight, low money, not enough sleep, bad food, rude manager, swearing. Go out work till shirt and trousers break, shoes break, no wash, can’t go to shop to get new clothes, worked till clothes fall off your back.

Marlon then moved on to Yundamindra Station where he became ‘overseer’ and stayed for around seven years. A continuity evolved because he felt trusted, had responsibility and developed a good working relationship with the manager. Wesley affirms that station managers ‘built up relationships’ with pastoral workers and would seek out the same workers.513

Under the DNW compulsory vocational training system young adults were ‘forced to work’ and if they were not working they were picked up by police (acting for DNW). Arthur suggests that this drove the development of the working habit. Una confirms that if men were caught sitting around Native Welfare would pick them up and take them to a station in much the same manner as children who were not at school were forcibly taken there by the DNW. The narratives from those who had been at Wongutha or Pedlar’s also describe how stations with the worst conditions were avoided. Arthur stayed at one station for a long time:

I been around every stations, and you see grumpy man...station owner, we didn’t like that man, so we moved around till we, till I can see this is a kind man he look after Aboriginal people. So I stayed at this one station ten or eleven miles south of Laverton... and that station owner he looked after us because he teach me, teaching me the right way. Like I started off on the, like the station motors so he taught me how to take the head off, take the sump off, take the engine out of the body. That was like a thing that I really liked, really loved to do. So I kept working and the station man, you know, he like a man like that.

Although Arthur acknowledges that ‘my way was forced, like, just the job part...that’s why I got that habit’, he also demonstrates agency in the manner in which he developed his working relationships:

[I]t wasn’t a big pay you know, they paid us little money...this was ‘pound time’. When we was working, we used to get little bit and money sort of changed at that time, you know and station people started paying us like right way. They see us working all the time and they know: ‘Oh he’s a good worker.’ And pay you more. If you not working properly, you won’t get much. So we really worked hard to earn more.

To this day a perception remains in the Ngaanyatjarra collective memory that ample employment was available: ‘when there’s station work in Laverton area they go...Leonora,

513 The good relations between pastoralists and Aboriginal station workers in the Goldfields, especially on sheep stations, was affirmed by Kado Muir (pers. comm. September 2005) who grew up in the Leonora district and is currently Head of School, School of Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Charles Darwin University, NT.
right across to Wiluna, right across the Goldfields'. Moreover, literacy was not as intrinsically important to the attainment of work as the state ideology purported. Wesley recalls that even for those 'not that educated' there was also plenty of work in town: 'Laverton Hospital was full of young Aboriginal people working, as was the Shire, now a battle to find one'. Arthur concurs:

There was a lot of jobs in the Shire and the mailcarter, he take mail into Kalgoorlie, Leonora, they needed young people to work so we used to work on the mail too. Like mail carting, going out, picking up stores, they had no train that time, coming into Laverton.

Then, Arthur says, it was different 'because of the changing':

The wool price went down, not enough meat, bullocks and things, this is around Laverton, that time used to be no rain, no grass, stations all went down. And mining mob came that time. When I was still working there, mining mob came around...they were buying the land and the station owners all got out then. That time it was really hard.

*Everything was different 'because of the changing'*

In December 1968 the *Federal Pastoral Industry Award* determined that all Aborigines employed in the pastoral industry in Australia should receive equal wages for equal work. However, West Australian Aboriginal pastoral workers were specifically 'excluded from the provisions of industrial awards which set minimum rates of pay for station hands' until 1969. 514

The core of any discussion about 'equality' rests on the premise that a worker will have access to basic and award wages as well as access to full unemployment benefit when unemployed. The exclusion of Aboriginal workers, primarily in the pastoral industry, in the Eastern Goldfields from these basic rights exposed an inherent contradiction in the DNW policy. Without economic equality the chance of achieving Middleton's dream of integration was minimised.515

Ironically, however, from 1969 the rural economy entered an unforeseen decline; wool prices plummeted and 'poor seasons and wheat quotas drove many farmers into difficulties'. 516 Additionally, increased mechanisation was being introduced to reduce labour costs and horseback mustering was replaced by aircraft and motorbikes. This led to reduced employment as stations in the Eastern Goldfields closed up or were taken over and an 'intractable set of problems started to grow at centres such as Wiluna, Laverton, and Leonora. 517

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514 (Schapper 1970: 10). In 1965 the Federal court prescribed that by the end of 1968 *all* Aborigines employed in the pastoral industry should receive the same wages as other workers (Bolton 1981: 166) and the *Federal Pastoral Industry Award* became effective in December 1968. All male Indigenous employees on Northern Territory cattle stations were entitled to the *Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award* by December 1 1968 (Rowse 1998: 118). This decision was also not applicable to Western Australia until the 1969 work season and applied only to Australian Worker's Union members and not to full-blood Aborigines employed as station hands unless they held a Certificate of Citizenship (Jebb 2002: 285), see (Bunbury 2002).
515 (Rowley 1972b: 251).
As employment potential declined it intersected with the growing confusion among welfare officers regarding Aboriginal people's eligibility for unemployment benefits: welfare policy at that time was for departmental officers not to give out rations, while Social Security guidelines continued to exclude seasonally employed people from receiving a benefit during the lay-off period.\textsuperscript{518} Aboriginal people were caught in a vicious cycle: lack of employment was further exacerbated by the inability to qualify for UB and by the DNW 'trying to rid their offices of rationees'.\textsuperscript{519}

As the 1960s drew to a close, diminishing employment prospects and the 'ineradicable proportion of structurally “unemployed” men' raised the question of eligibility for UB.\textsuperscript{520} After the election of the Labor government in 1972 it was declared that ‘all Aborigines should be paid award wages when in employment and should otherwise be eligible for the full range of social security payments, including UB’.\textsuperscript{521} With the introduction of UB Ngaanyatjarra people had their first experience of 'free money' or 'sit down'. Many did not welcome it, as Wesley’s sister Helen suggests: ‘it didn’t seem right to get the dole when you were capable of working’. Jim concurs:

\begin{quote}
I never been on that… it’s not good, for me…in that time my father told me that I’m old enough to work now: ‘You got to work for your own living.’ I think that money, that sit-down money made them give away all them jobs. Over there getting free money, why not sit down? No work. That’s changed.
\end{quote}

Marlon’s reflection provides a similar perspective:

\begin{quote}
I got used to working and supporting my family, got good money in Windarra mine, I buggared it when I came here, to Tjirrkarli about ‘83, now I got no money. Came here and watched my family drinking and I started drinking too. From that time to today they made a big mess with ‘sit down’——the government policy when they first gave ‘sit down’… the damage they done. Before we had to work to keep the family going, that’s what we were taught. When we came back to Warburton: don’t work, you don’t have to, everyone said you don’t have to worry about it now. And we got Unemployment Benefit. That was ‘government time’ and a ‘you give me this’ attitude started and went right through, like: ‘If they ask for things then I can too.’ So we all got into this habit of sitting down, lining up, waiting for the money. Now they say: ‘Why you all sitting down?’ But it was their stupid idea in the first place, the government policy, that caused so many people to sit down and loaf and put their hand out. I changed too from hard working six to four, to getting the free money, no sweat at all.
\end{quote}

From these reflections insights are gained into how the Ngaanyatjarra were paradigmatically ‘habitualized’ into the normativity of work that they encountered on the missions and stations. Then the state introduced incomprehensible waves of policy change

\begin{footnotes}
\item[518] (Jebb 2002: 288).
\item[519] (Rowley 1972 [1970]: 64; Jebb 2002: 294).
\item[520] (Rowse 1998: 138; Sanders 1986).
\item[521] (Sanders 1986: 285).
\end{footnotes}
and people began to experience a diminishing sense of certainty, predictability and control. As Arthur says:

I don't know why, but the changes came in, like you don't have to work and you still got the money coming in, all those sort of changes came, changed it around.

The dearth of employment also led to sedentarisation on the reserves and this coincided with the lifting of alcohol restrictions in 1971.

*Painted with the same brush*—alcohol and its effects

The 1963 amendments to the *Native Welfare Act* had removed many of the last restrictive regulations pertaining to Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, until 1971, alcohol restrictions still applied to any Aboriginal person not holding an exemption certificate issued under the provisions of the *Native (Citizenship Rights) Act* (see Chapter 2). Even so, alcohol was still obtained illegally. Alcohol restrictions remained in place longer in the Eastern Goldfields than in other regions, apart from the Kimberley (despite the repeal in 1970 of the *Licensing Act* which had previously prohibited Aboriginal drinking). Finally, in July 1971, the *Native (Citizenship Rights) Act* was repealed—and West Australian Aborigines gained full citizenship rights. The 'ramifications' of unrestricted access to alcohol then rippled through the sociocultural system in the towns of Wiluna, Leonora and Laverton, as well as Mt Margaret, Cosmo Newbery and Warburton. European-Aboriginal relations deteriorated and alcohol-related fights increased arrests and incarceration—eventually culminating in a serious incident between police and Warburton men travelling through Laverton for ceremonial business at Wiluna.

The removal of the remaining restrictions on alcohol access was to impact profoundly on tutored assimilation and the social development strategy. Some Ngaanyatjarra perceive that as a consequence they were no longer seen as potential workers, irrespective of their education or work experience. April considers that as alcohol took over, education was undermined:

When them young girls, young men came home after being away for two or three years being away learning a lot of things, work and everything, reading, writing, and all that...They came back and

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523 (Sackett 1977).
524 Annual Report CNW 1971: 8. Alcohol restrictions were lifted progressively in the different regions across WA. The right of access to alcohol on the same conditions as applied to the general public were granted in the South West Land Division in July 1964 and in November 1966 restrictions were lifted in the North West Division and the North Central Division, excluding the township of Wiluna (Annual Report CNW 1967: 11).
525 (Fletcher 1992:1).
526 (Sackett 1977).
527 The incident became known as the 'Skull Creek affair' and was of such severity that it led to the 'Laverton Royal Commission'. See (Legal Service 1976; Western Australia Parliament 1976; Woenne 1980).
sort of went down, drinking, they was teaching them the wrong way. Teaching them to drink, instead of teaching them to go out to the station or get a job in small towns like Laverton, Leonora. From that time, you know the ones I went to school with they went down…instead of going up and learning different things, they didn’t learn anything after that. That’s really sad ‘cause I used to live in Cosmo, and when I used to go into Laverton and do shopping and I see all the girls I been to school with, they all drinking…which wasn’t right, should have been all working, there was a lot of jobs there…When I was still going to school I used to see a lot of young ladies come back from Kurrawang, Esperance and they work in the hospital, work in the Welfare office, work in the shop, they had jobs everywhere.

Wesley suggests that Aboriginal people in towns like Kalgoorlie and Laverton were ‘painted with the same brush’ and April attests to this:

Citizen Rights come in, that just went down, wasn’t good…They had no encouragement you know. ‘Cause only they look at…they don’t look at fullbloods…not encourage the fullbloods…they had that feeling all the time in small towns like Wiluna, Leonora, Kalgoorlie or Laverton.

Wesley senses that prior to this, non-Aboriginal people in the Eastern Goldfields had been ‘building up relationships’ with Aboriginal people, but non-restrictive drinking rights and the introduction of ‘money for nothing’ led to negative stereotyping that continues up to the present day. These days some Ngaanyatjarra leaders lament on how life should have been, had it not been for the insurmountable factors outlined above.

By 1969 Ministerial concern regarding underemployment in the Central Reserves and surrounding towns had intensified to such an extent that the resources and needs of the area, including Warburton, were evaluated by consultants W.D. Scott and Co. In 1972 the Minister accepted their in principle recommendations. With the 1972 election of a Federal Labor government, as I describe in Chapter 4, these recommendations were never realised.

The move ‘from rations to cash’

Anthropologist Charles Rowley posits that education was seen as ‘the one great hope for increasing the rate of change’ for Aborigines, yet, he argues, the causal factors in the process of social change were not properly considered as it was assumed at the time that schooling was ‘the main factor in social change’. Moreover, the ‘effects of access to money…as a basic force in social change’ were not taken into consideration. Tutored assimilation was expected to bring Aboriginal people to a ‘standard’ warranting receipt of

528 Management consultants W.D. Scott and Co. were employed to survey the region and the DNW was given the impression that Warburton Ranges Mission was ‘on its last legs’ (WA SRO Acc 1667 444/70—Central Reserves 1/8/70 notes from DNW Scott Survey Steering Committee). Recommendations from the Scott survey included increasing the involvement of Aboriginal people in the development of projects; emphasising adult training and vocational training; and changing the system of primary education delivered by the WA Education Department. The Education Department was, however, scornful of recommendations regarding changes to education (WA SRO Acc 1667 444/70—Central Reserves Director General of Education evaluation of Report).

529 WA SRO Acc 1667 444/70—Central Reserves 16/3/72 letter from CNW to Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra.

530 Title adapted from (Rowse 1998: 112).
cash wages for the employed and welfare benefits for the unemployed on the assumption that they adopted the family form and household structure of 'normal' Australians.\(^{532}\) However, for the training to be effective, 'rations would eventually have to be replaced by cash'.\(^{533}\)

**The Warburton experience of cash**

The transition to a cash-based labour market economy was nuanced by the sociocultural expectation of the exchange relationship, the understanding of the ration relationship and the lack of familiarity with cash as an abstract medium of exchange. Western Desert society is founded upon the rule-bound, sanctified nature of reciprocity and exchange embedded in social relationships and ritual.\(^{534}\) This kin-based social economy does not articulate easily into a market-based cash economy.\(^{535}\)

The mission was at first a cash-less society and the Ngaanyatjarra learned that 'rations' were not given, but earned (i.e. as payment for dingo scalps, or mission work because 'pauperism' was not encouraged).\(^{536}\) As a 'reward for effort' workers received a 'chit'—a piece of paper marked with the number of hours worked to be exchanged for rations, blankets and second hand clothes at the store. Even with subsidies, the mission's capacity to provide rations in exchange for labour was limited and depended upon the majority population maintaining their previous hunter-gatherer lifestyle:

> Natives are not permitted to come and just sit around the mission all day in the hopes of cadging food or eating up the earnings of those who work, but are sent out hunting and encouraged to live their normal bush lives...the indigents are rationed on Mondays and the Child endowment goods are distributed for the camp children on Thursdays...there are 27 boys and 34 girls in the Homes with 60 children in the camp making a total of 121 for whom we receive Child endowment.\(^{537}\)

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\(^{531}\) (Rowley 1972b: 322).

\(^{532}\) (Rowse 1998: 117).

\(^{533}\) (Rowse 1998: 170).

\(^{534}\) Traditionally social transactions were enacted in ritual exchange, for example: trading exchange of weapons or utensils; ritual exchange of objects after the completion of funeral ceremonies; and the obligation to provide food in sorry camps. Myers talks of hunting and preparing large game in terms of a 'social product' where 'gifts of meat could satisfy other exchange obligations' such as bestowals of meat from a man to his future in-laws, and the distribution of meat to kin according to relationship with the hunter (Myers 1988: 21). Exchange of objects or 'services' may last many years, for example: a verbal contract for marriage where a son-in-law is obligated to contribute food, services or blankets to his father-in-law could extend over many seasons (de Graaf 1968: 98-99). See also (Hamilton 1972; Myers 1986; Rowse 1998).

\(^{535}\) (Austin-Broos 2003; Peterson 1993; Sansom 1994 [1988]; Schwab 1995)

\(^{536}\) Rowse argues that 'pauperism' is 'one of the central constructs of Australian colonialism' and underpinning the act of ration distribution was the philosophical need to inculcate Aboriginal people into 'earning' rations, thus reinforcing the 'ethical relationship between effort and reward' (Rowse 1998: 40–1).

\(^{537}\) WA SRO Acc 1419 23-7-3 Missions UAM Mission Warburton Ranges—Reports Annual Inspection June 1954–June 1955 Annual Report from UAM to DNA re. Warburton. Prior to the 1959 amendments to the Commonwealth Social Services Act the distribution of pensions and child endowment most likely arose from the mission exploiting its discretionary access to social security benefits. During the Second World War a number of important changes were made to the Social Services laws as they applied to Aboriginal people. 'Detribalised' Aborigines became eligible for child endowment under the Commonwealth Child Endowment Act, 1941 and in the following year this was extended to missions and government institutions. An amendment to the family allowance legislation (Act No 5 of 1942) allowed the granting of child
The ‘reward for effort’ relationship was confused by churchgoers also receiving a token that could be exchanged for rations. In the 1960s the Western Mining workers were the first workers at Warburton to actually earn cash (and immediately purchased the first locally-owned vehicle). Then, as I explain further below cash came in the form of social security benefits and by 1968 a Savings Bank Agency operated with 20 accounts mainly used by locals.

**The Goldfields experience of cash**

Unlike their mission counterparts, adults in the Goldfields had worked for cash and learned to handle money: ‘like whitefellas you got to go out and work for yourself, can’t depend on your family all the time…that’s what Aboriginal people this side say’. Valcie states also that:

> Even bush people, they come from Lands, they right, was stock work in those days…all working on stations and only rations for real old people in those days…no Social Security, no nothing. If you don’t work you don’t have anything. You don’t have sit-down money or anything. And money wasn’t good in those days, but whatever money, look after it, spend it right.

And Wesley concurs:

> They had to work for a living because there was no such thing as the dole…After the ration depot finished, well they got to go and work for their own money. Then they had to go and work station and that was part of learning and they still kept on learning on the job, on the job training. Got to understand the white man, understand the white man boss.

Molly recalls:

> I used to work around Laverton area, hospital, domestic, work anywhere to earn money, to keep me going and my husband used to work in the station. We worked to earn our own living, no government money, only child endowment. That’s all the free money I know.

Clifford also heard stories from his family about this experience:

> I think they learned just to work, look after yourself, put food on the table…the people who camped around the mission they were sort of cared for…people who worked down that way Cosmo, Laverton, round Laverton, stations, Leonora…they had to work or else they wouldn’t get nothing coming in.

**Access to Social Security**

The official goal of assimilation necessitated equality of access to social security benefits and inclusion in normal industrial awards as ‘indisputable entitlements’. Amendments to the Commonwealth Social Services Act in 1959 had finally allowed ‘nomadic’ Aborigines access

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endowment payments to children maintained by missions under particular circumstances and pensions granted to the mission authority under (Acts Nos 3 and 19 of 1942) (Sanders 1986: 91–93). In 1944 the Unemployment and Sickness Benefit Act was applied to all Aborigines provided that they were considered by the Department of Social Services to be of sufficient ‘character, standard of intelligence and social development’ (Sanders 1986: 93). ‘Nomadic’ Aborigines were, however, denied access to the benefits until 1959.

538 (Plant and Viegas 2002).
540 Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
to welfare benefits previously denied: child endowment became available to mothers and the pension was available for aged, widowed and invalid people.\textsuperscript{542} Social security reforms were based on the Department of Social Services 'principle' that if an Aborigine demonstrated his 'ability to handle money wisely and to manage his own affairs' then payments could be paid directly to him, or the mission was able to give out part of the pension to the individual in the form of a 'pocket money' payment.\textsuperscript{543}

The distribution of social services benefits set the stage for the formation of an administrative identity—unmediated by social relatedness—in accord with the bureaucratic requirements of the state. In its attempt to assimilate Aboriginal people into European institutionalised norms, the social security system was unable to cope with aspects of Aboriginal sociality like traditional marriages (i.e. marriages not registered at law) and polygynous marriages.\textsuperscript{544} After 1959 identity requirements for social security eligibility were formalised—proof of residence, date of birth, naming, signatures—and by 1961 even the registering of Aboriginal births and deaths became 'compulsory'.\textsuperscript{545}

Warburton people were given family surnames between 1955 and 1958, consistent with a 1954 DNW circular advising that 'where possible English surnames should be used'.\textsuperscript{546} Names were initially applied haphazardly with brothers receiving different surnames or a man being named after his wife. Older people with no surname were arbitrarily grouped into families because the administration required surnames. At the time of the first census in Warburton in 1966 a missionary realised that some family surnames had been attributed wrongly and one family had a number of different surnames. English names started to be used in tandem with the introduction of new systems. Una recalls that when rations were distributed the new English names were called out and gradually people began to learn 'this must be for me' and acquired the names. The more common usage of English name, may also have arisen around finding a form of address that was phonologically dissimilar from the bush name to refer to someone recently deceased.\textsuperscript{547} Brooks suggests that it was common for schooled adults to acquire surnames first then pass them on to other family

\textsuperscript{541} (Rowse 1998: 114).
\textsuperscript{542} (Rowse 1998: 133).
\textsuperscript{543} (Sanders 1986: 99).
\textsuperscript{544} (Sanders 1986).
\textsuperscript{545} (Jebb 2002: 260). See (Jebb 2002) for a discussion of the entry into the Social Security system in the 1950s in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.
\textsuperscript{546} (Powell and Kennedy 2005: 34–6).
\textsuperscript{547} The term \textit{Kammarra} (or \textit{Kammarra}) is the name for someone who has a similar name to someone who passed away. See Ngaanyatjarra Glossary Appendix D.
members, including elders. These habits were to signify an overt appropriation of the introduced ‘symbolic system’, that is, a ‘cultural marker’ that publicly redefined the way that one perceived oneself and related to others. Pension and child endowment cheques, written out to an individual’s recently acquired English name, came to the Warburton superintendent. The receipt of a set amount of pocket money (with the remaining proportion allocated in rations) required a verification mark—a signature (the phonographic code for the new oral vocative) or an ‘X’ (a legally valid stylised mark). It was in the mission’s economic interest to promote the acquisition of English nomenclatures as only schoolchildren with English names could be claimed under Section 95(1) of the Act and subsidised by the DNW. Wells suggests that the subsidies were a means by which the mission kept operating.

The dormitory had closed in 1961, ostensibly to train adults to take responsibility for their children and to encourage economic independence. However, the mission continued receiving government subsidies to provide three meals a day for some 100 schoolchildren and stores for 34 pensioners. Adults had by this time become reliant on food bought from the mission store using minimal cash from limited poorly paid employment or pocket money from child endowment or pensions. De Graaf suggests that at this time around 400 adults shared and subsisted on meagre resources with hungry parents ‘begging’ for food from children fed in the dining room. Despite the 1959 amendments to the Act, direct payment of full cash welfare benefits to individuals commenced at Warburton only in 1971 (see Appendix E—Table AE.1) and ‘the real turning point’ came with the election of the Federal Labor government in 1972. It is important at this point to juxtapose this paternalistic state of affairs with the demands and expectations of individual competence in managing not only one’s personal affairs, but also community affairs, with the onset of self-determination only a few years later.

549 (Harries 1994: 60; Brooks 2002a: 29).
552 Wells—Interview 1/4/04.
553 (Douglas 1978: 4–5).
554 (United Aborigines Messenger February 1965: 6).
555 Mark de Graaf was Principal at Warburton School from 1962–1963. He notes that by now flour bought from the mission store had replaced plant foods which were mainly gathered on bush trips (de Graaf 1968: 69).
556 (de Graaf 1968: 136–5).
557 (Sanders 1986: 115). The directive was issued by Billy Wentworth who was at the time the Minister for Social Security and in charge of the Commonwealth government’s new Office of Aboriginal Affairs (Sanders 1986: 115).
Literacy and schooling

In 1953 the DNA had announced that it had been unable ‘to collate statistical information which would permit an estimate of current literacy among adult natives’ across the entire state of Western Australia. 558 Nevertheless, by 1958 most Aboriginal adults were seen to ‘lack skills’ other than for a ‘limited range of farm and pastoral tasks’ and this was associated with the ‘illiteracy of most Aborigines 30 years of age and above, and with functional illiteracy of a large number between 15 and 30 years’. 559 This is hardly surprising if one considers that the 1945 Education Act had ‘theoretically’ opened ‘white schools’ to Aborigines, yet under 1954 Native Welfare Act ‘legal restrictions to towns had prohibited them taking advantage of it’ and only in 1951 had the DNA expressed a ‘willingness’ to accept responsibility for the education of children in missions. 560

In 1951, in the DNA Central District, incorporating the Goldfields, it was found that not many school-age children had ‘progressed beyond Standard V’ and this was attributed simply to poor attendance arising from the ‘itinerant nature of the children’s family life’. 561 However, according to Biskup, 54.4% of school-age Goldfields Aboriginal children were found to be attending school in 1954 and educated at primary standard. 562 Ironically in 1956, despite a history of minimal state support for Aboriginal education, a DNW officer reported that it was ‘an indictment of some 30 years of Mission effort in the Eastern Goldfields that so few adult natives can speak even a limited version of comprehensible English and a minimal percentage of them can read and write it’. 563 By the 1960s, with increased Education Department involvement and Native Welfare compulsion, Aboriginal children were to form the majority state school population in many small Goldfields towns, although Mt Margaret remained the largest school north of Kalgoorlie. 564 By 1963, in the DNW Eastern Division (Fig. 1.4) it was reported that 452 Aboriginal children were in primary school, 28 were in secondary, and twelve were at Wongutha Farm, with secondary participation up to Grade VII. 565 Given the limitations of prior educational experiences it is

560 (Morgan 1986: 268-269); WA SRO Acc 1733 511/42—Warburton Ranges Mission native matters 10/8/51 UAM to A/DCNA.
562 (Biskup 1973: 255); Annual Report CNW 1955: 27.
563 WA SRO Acc 1419 EG 23-1 19/12/56—From DO-C McLarty to CNW re. arguing against UAM teaching vernacular at Warburton Ranges.
564 (Milnes 1987: 391).
understandable that few Aboriginal children in the Eastern Division were found to have: ‘the academic ability to undertake conventional high school courses’.\footnote{Annual Report CNW 1967: 27.} It is important to emphasise at this point that the Warburton students undertaking secondary education in the Goldfields who ‘could not cope with anything but the most basic academic program’, in fact formed only the first or second generation to experience schooling.\footnote{(Green 1983: 18).}

It was perceived that the assimilation experiment in Warburton ‘was doomed to failure, for the problems of learning in a second language had become cumulative’.\footnote{(Green 1983: 18).} Douglas concurs, considering that teenagers knew ‘everyday English’, but did not have sufficient competence to cope with secondary schooling having been taught English by a ‘hit-or-miss method’.\footnote{(Douglas 1978: 117).} School records from 1961 indicated that reading levels of fifteen year olds were below those of a mainstream nine year old.\footnote{(Green 1983: 35).} In 1962 de Graaf found reading ages ‘so low as to be at times immeasurable’ with the highest English reading level equivalent to Grade 3 or 4, and by 1963 equivalent to Grade 7.\footnote{(de Graaf 1968:134).} Later in the 1960s the school was not achieving ‘even a basic level of literacy and numeracy’ and by 1974 at the end of primary school ‘a great number’ of students ‘have little to show for the time spent there’.\footnote{(Green 1983: 120-121; Glass 1974: 44).} Anecdotally, it is commonly asserted that young people at Warburton are less literate than their mission-educated elders. It is suggested that social relatedness accounted as much for the purportedly higher levels of literacy among mission-educated adults, as did ‘compulsion’.\footnote{Howell—Email interview 2004.} Certainly children resident in the Home attended school regularly—when it was happening, and for shorter durations—and schooling was in harmony with restructured sleeping, eating and bathing routines. During ‘Native Welfare time’, a factor leading to ‘better literacy’ was compulsion, driven by hunger, as ‘there was so little food that kids had to go to the dining room... so it meant that they went to school every day’.\footnote{Glass and Hackett—Interview 8/5/04.}

Wells describe that ‘there was sort of this compulsion of going to school’ because ‘people...
were still under the influence of the mission era where kids went to school, no questions asked’ and ‘partly because they were fed’:

Kids came up from the camp, were showered, went to the dining room for breakfast, went from the dining room to school. We marched them back for lunch, then marched them back to school, then at the end of the school afternoon they changed into their camp clothes and went home.575

As a consequence, concludes Wells, children in those days ‘appeared to be a lot more literate’.

However, in fact, data from the 2004 CDEP Skills Audit literacy assessments (shown in Chapter 5) suggest that the literacy levels of the older generation are approximately equivalent to those of the younger generation. If this is so, what accounts for the impression that the mission generation has better literacy? It is not my intention to determine whether mission schooling was more or less successful, nor to consider whether literacy outcomes have deteriorated or improved. Rather, my aim is to examine whether over a few generations adults have taken hold of literacy for social and cultural purposes and, if so, under what circumstances, in order to understand the factors beyond instructional learning that account for literacy in the remote Aboriginal context. I now turn the focus away from children and pedagogy to analyse the circumstances that precipitated the development of literacy as social practice in this recently preliterate group.

**Literacy and adult practices**

Street posits that ‘literacy processes cannot be understood simply in terms of schooling and pedagogy: they are part of more embracing social institutions and conceptions’.576 He further contends that it is necessary to ‘take account of the ideological issues and social practices that surround people’s literacy practices’, and I would add, act as catalysts allowing some literacies to flourish, and not others.577 I now turn to adults and the context that fostered the development of vernacular literacy.

**Vernacular literacy**

As discussed in Chapter 2, a vernacular approach to literacy commenced in the 1950s in the belief that ‘the ability to read in the vernacular will be one of the greatest incentives and helps to the reading and mastery of English’.578 Driven by a new enthusiasm the

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575 Wells—Interview 1/4/04. The missionaries operated the dining room until it was taken over by the Department of Community Welfare (DCW) in 1973 (United Aborigines Messenger April 1973: 4). DCW ran the dining room for a number of years, then the community ran it for only a short while longer.

576 (Street 1994: 145).

577 (Street 2001: 100).

missionaries aimed to establish ‘self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating Aboriginal churches’ and, unless they gave ‘the people Scriptures in their own speech’, they were ‘doomed to failure’. 579 Aboriginal pastors were trained at Gnowangerup Bible Training Institute (GBTI) to itinerate so that white missionaries would be free to move to areas: ‘where Christ is not known’. 580 However, this ran counter to the ideological position of the DNW:

While it is desirable that the Missionaries learn to converse understandably with the natives they profess to enlighten they must be brought to realise that if the natives are to make their way in a white man’s world it is essential that they be given a good command of English...very little can be gained by attempting to make tribal natives literate in their own language. 581

The accepted Native Welfare policy was that ‘English is spoken in all dealings with native children’, and missionaries using the ‘native dialect’ were ‘requested to discourage this practice’. 582 The vernacular approach had other critics:

This attitude, though of debatable value to the Australian drive for aboriginal “assimilation”, has changed markedly the typical U.A.M outlook on native culture. Linked with this new outlook is a desire to provide this nascent church with the Gospel in the native language...This approach is the reverse of the integration and training in English so ardently advocated by R.S. Schenk, long an influential voice in the U.A.M. decisions. 583

I would suggest that, paradoxically, Christianity and vernacular literacy were to provide a context for literacy maintenance and development not visible to the state.

Adults were taught to read Christian texts in Bible study schools at missions and in Kalgoorlie. 584 At Mt Margaret in 1957, men from Cosmo Newbery and Warburton participated in textually-mediated exegetical tasks including: studies in the ‘Old Testament, New Testament, Bible Teachings, Christian Service (Witnessing, Sermon Preparation, Art and Music)’, vernacular literacy and the memorisation of Scripture. The Warburton group were given separate classes consisting of:

A set of 18 lectures on the chief Bible Doctrines. (These were given in the Warburton Ranges Dialect). 2. Translation of the following portions: Genesis 1–4; 16; 22: 1–14. Mark 1: 12; 3: 35. Selection of 26 verses for use in the Bible Doctrine lectures. 3. Production of a set of paraphrases of eight scenes surrounding the Crucifixion Story. 4. Compilation of a small book of Hymns and Choruses. 585

581 WA SRO Acc 1419 EG 23-1 19/12/56——From DO-C McLarty to CNW re. arguing against UAM teaching vernacular at Warburton Ranges.
582 Annual Report CNW 1957: 12.
583 (Marks 1960: 101).
584 The Western Desert Bible School and Translation Centre was established in 1957 and in 1958 became the UAM Language Department in Kalgoorlie under the guidance of Wilf Douglas and his wife Beth. They provided resources and support for the development of Christian materials, particularly in the vernacular, across the whole of the Eastern Goldfields. The Bible-training section was transferred to the Gnowangerup Bible Training Institute. The UAM Language Department ceased operating after 1982.
By 1966 it was claimed that the church was ‘no longer a mission church, but the church of the people’:

Many of the leaders of the church are illiterate, or have only little education. There is much they must learn for themselves before they can give out to help others. There is a great urgency to have God’s word in their own language so they may have spiritual food to feed upon, that they may be able to fully understand the wonderful message of God’s salvation to them. 586

As only ‘one or two’ of the Christian leaders were able to read from the English Bible, most ‘relied heavily’ on Bible story pictures (Fig. 3.1): 587

Some were able to read English but not write in it. Others could not speak nor read nor write English. Leadership roles did not call upon English literacy very heavily if at all. A small number of men could read English and did so in church services from the Bible. Writing was not called for. 588

Howell also suggests that over time literacy in Ngaanyatjarra, rather than English, became integral to the church leadership role where reading in Ngaanyatjarra was ‘almost an essential skill’. Silas says his father learned to be a preacher at Bible school and learned Ngaanyatjarra reading by doing translation work with the missionary Noel Blyth. Harold (Family D) trained to be an evangelist before 1963 when he went to the Australian Inland Mission Bible College in Singleton, NSW for three to six months. His wife Rosie recalls that when he returned there were many preachers ‘telling story about Mama God... Jack, Silas’s father, every Sunday they tell a story to the people, they come from the camp they hear about the Lord Jesus’ then get ‘little ticket from the missionary for mirrka’. Molly recalls:

In the mission Aboriginal teachers used to hold their own class, and when you want to have a Christian meeting, Christian Endeavour you learn to teach them from the Bible yourself. We used to have our own Bible School. The training they gave us, we used to teach, if you want a speaker for next week, well, you go and pick that speaker yourself they can speak on Sunday. Training, running their own things. 589

A broader adult vernacular literacy ‘campaign’ commenced with the arrival of missionary linguists Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett in 1963. 590 Initially they did not find ‘the keen interest in the literacy campaign which they had hoped for...

586 United Aborigines Messenger October 1966: 5.
588 Howell—Email interview 2004.
589 Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).
590 A number of non-Aboriginal people have worked on Ngaanyatjarra language over many years beginning with Claude Cotterill and Sam Mollenhauer who had commenced untrained linguistic analysis prior to the arrival of Wilf Douglas, and subsequently Noel Blyth, Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett commenced a lifetime vocation learning Ngaanyatjarra, teaching vernacular literacy, and translating Scriptures from English to Ngaanyatjarra. They have published a number of significant Ngaanyatjarra texts including the New Testament (Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project 1999) and the Ngaanyatjarra dictionary (Glass and Hackett 2003). Still today they continue to teach Ngaanyatjarra literacy, translate the Old Testament and publish Ngaanyatjarra texts. Herbert Howell was a teacher at COSMO Newbery from 1963–66 and in 1971 appointed superintendent at Warburton Ranges Mission. In 1978 Herbert and his wife Lorraine moved to Warakurna to develop a new ministry. In 1982 they resigned from the UAM and along with Glass and Hackett formed the Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project with the Ngaanyatjarra people. Thelma Roberts did missionary work at Warburton from the early 1970s to 1983.
I'm pastor of Warburton Ranges Community Church. I've been a Christian for a long time. We have difficult times, and as we journey in our Christian life, we must ask God to help us. It's been a difficult time for my Christian life, taking funerals in the Ngaanyatjarra land and doing the best I can. Lately I lost my aunt, Mrs She was the first person to see the missionaries coming out from Mt Margaret to the Warburton Ranges. She was one of the first Christians, and lived a long time. When she passed away, she told me not to have a sorry camp because she is going to a happy land, and we did what she asked. As a Christian we have to break down some barriers, so I'd like to encourage everyone who is reading this story, as a Christian we will face many trials and tribulations, but we can only look upon the Lord for our guidance and follow His way. Jesus said in John 14, 'let not your hearts be troubled'. He also said He's going to prepare a place for us and He's coming to take us to that wonderful home in heaven. We need to be ready all the time.

The campaign was aimed not only at the male church leadership, but also at women. A group of 30 women started learning, with ten completing the ‘course’, however with insufficient reading material they were ‘far from being fluent readers’. At first simple duplicated reading materials were produced and groups ‘were often split into those who had learned some English literacy at school and those who were non-literate’. In 1969 Glass completed a new set of seven primers entitled Nintirriwa-la Wangkaku.

After returning to Warburton from the Goldfields, Una recalls observing her mother learning to read Ngaanyatjarra using the phonics method (i.e. syllable-based approach) introduced in the early literacy classes for women:

I used to go round and sit down and listen to the older people sitting down…and I was thinking to myself: ‘Oh that’s too hard, I can’t do that’…But that was my language, but I was slowly learning. I used to come and sit down when the older people were talking to Miss Hackett and Miss Glass and I used to sit down and watch them…my mother used to take little books down, books like ‘kapi, wuru, mirrka’ all that. She used to then take little papers like this home and they and I used to sit down and say: ‘wuru, mirrka, ku-pi’. Then I got interested. They used to have a little Bible and songbook, then I used to learn, learn, learn.

Una considers that at school she ‘didn’t learn much, really…still a little bit not properly learnt, like going to high school, wiyarta’. But she was interested in reading nevertheless:

When I left school I used to read all sorts of, any sort of books, I see on the ground. Sometimes we get Reader’s Digest…or sometimes they come second-hand and I used to read them…We used to stay long way and we used to sit down home, nothing to do and I used to sit down and read, anything what I see.

Una’s motivation to learn Ngaanyatjarra literacy continued as she worked with Glass and Hackett, eventually authoring a number of stories, and contributing to Bible translation and dictionary compilation.

Marie Geytenbeek and Jan Mountney from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) were seconded to the Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project and worked in a number of Ngaanyatjarra communities from 1990 onwards. After the Howells shifted to Warburton, Lorraine along with Mountney and Geytenbeek worked on Ngaanyatjarra literacy and AEW training in the schools (Glass 2000: 5). In 1999 the Howells left the Lands and Herbert currently works at Wongutha Christian Aboriginal Parent-directed School (CAPS) near Esperance. Mountney and Geytenbeek lived for six months to a year in the communities and taught reading to adults and children from their caravans. Mountney is still based in Blackstone training Ngaanyatjarra speakers to teach literacy in the LOTE programme. The first non-missionary linguist, Kazuko Obata, was appointed by the Ngaanyatjarra Council to work at the short-lived Language Centre based at Ngaanyatjarra Community College from 2000–2001. She returned to complete other projects including a Ngaanyatjarra learner’s guide, CD-rom and a picture dictionary (Obata et al. 2005).

592 United Aborigines’ Messenger, August 1968: 12.
594 (Glass 2000).
In the early days at Warburton there was minimal adult reading material other than Christian texts, although secular books sometimes arrived in donations of second-hand goods, as Una notes above.595

There’s no books only school books…They used to go church. Only, what that book, Christian one, song. English one, Redemption one them older peoples.596

Christian literacy events were important as they modelled a purpose for reading outside the pedagogical context. At church services, ‘picture sheets’ were used, short Bible stories were read and the sermon explained the story. Sunday School was textually-mediated with hymns in English or Ngaanyatjarra, Bible reading, and a short story or quiz.597 Services were also held in the camps ‘with hymn-singing, reading and a prayer’ led by family members.598 The availability of Christian texts must have aided literacy as they provided a means by which newly literate individuals could practice their reading skills. The UAM Language Department produced and distributed material:

From Kalgoorlie we send out English literature to a growing number of aboriginal and part-aboriginal readers. It is not easy to find good literature in English simple enough to meet the needs of some of the people…but what we are sending out is increasing the desire to read on the part of the people, and we trust that more and more literature of the right type will become available as Christians and missionaries become conscious of the value of the printed page.599

‘Mission Publications of Australia’ also published magazines, Sunday School lessons, Scriptures and Hymns, primers and illustrated dictionaries.600 The Christian Today: Family Magazine has been distributed to Aboriginal Christians since the 1950s with simple text prepared for a community audience.601 It was read for photos and stories about Christian people outside Warburton and people still contribute to it today (Fig. 3.2).

**Literacy and Christian practices in the Goldfields**

In the 1960s the Ngaanyatjarra participated in textually-mediated Christian practices within a web of interconnectedness extending across the Eastern Goldfields to Warburton. The Aboriginal church gained momentum as graduates from GBTI began itinerating around the Goldfields. Cosmo Newbery was an important site with ladies prayer meetings, Christian Endeavour for children, and services led by local church leaders, including April’s father. Aboriginal Christians from Cosmo itinerated with workers at nearby stations:602

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595 United Aborigines Messenger June 1964: 12.
596 Redemption Songs (Redemption Songs n.d.) is a popular Hymn book. It is now out of print but people still ask to translate English songs into Ngaanyatjarra from the ‘Redemption one’ (Glass and Hackett pers. comm. 2004).
599 (Douglas and Douglas 1964: 54).
Pray the Lord will raise up someone to do itinerating trips around the stations in the Goldfields. I went around with three friends after the anniversary and found it a real necessity and worthwhile. Often the Christians get lonely on the stations with no fellowship and so they give up.603

Alcoholism and the despair of reserve life gave missionaries fertile ground for itineration and salvation.604 Permits authorised by the Minister for Native Welfare were required for missionaries to enter and evangelise as reserves were legally inaccessible to persons other than Aborigines.605 Douglas recalls how many a time on the Kalgoorlie Reserve he was followed and questioned by police who mistakenly assumed his bag contained illegal supplies of alcohol rather than Christian material.606 Itineration trips were also made to Laverton and Leonora 'to contact the people in the towns and native reserves'.607 Often a missionary would hold evening slide shows or films, give out Bible stories and Bible pictures or hold church services and teach Sunday School.608 Gospel Centres or shop fronts were also set up in Leonora and Laverton and this enabled the distribution of Christian materials for Christian meetings.609

Literature...puts into the hands of the ordinary missionary a valuable means of communication, instruction and propagation of the Gospel. It also assists the local church leaders and teachers...Over all, the trend is to consolidate the effectiveness of Gospel outreach in its many forms. Not only so – here is an effective means of making newly-literates more literate, and opens new doors of economic opportunity.610

Kalgoorlie was a centre for services, Youth Fellowship and the Mission Church half hour on 6KG radio with people sending in hymn requests 'for someone they know'.611 Christian Conventions, often attended by hundreds of Aboriginal people from across the region, were regularly held at Mt Margaret providing opportunities for Aboriginal Christians to hone their skills and demonstrate leadership. The 1969 Convention at Mt Margaret was the first anniversary organised and run solely by Aboriginal Christians.612 Arthur recalls going to Mt Margaret after Pedlar's Hostel and observing people coming in for the 'Anniversary':

Big mob coming in from all over coming in to like Mt Margaret, for church service every once a year, so that's where I was learning like: where these people come from? Younger people and older people coming in. One of my parents told me: 'Oh they come in from stations, there's a lot of station around here, anybody can go and work...'...so I moved out into the station.

The Conventions offered a site for the exchange of information and new practices.

604 United Aborigines Messenger September 1968: 3.
605 (Schapper 1970: 41).
606 United Aborigines Messenger September 1968: 3.
607 United Aborigines Messenger August 1963: 19.
609 United Aborigines Messenger February 1965: 8; United Aborigines' Messenger, February/March 1968: 12–13
610 United Aborigines' Messenger, August 1968: 12.
612 (Stanton 1990: 221).
In summation, the missionaries taught adults to read, and to a lesser extent write, in their own vernacular believing in the inestimable importance of comprehension in the mother tongue. This process also worked in part because as Rose notes: ‘biblical discourse is meaningful’ and ‘directly translatable’ to Western Desert people.\(^1\) Christian texts continue to manifest emblematic value as artefacts redolent of the sacred qualities of turulu—polysemously rendered as both ‘song, corroboree, dance’ and ‘church service, church meeting’ in the Ngaanyatjarra Dictionary.\(^4\)

Some older people who’ve become Christians, they can’t read or write but they’ll still carry a Bible around with them because it’s the importance, it’s God’s Word, so they keep it. Cause it’s part of God, it’s all of God’s words in there, it’s a Holy Book that they keep with them, along with their Hymn book.\(^5\)

And despite socio-spatial factors working against the conservation of literacy artefacts, Bibles and hymnbooks have been looked after over many years.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I begin to demonstrate that pedagogy is ‘only one influence’ on literacy.\(^6\)

In this period we see the enactment of two prevailing ideologies: one that echoes the narrative of advancement from illiteracy to literacy focusing on improved state schooling for children, and another that draws on the reformist missionary tradition of adults attaining their own meaningful relationship with the Word in the vernacular. The missionaries provided a social context for literacy, and reiterative encounters with the textually-mediated Christian community paradigmatically influenced the manner in which people took hold of literacy. Perspectives were expanded in ‘Native Welfare time’ when a consciousness about belonging to a broader Christian community, beyond kinship networks, started developing. During this period events from the Western world started to resonate marking a conceptual reconfiguring of the known world as the Ngaanyatjarra began to locate themselves within a broader national and international sociocultural space.

Ultimately, the expectations of assimilation, education and employment under Native Welfare were unrealistic and did not correlate with the rapidly changing socioeconomic circumstances of the late 1960s. The assimilationist policy of social development had placed the onus on individuals to take responsibility for their own advancement and tried to separate young people from the influence of traditional families. Sir Paul Hasluck, who later had misgivings about this individualist approach, reflected that ‘we did not see clearly

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\(^{1}\) (Rose 2001: 75).
\(^{4}\) (Glass and Hackett 2003: 398).
\(^{5}\) Marrkilyi E.—Interview 22/1/04.
the ways in which the individual is bound by membership of a family or a group. Nor did they comprehend the overwhelming attachment to country that would ultimately draw the Ngaanyatjarra back to their homelands, as will be explored in the proceeding chapter.

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616 (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 45).
617 Sir Paul Hasluck was Commonwealth Minister for Territories under Robert Menzies Liberal Government (1951–63) and a key architect of assimilation policy (Rowse 1998: 115; Rowse 2005: 241)