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Spaces of Multiplicity: Rethinking Indigenous Perspectives in Australian Tertiary Education through Altering Teacher Beliefs and Practices

Ongoing tension between Indigenous self-determination and Western educational frames of reference remains a potent force within educational debate. This essay voices some of the dilemmas of practice emergent in two Australian educators' everyday work through exploration of some new spaces of possibility within this complex domain. Through observation and surveys with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian tertiary educators experiences, beliefs and practices about teaching Indigenous perspectives are presented. This paper invites a re-thinking of tertiary educational space, as a possible site of multiplicity that is not preoccupied with the differences of meaning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds of knowledge and experience. Rather it is a space that recognises dilemmas and convergences of knowledge in relation to content and pedagogy.

Curatorial Spaces

Two artworks currently hang in the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) at one of the entrances into the Australian art section. For the purposes of this paper, what is interesting about these works is the curatorial decision to hang these large works opposite each other (see Figure 1). One work is by Gordon Bennett, the other by Imants Tillers, both Australian artists.¹ In each panoramic artwork (see Figures 2 and 3) there is an array of seemingly insignificant small parts, comprising images and text. Each component part can be shown on its own or in an interconnected space, allowing many interpretive dimensions and voices to emerge. Displacement and relocation of individuals from their home is a recurrent theme in each work. Both paintings examine geographical mappings and cultural disruption. In Bennett's case, his imagery is driven by a "strongly felt sense of injustice at the 'homogeneity impulse' of the colonizing white culture" (Gordon Bennett Profile). Tillers' artwork appropriates Indigenous and Western imagery to process information and to communicate a contemporary view from the perspective of the European diaspora. Both artists turn towards respective histories and experiences for their inspiration – one Indigenous, and one European. The curatorial space, or choices made by the curators in the positioning of the art work, produced by the discreet hanging of the two works together yet, not side-by-side, opens new spaces of multiplicity for contemplation, interrogation and scopic engagement. As a result of this curatorial decision, the viewer is allowed the physical and conceptual space and time to reflect, not so much on the binary of Indigenous and Western conceptions of place and history, but rather on a self-reflective interpretation of each piece. For an informed viewer familiar with the tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Australia, historical tensions and contemporary debates in contemporary art are given voice as well as a means for "conversation" as suggested by the title of Tillers' work. For example, this curatorial space moves away from what art historian Sasha Grishin calls "the apartheid model" of traditional hanging spaces where "Indigenous

1. Gordon Bennett is an Australian artist with Anglo Celtic and Indigenous Australian heritage, born in Australia in 1955 and died in 2014. Imants Tillers is an Australian artist with a Latvian heritage born in Australia in 1950.

and non-Indigenous art practice is placed in separate camps” (x). The AGNSW curatorial space is seeking, rather, new dynamics and synergies when the works are juxtaposed together revealing a multiplicity of relationships and meanings, including tensions and historical debates.

Figure 1. Curatorial space at the entrance of the Australian Art Section, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia. Bennett's painting on the left is hung facing Tiller's work. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Photo: AGNSW.

The debate between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems is not limited to the art world. Numerous government policies are giving shape to the Australian education system with respect to “closing the gap” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian education outcomes and providing Indigenous Australians with professional opportunities (Bradley Review 2008; Berhendt Review 2012).² It is the Australian Government's intention that all primary and secondary teachers will have, as a minimum, a proficient level of demonstrable professional expertise in Indigenous Studies. In more recent discussions, tertiary institutions are examining ways of integrating Indigenous perspectives and/or knowledges in their courses. This is an attempt by postcolonial Australia to address the effects colonial dispossession has had on Indigenous Australians.

This research aims to identify the dilemmas of praxis that arise in the consideration of Indigenous perspectives through a pilot project on the personal accounts of the authors of this work who are two university educators in Australia and who are part of a

2. According to the Berhendt Report “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly underrepresented in the higher education system, contributing to the high levels of social and economic disadvantage they often experience” (2012, ix). This same report refers to the Closing the Gap agenda. “Closing the Gap is a commitment by all Australian governments to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across six areas relating to health, early childhood development, education and economic participation” (2012, 3).

community of practice that comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. It includes participant observation and surveys conducted in their universities, in the context of discussions and workshops on Indigenous perspectives in university courses. This paper acknowledges the recent work on engagement with Indigenous perspectives in tertiary curriculum, which problematise the significance of rights and strengths in education (Ma Rhea), social activism and decolonisation teaching approaches (McLoughlin) and the Western/Indigenous Knowledges binary (Nakata, Cultural Interface), yet extends this debate to examine the role of teacher knowledge and wisdom.

Teaching Practices and Art as Analogy

This paper is focused on staff capabilities and how concepts of teacher knowledge, belief and practice need to be acknowledged in the dialogue on Indigenous perspectives in education. Educational psychologists Shulman and Shulman place individual teacher wisdom and capacity at the centre of educational change. They argue “capital” or personal and professional resources, are a point of tension intervening and shaping a teacher’s capacity to act and to shape the curriculum. Teachers come to the classroom with a repertoire of teacher knowledge, which operates as working capital. This paper argues that teachers’ work cannot be degraded into predetermined sets of instructional data. Rather enhancing personal capacities and case-based knowledge within a developing sense of a professional community is a key focus of Shulman *et al.*’s research.

This focus of attention on individual teachers work, corresponds to a longstanding, yet still emergent concurrence internationally regarding the rights of Indigenous peoples and a global move of Indigenous peoples seeking a voice in the contemporary, as a result of shared world views on the relationship between Indigenous peoples and nation states. This perspective is articulated in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007, which formally recognises Indigenous difference rather than categorizing it as the other. Indigenous educator Martin Nakata also notes the shift at the beginning of the 21st century in attitudes towards Indigenous knowledge, which he sees as emerging at a “historical moment where Indigenous peoples are much better positioned within the legal political order where issues of rights, sovereignty, self-determination, and historical redress, provide a better base for the assertion of Indigenous interests” (Cultural Interface, 8). Articulation of policy frameworks concerning educational rights and freedoms from an Australian Indigenous perspective, have long been in the public domain. For instance, over twenty years ago, the *Coolangatta Statement* resulting from the National Organizing Committee of the 1993 World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Education held at Coolangatta (Queensland), outlined a framework for discussing Indigenous Peoples’ Education Rights.³ Consequently, within government policy and rhetoric the role of education has become a key area in which to support these intentions to bridge the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australian education outcomes (MCEECDYA 22-25). Accordingly, universities may play a key role in cultural relations by their willingness to engage in new ways of seeing and doing with regard to

3. *The Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous People’s Rights in Education* is a document prepared by a task force who met in Coolangatta between September 24 and October 1, 1993 at the World Indigenous People’s Conference on Education. This statement represents a collective voice of Indigenous peoples from around the world who support fundamental principles considered vital to achieving reform and transformation of education for Indigenous peoples.

learning and teaching in the area of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges. Indeed, there have been numerous discussions in this area through reviews (Bradley Review, 2008; Behrendt Review, 2012) and research on developing Indigenous cultural competencies in the context of university teaching (Ma Rhea; McLaughlin; Moore; Nakata *et al.*).

Despite these initiatives, recent reports on teaching Indigenous perspectives in education suggest, “postcolonial democracies such as Australia are struggling to employ new frameworks in which to undertake teacher professional development in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domain” (Ma Rhea 11). Furthermore, some studies argue that the frameworks that exist “lack a guiding commitment to a rights and strengths perspective” (Ma Rhea 11). Other works reveal that the “uncritical transfer of Western knowledge systems through colonizing processes” require a “rethinking of how we educate future global cultural competency within the Australian context” and invite educators to “accept social and ethical responsibility to critique existing knowledge of Indigenous Australia” (McLaughlin 249). The teaching and learning of Indigenous perspectives by non-Indigenous academics therefore invite theoretical investigation of the complexities of classroom contexts around two distinct knowledge systems: Indigenous and Western. Williamson and Dalal, writing from the perspective of university personnel who have been involved with what they call “Indigenizing” the curriculum, use the work of Nakata (Indigenous Knowledge; Ongoing Conversations), to outline the dilemma of running the “risk of implying the application of an ‘impo-verished’ version of ‘Aboriginal Pedagogy’ and the promotion of corrupted understandings of Indigenous knowledge” (51). In each of these studies, Indigenous perspectives challenge the way educators conceptualise their teaching pedagogy. As Juliana McLaughlin notes in her paper on educating culturally competent professionals, the success of these initiatives depends on understanding Indigenous perspectives and knowledges (253) yet little discussion exists about non-Indigenous staff who make up the bulk of teachers in Australian universities, and how these initiatives should be approached, or how they impact the professional practice of educators other than to suggest a decolonising approach to teaching practice (251). Subsequently, these initiatives raise pedagogical questions around notions such as how teachers decolonise their teaching when their expertise is not in the social sciences or education disciplines, for instance, where critical thinking in these areas are often conceptualised. Likewise, how does a researcher in engineering studies know whether a desired attempt to decolonize the curriculum in engineering studies is not further perpetuating colonial ways of thinking or stereotypes, particularly if the teacher has not received training or knowledge in the area of Western postcolonial approaches to knowledge? These questions also call into consideration a deeper understanding of the implications Indigenous perspectives in tertiary education may have in relation to concepts such as teacher judgment, values and wisdom and how this may inform the way teachers integrate Indigenous perspectives in tertiary education.

To illuminate these questions, the authors of this paper conducted a survey in 2014 to examine some of the responses of academics working in their respective Australian tertiary institution. In total 12 educators working in the field of Humanities responded. Two were Indigenous educators and the rest were non-Indigenous with teaching experience in tertiary education ranging between 20 to 40 years. Respondents were asked to

present their views on Indigenous perspectives in their teaching. Parallel to this, we examined a limited range of reviews of some of the paintings by Australian artists Gordon Bennett and Imants Tillers. The artworks and the curatorial space in the gallery setting were selected because of the way they seemingly reflected similar narratives in the perceived naturalness and relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems. In this paper, we have not undertaken a comprehensive review of each artwork and its specific meaning in relation to the development of contemporary art. Rather, we have focused on how the placement and spatial arrangement of the artworks in the gallery setting can offer new insights into the juxtaposition of ideas useful for rethinking educational applications.

Simultaneously, the two artworks engage in a dialogue between the Modernist borrowing of Indigenous artworks by Tillers and the rejection and political critique of white culture provided by Bennett. The tensions and contestation apparent within the curatorial space is salient for the research as we draw on the “framework of dilemmas” elaborated by Windschitl⁴ (132)) to explore the questions raised by academics who have been reflecting on Indigenous perspectives in their teaching. The “dilemmas framework” has significant implications for teachers in examining their own practice. As a heuristic tool, the framework involves a number of critical questions that can prompt teachers to interrogate their own beliefs, question institutional routines and understand more deeply the forces that influence their classroom practice. Windschitl concludes that teachers and teaching are central to the “re-culturing of the classroom, meaning that familiar relationships, norms, and values have to be made public and be critically reevaluated” (164). This may mean a kind of destabilisation in lecture rooms, as teachers re-orientate practice to move beyond passive consumption of information in order to “respond to students” diverse approaches to learning, that are structured to take advantage of students unique starting points, and that carefully scaffold work aimed at more proficient performances” (qtd. in Windschitl 164).

The curatorial space is also poised as a space in which to explore artworld and cultural dilemmas through visual and historical case-based meaning making. The major challenge then is to develop new theoretical conceptions that privilege the learner, problematise practice, and dynamically incorporate localised knowledge by including “all the players, the conflicts, and the tensions” (165). Stress is also placed on the central role of teachers’ personal and professional actions as key catalysts, and the “principle agents of reform” (165) within emergent theories of learning. To sustain such transformative practices Windschitl states that “researchers, reformers, and practitioners must jointly fashion a vision [...] that involves more than theories of learning or instruction” (165). In the context of this framework, discussions on Indigenous perspectives in tertiary education acts as a useful, yet destabilising factor that brings into question how teachers teach and what systems of knowledge are applied.

4. Four frames of reference are used to describe these dilemmas (conceptual, pedagogical, cultural and political). These dilemmas often exist as concerns for teachers and their relation to students, administrators and the community in the context of reform-orientated education (Windschitl 132).

Art as Analogy

The curatorial space referred to earlier in this paper is used as an analogy to illustrate complexities for non-Indigenous educators regarding Indigenous perspectives within tertiary curriculum and pedagogy. By making the curatorial decision to place Gordon Bennett's *Myth of the Western man (White man's burden)*, (Figure 2) opposite the non-Indigenous artist Imants Tillers's *Conversations with the Bride 1974-1975* (Figure 3), the vacant gallery space that divides each art piece prevents the viewer from looking at each of the works simultaneously. No one viewpoint is therefore privileged.

Bennett's work draws attention to the construction of identity in Australia. In a style suggesting Aboriginal Western Desert dot painting as well as abstract expressionist art in the style of Jackson Pollock, this painting explores key dates in Australian history such as the landing of the First Fleet, massacres of Aboriginal people, Mabo ruling and the establishment of the Tent Embassy in Canberra.

Figure 2. Gordon Bennett (Australia, b.1955, d.2014).
Myth of the Western Man (White Man's Burden) 1992 synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 175.5 x 304.3 cm.
 Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1993.
 Photo: AGNSW. 390.1993. © The Estate of Gordon Bennett

Tillers' artworks stage a critical dialogue between European and Indigenous art practices. This installation features various landscapes and references to Western art such as Australian landscape painting and European Antiquity by way of 112 miniature paintings on metal tripods. It appropriates Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare* and Hans Heyson's landscapes of Australian settlement.⁵ Each image explores the

5. Hans Heyson was a German born Australian artist (1877-1968) who is recognised for his paintings that explore the unique character of Australian landscape at the turn of the 20th century.

Figure 3. Imants Tillers (Australia, b.1950). *Conversations with the Bride 1974-1975*.
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on paper, type C photograph, aluminium, dimensions variable.
Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1976.
Photo: AGNSW. 235.1976.a-wwwwwwwww. © Imants Tillers/Licensed by Viscopy, 2016.

relationship between artworks, artists and viewers through the layering of historic and contemporary references from art and literature.

The particular hang and curatorship of these works remind us – as Korsmeyer states – that “we learn to understand ourselves in and through it [art]” (92). This space questions both the conversational and the oppositional aspects of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge. In Russell’s scheme of things in “their differences, Indigenous knowledge systems and Western scientific ones are considered so disparate as to be ‘irreconcilable’” (Cultural Interface, 8). In working towards educational change, we on the other hand suggest that this void acts as a space where a possible exchange of knowledge can occur.

Recognition of Indigenous perspectives in Australian tertiary education has led to some universities offering academic teaching staff an opportunity for professional development through training days, conferences, and individual support, and also an extensive body of materials and resources to use in their teaching. The focus of these opportunities tends to be on cultural awareness and cultural competency workshops such as the current health condition of Indigenous Australians, or the effects of the Northern Territory intervention on Indigenous Australians rather than on programs that discuss frameworks for teaching and learning. The apportioning of curatorial space in the AGNSW display of Bennett’s and Tillers’ works mirrors to some extent, the possibilities, themes and dilemmas identified by teachers in relation to Indigenous

perspectives in tertiary education, namely: teacher fear and resistance about teaching Indigenous content; how to approach new histories; moving beyond appropriation and mimicry towards understanding and applying decolonising pedagogy; questioning staff and student beliefs about Indigenous Knowledge; and the literal spaces of multiplicities offered by the teaching and learning classroom.

Fear and Resistance

While Indigenous perspectives in tertiary education aim to narrow the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, discussions at workshops and presentations around how to embed this in courses creates gaps of another nature – that of teacher knowledge or lack of knowledge in the area of Indigenous content. The emotional qualifier “fear” or the cognitive recognition of “not knowing” are some of the words we have heard pronounced by non-Indigenous teachers attending workshops with regard to how they view Indigenous topics in their teaching. This is further reiterated by Indigenous experts in discussions at workshops we attended between Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues, who recognise that “Australia needs professionals to work for and work with Indigenous people but we don’t have the professional capacity to do this.” Likewise, Nakata relates that “things aren’t just white or black, and things cannot be fixed by simply adding in Indigenous components to the mix. This is a very complicated and contested space” (“Cultural Interface” 8). In this context of complexity and uncertainty, tertiary educators, in discussions on how to embed Indigenous content and viewpoints into the courses they teach, relate that in terms of their knowledge in this area “it’s not something you know” or “there is the fear of teaching outside our direct knowledge” or “we just don’t want to say the wrong thing so we say nothing”.

A survey conducted asking non-Indigenous staff how they would embed Indigenous content into their curriculum further reflects these views. Some of the respondents discussed their lack of knowledge in how they would embed Indigenous topics into their curriculum with responses such as: “no particular ideas at the moment”; “this is a major undertaking, as it involves (as I understand it) incorporating/integrating a new knowledge system into the way we understand what we teach”; “not sure”; “I have no idea”.

One of the respondents also felt the need for Indigenous local teachers to be employed when tackling Indigenous issues as they felt that: “lectures in Indigenous topics [should be taught], by Indigenous lecturers.” While another felt that Indigenous perspectives should incorporate worldviews rather than nation specific viewpoints: “it would be good to make students aware of Indigenous issues beyond cultural borders”.

These observations show some of the reluctance or the inability of educators to engage directly with Indigenous topics in their teaching, and are consistent with some of the findings in other scholarly work on secondary schools relating that “teachers have fear and resistance about teacher standards that highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters” (Ma Rhea 11). Furthermore, they highlight other related issues on teaching approaches on Indigenous knowledge such as who “owns such knowledge,” and underline questions on how this material is “used by non-Indigenous people without accountability back to the original knowledge holders” (Ma Rhea 9). In a similar way, Tillers’ art has become the subject of debate in contemporary art as he appropriates Indigenous artworks and images. In such a climate of how and who teaches

Indigenous content, Ma Rhea's work recognises similar concerns to those voiced in the workshops we have attended revealing that:

many teachers do not teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and arguably as a profession have little or no appropriate qualification with regard to either the teaching and learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students or in the broader cognate area of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (2)

Furthermore, the work of Ma Rhea *et al.* raises the issue of teacher "resistance" to teaching Indigenous perspectives and knowledges as a result of the "lack of actual or perceived consensus on an overarching commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and social justice," and on "what constitutes the agreed body of knowledge" needed by teachers to meet focus areas (Ma Rhea *et al.* 57). In some of the workshops we have attended, this lack of clarity for some non-Indigenous academics translates into confusion regarding how Indigenous perspectives can be embedded in all courses. This, as a consequence, leads to resistance to incorporating material into teaching that does not constitute the educator's direct knowledge. Terry Moore expressed a similar concern in his work on the policy process in Aboriginal Australian Education that encouraged counter-productive attitudes and behaviours because of "education policy based in an imagined Aboriginal culture and self-locked in an imagined oppositional relationship with Australia and modernity" (142). In this context education policy becomes an "unorganized and disorganized dynamic of settler-Australian imagination" (142).

These discussions mirror the criticism generated by the 1986 Biennale of Sydney when it introduced for the first time Indigenous work in its program of artworks. The Biennale was described by critics as occupying a "dangerous critical space" when it incorporated Indigenous material in an attempt to bridge the gap between European and Indigenous art (McLean 13). Rather than narrowing the gap, the Biennale was accused by critics of being "politically regressive," and of speaking "from inside the authority and prestige of a colonizing tradition" (McLean 13). It was notably the non-Indigenous artist Imants Tillers' work *The Nine Shots* that was scrutinised because it was seen to appropriate and mimic Indigenous work. In response, Gordon Bennett viewed Tillers' work as an act of cultural violence and expressed this in his painting *The Nine Ricochets (Fall down black fella, jump up white fella)* 1990. Although these questions were raised in the context of the 1980s and 1990s, they are still highly contentious in today's context.

Teacher Values, Beliefs and Wisdom

Within the postcolonial education context of this research, the notion of teacher values, beliefs and wisdom are like Tillers' artwork subject to scrutiny in relation to how educators impart knowledge about Indigenous material in universities. Will this teaching be viewed as mimicking Indigenous perspectives or perhaps perpetuating the imagined Indigenous Australian suggested by Moore earlier? By decolonizing could educators further perpetuate the colonial position that Nakata *et al.* claim in their work ("Decolonial Goals" 127)? Could the tokenistic inclusion of Indigenous content in tertiary curriculum run the risk of disengaging learners from participating in the knowledge-making process? And finally, when teaching values whose values do you teach?

To investigate these issues, the survey distributed to 12 university educators, included one question referring to how these academics engaged with Indigenous content in their teaching. Their answers reflect the varying ways that some academics are embedding Indigenous content in their work. Some of the responses from non-Indigenous educators revealed teaching content such as:

Analysis of how Germans have engaged with Indigenous peoples, both in Germany and in Australia and how Indigenous people have played at exoticising German attitudes to their own benefit.

Perspectives from the non-dominant group of speakers of the language(s) taught within the context of International Studies (for instance those in former colonies) are also included in language classes to bring these voices into the classroom.

As part of the historical context for understanding transculturation in the Americas since 1492, and the current place of millions of Indigenous peoples in contemporary societies across the Americas.

My approach is to get non-Indigenous students (the whole of the class) to engage with basic Indigenous vocabulary/terminology: such as “sacred sites,” “attachment to the land” by asking them to define these concepts within their own personal experiences.

These examples demonstrate that non-Indigenous educators have begun thinking about the ways they integrate Indigenous aspects in their teaching, but they also show how diverse each teacher’s knowledge approach is with regard to Indigenous perspectives and the way they convey this in their subjects.

Meanwhile, responses from Indigenous educators reveal a different approach to the way they embed Indigenous content in their curriculum. One respondent noted:

When I taught in schools in NSW for 30 years as an Indigenous person, I set out to correct the history that was taught about development/expansion of the colony. The way Australian history has been portrayed has a ring of falsehood about it [...] it is an idealized triumphant story of pioneering Mythmakers. Dispossession wasn’t mentioned.

The same respondent further notes: “I found that a “trusted” Indigenous staff member was very effective in ‘correcting history’ and effecting attitudinal change”. Another Indigenous educator stated: “I utilise Indigenous only writings, films, radio *etc.* I have as many Indigenous guest lecturers who are expert in the topic as is possible”. Here the Indigenous educators talk about “correcting,” “falsehood,” “experts” and “trusting.”

Each response shows that by incorporating Indigenous topics into curriculum areas, educators are “screening it through a filter that positions it to serve educational objectives, and which draws on prior theoretical investments in knowledge and knowledge practice” (Nakata, “Cultural Interface” 10).

Spaces of Multiplicity

One of the Indigenous participants surveyed in this study has had many decades of experience in secondary schools. As an Indigenous Elder, this person’s response to awareness of Indigenous perspectives was:

Our approach to Indigenous perspectives verges on tokenistic surfacing only when tragic incidents occur or on national ceremonial occasions *e.g.* [...] Australia Day. We (Australians) seem to be ashamed of our Indigenous history unlike New Zealand where Maori culture and its history is kept alive and relevant to total population.

This answer evokes the continuing problem around the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in educational curricula where for the respondent it is viewed as an “add-on” or as “tokenistic.” Meanwhile, the same respondent proposes the inclusion of Indigenous content through Indigenous expertise in educational programs, and makes the following recommendations:

- Employ Indigenous artist to produce art with children
- Bring Indigenous poet/writer/Elder to school to workshop life stories and interact with students
- Organise lesson on bush tucker, traditional land-use management practices.
- Elders telling Dreamtime stories.

This response underlines the importance of highlighting Indigenous educators’ collaboration in a localised context, as well as the significance of communities and connection. Alternatively, Nakata identifies the problem that exists when putting knowledge into either an Indigenous or Western framework – for him, one inevitably excludes one or the other. Rather Nakata, refers to what he terms the “cultural interface” as a way of embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. This is a space that is not preoccupied with the differences of meaning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds of knowledge and experience. It is a space that recognises “all the disruptions, discontinuities, continuities and convergences of knowledge in this space and appreciations of the complexities that exist there” (Nakata, “Pathways” 5). The conditions of this space require appreciation and acknowledgement of the presence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous standpoints. The interface, therefore, assumes complexity as a condition of the space, but does not see the solution to be the endless separation of Indigenous from non-Indigenous (Nakata, “Pathways” 5). What Nakata is suggesting is that we “normalise the presence of Indigenous content” so that it is not “an oddity, a novelty, a token or an add-on” (“Pathways” 6). In other words, Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum should not be equated with the inclusion of Indigenous content, but should rather be regarded as an inherent part of the diversity in the nation while still recognising Indigenous people as representing the first culture of the land. Likewise, the way that the “curatorial space” allows the space in Bennett’s work (Figure 2) to dissolve and become a fluid and dripping mass challenging the grid-like (Western) conception of structure within Tillers’ installation, suggests that a deeper interrogation of each artwork is essential in our further research to re-position and normalise Indigenous knowledge as part of everyday educational experience.

In order to try and comprehend further the complexity and dilemmas related to this interface, we refer back to the contested spaces and historical critique raised by Imants Tillers in an earlier artwork, *The Nine Shots*, which combined Indigenous and non-Indigenous references. Bennett subsequently responded to Tillers’ use of Indigenous artist Michael Jagamara Nelson’s *Five Dreamings* (1982) as one of the main images with his own *The Nine Ricochets* (*Fall down black fella, jump up white fella*) which refers to the conceptual power of a ricochet whereby Bennett in turn borrows images from Tillers’ work to speak about appropriation and alienation. By placing these artists’ respective works in a contested “curatorial space,” the AGNSW has deliberately chosen to continue the debate on identities based on locality and the ownership of cultural images once again into contemporary dialogue. As an example of the importance of a conversation that

has now been going on for twenty-five years, art scholar Ian McLean revisits the artwork of Tillers in a 2010 article which draws on the criticism during the 1986 Biennale. The debate stands in relation to the artist's appropriation (as a non-Indigenous artist) of Indigenous works and themes. McLean argues that Tillers' work does not copy original Indigenous work, but rather constructs an "[...] empty and indeterminate image that is situated in a system of differences. Here "mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask" (14). He adds further that the space created by Tillers is a "screen of ambivalence and uncertainty that, in the context of colonial power, disrupts the presumed authority of the centre, stealing its aura for itself" (McLean 14). In the postmodern world, Tillers' work rather than an appropriation of the original is, as McLean suggests an "interconnected maze of endless copies with no origin, no centre and bound by uncertain relations" (14). If, as McLean argues, there is no "authorising centre" then the copy is not about submission or subversion but about the "reality of communication, the way information is processed" (14). This particular critical and historical view of Tillers' artwork highlights the need for ongoing dialogue in this interpretative space as authenticity, the copy and the original have particular significance in the colonising histories of Indigenous and Western knowledge in the Australian context. Bennett's work provides a counterpoint to Tillers' artwork and subsequent interpretive accounts, such as McLean's. What is important is that re-thinking familiar narratives through public examples and new, multiple spaces of curation and displacement is required in order to work towards altered beliefs, destabilised routines and consideration of how contested views can be brought to the forefront of educational debates.

Referring back to Nakata's cultural interface and the teaching context there are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives (Cultural Interface, 9). Likewise in both Bennett's and Tillers' artworks, there are unlimited interconnected possibilities offered by both Indigenous and Western viewpoints. For Nakata, the space of the classroom is not about the politicising of truths, but rather "the workings of knowledge and how an understanding of Indigenous people is caught up and is implicated in its work" ("Cultural Interface" 12). The "cultural interface" in the classroom refers to how a "social position is discursively constituted within and constitutive of complex sets of social relations as expressed through the social organization" of the everyday (Nakata, "Cultural Interface" 12). Unpacking the complexity of social relations in this research is therefore best understood through the importance of everyday experience and the specificity of case-based knowledge. The local in this instance is evidenced through the analogical possibilities offered by two artworks hung seemingly in a neutral fashion in a gallery and the survey of tertiary educators.

In seeking to create the "cultural interface" and enhance each educator's "working capital" (Shulman *et al.*) by making connections across and between events, relations and examples, a point of tension emerges in the survey research with tertiary educators. For example, the Indigenous respondents tended to ensure that historical references and events were not just left as a piece of neutral historical data, rather each person's particular "working capital" and nested knowledge systems allowed a more complex set of relations to emerge and be considered for learning. In contrast the non-Indige-

nous respondents tended to choose a specific approach that seemed to relate to their specific existing course content (German/Indigenous engagement, transculturation in America and Indigenous vocabulary). Expanding teacher knowledge and wisdom about Indigenous Knowledge through Shulman *et al.*'s concept of "working capital" is essential when engaging in the cultural interface. Whilst new spaces of multiplicity imply an intercultural learning arena, the question of the curriculum and what materials should be used when talking about Indigenous knowledge and experience remains. The authors conclude that the juxtaposition of diverse, yet conversationally significant carefully selected exemplars (in this case artworks) requires "curation" in tertiary classrooms. Importantly, as we have seen with the example of the displayed artworks, having an open-ended dialogue with both historical/temporal and spatial depths and complexity is essential. New "curatorial spaces" of tension and displacement also necessitate the interrogation of educators' personal beliefs and practices in order to explicitly create the "cultural interface" utilising a dilemmas framework.

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