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Chapter 7
THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL VIEW OF GIFTEDNESS[1]

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Aboriginal people are so special because we understand a lot more that goes on around us. We see a lot more, we hear a lot more, we feel a lot more, we touch a lot more, and we taste a lot more, than the people around us. We have a panoramic vision of what's behind us, what's underneath us, and what's on top of us. (Ernie Dingo, cited by Coolwell, 1993, p. 90)

INTRODUCTION

To write a chapter on the conceptions of giftedness held by the indigenous people of Australia presents particular challenges to the authors. In framing this chapter, we are mindful that the structure of the book has looked at language as a defining aspect of culture but there is no single Aboriginal language (or culture) and the majority of Aboriginal people speak as their first language either Aboriginal English, a dialect of English, or one of three Kriols, the Aboriginal term for the creole languages (Sandefur, 1986) that have evolved following English settlement of Australia. Even if we were to look at a single Aboriginal community, we are faced with the fact that the language changes according to whether the speakers are male or female, their age, and the people to whom they are speaking. Further, the total number of speakers of any Aboriginal language can be quite small. Nevertheless, language generally (as opposed to specific languages) is a defining and important concept in understanding indigenous Australians' views toward giftedness.

[1] In writing this chapter, we would like to acknowledge the Dharawal people who are the traditional inhabitants of the land on which the University of Wollongong— the Australian site for this contribution— stands. The authors of this chapter are not Aboriginal but both have worked extensively with Aboriginal communities over the course of their careers as educators. Further, the research reported in this chapter was either conducted by Aboriginal Australians or in close consultation and collaboration with the relevant Aboriginal communities.

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A further challenge has been to simultaneously acknowledge the diversity of different indigenous groups, ranging from those who still lead reasonably traditional lifestyles through to those who live in urban Westernised contexts, as well as to draw some of the unifying threads from these diverse cultures in order to consider an Australian indigenous view of giftedness that will contribute to the thesis of this publication. Hence, in this chapter we do not examine the conceptions of giftedness held by one neatly defined language-cultural group, but we try to look across a number of groups, traditional and urbanized, to see what these indigenous groups share in terms of their world view that may inform our understanding of giftedness. This is assisted by the fact that, although, language differences among different Aboriginal groups were evident, migration and contact among the groups resulted in many cultural similarities. As McElwain and Kearney (1976) observed: "But migrations of some magnitude must have occurred because sometimes people living presently in a coastal region have the speech forms, religious practices and beliefs held generally by desert people perhaps a thousand miles away" (p. 7).

Christie (1987) identified four consistent characteristics that distinguish the Aboriginal world view:

1. Co-existence with nature, evident from the fact that Aboriginal people have inhabited Australia for 50,000 years without compromising the ecology.
2. Social continuity in the sense that relationships with ancestors continue beyond life through spiritual connection.
3. The quality of relationships is paramount.
4. Knowledge comes from observation.

In the 1960s and 70s, a number of empirical studies were conducted into the psychology and cognition of Australia's indigenous cultures, the majority of which were conducted by non-Aboriginal people (see, for example, Kearney & McElwain, 1976). While many of these were well meaning in intent, they tended to assume a paternalistic overtone as they sought to explain the poorer test or school performance of indigenous children. This observation by De Lacey (1974) was typical of these studies:

> There is little doubt that Aboriginals in remote areas grow up with their ability to think logically in Western terms seriously impaired. It is also likely that this impairment is associated with the very

> restricted nature of the experiences to which the mission or reserve children are exposed during childhood. (p. 36)

One exception to this investigation of deficit was Kearins' (1982) studies indicating superior visual-spatial abilities among Aboriginal children.

There are few studies that deal specifically with giftedness and Australian Aboriginal people, and, perhaps not surprisingly given the relatively small number of Aboriginal students in gifted programs, those that have been completed are almost all concerned with identification issues. We draw predominantly on these studies to inform this chapter.

Given these challenges, we start this chapter with a brief examination of the historical and cultural background of Australian Aboriginal people, particularly as it pertains to understanding their view of giftedness and talent. We then discuss the issue of language and its relationship to Aboriginal world views. This discussion leads into our examination of specific conceptions of giftedness, drawing predominantly on empirical studies. We highlight particular domains where Australian Aboriginal people have excelled although we are wary of the danger of creating or sustaining stereotypes through these analyses. Finally, we consider implications for education and further research.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

For at least 40,000 years, Aboriginal people have lived in the present day country of Australia. Prior to the arrival of the European explorers, there were approximately 300,000 people living in hundreds of small groups or communities throughout the continent. It is estimated that these groups spoke over 600 different dialects in 200 to 250 languages (Blake, 1981; Fesl, 1993) and had different customs and lifestyles. This linguistic and cultural diversity means that it is not possible to identify a single Aboriginal culture. However, all were hunting and gathering communities and shared similar beliefs about the creation and nature of the world. These beliefs are called the Dreamtime (Harker & McConnochie, 1985). The land is the representation of the Dreamtime and the life force; and, therefore, is basic to Aboriginal social organization and culture. The Aboriginal communities feel a deep connection to the land, which contains the force that sustains all life.

The island continent of Australia and its indigenous cultures had been visited by other cultures, including the Macassans, prior to the first European sighting in 1642 by the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman. English Captain James Cook reached Botany Bay on March 31, 1770, just south of what is now Sydney harbour, and claimed the continent in the name of King George III. Cook and his crew only remained a week to replenish supplies before sailing two thousand miles up the eastern coast along the Great Barrier Reef and then on to Papua New Guinea. It was later, in 1788, that Sydney was established as a penal settlement of England.

The arrival of the European explorers brought a threat to the reasonably stable Aboriginal cultures. A hierarchy of cultures had been developed in Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries with those of Western Europe at the top. This framework gave 'scientific' legitimacy to the kind of rhetoric used to support the colonial invasion and suppression of 'lesser cultures' (Groome, 1994, p. 50). It was used to justify and support the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples throughout Australia.

Viewing the Aborigines as a primitive culture with people inferior to their own white society, the Europeans set out to annihilate the Aboriginal people (Harker & McConnochie, 1985) through policies of domination and assimilation (Fesl, 1993). This was a deliberate attempt to destroy their original cultures and languages, substituting in their place a white servant class culture and the English language (Groome, 1994). Fesl (1993) commented: “Although the assimilation policy was viewed by its supporters as being radically different from previous policies…, the intent was still the elimination of Koorie [an Aboriginal term meaning “our people”] lifeways and their replacement with British values, education and training, to make Koories useful tools of the British economy” (p. 125).

Laws and processes introduced to carry out these purposes led to a devastation of the Aboriginal cultures. The Wastelands Act of 1842 allowed expropriation of Aboriginal lands and as a result displaced Aboriginal people from their lands (Passmore, 1985). This displacement continued with developments such as the Overland Telegraph Line and the expansion of pastoral industry. Similar to the Native American tribes in North America, Aboriginal people became refugees on land belonging to other Aboriginal groups. This was devastating to many Aboriginal people because, prior to European settlement, there was territorial respect, which was a recognition that each community had a spiritual connection and sense of belonging to

particular areas of land (Fesl, 1993). With their ties to the land severed, many Aboriginal people experienced a disconnection with their traditional lifestyles (Harker & McConnochie, 1985).

Separation of Aboriginal people from their land continued and was further supported through the 1911 Aborigines Act which allowed government seizure of reserved lands and empowered government officials to prohibit Aborigines from towns and municipalities (Passmore, 1985). Additionally, the 1911 act appointed protectors, usually the local constabulary, who were the official guardians of all Aboriginal children under the age of 21 years, who officially owned all possessions of an Aborigine, who could order Aborigines to move to different areas and who ensured that Aboriginal children and, to the extent possible, Aboriginal adults, were confined to a designated reserve.

The Training of Aboriginal Children Act of 1923 served to broaden the legislation of 1911 with the intent to further restrict Aboriginal cultural practices and to advance the Protestant work ethic (Woods, 1994). This act empowered protectors to "commit any Aboriginal child to an institution where he or she might be detained until either 18 or 21 years of age" (Passmore, 1985, p. 26). Aboriginal parents and other adults were only allowed to visit if given permission by the managers of the institution. However, the traditions, beliefs, and values of the society withstood this assault making necessary the use of an assimilation tactic by the government.

In particular, the Aboriginal Act of 1934 threatened Aboriginal cultures and identity. The Act allowed exemption from being classified as an Aborigine based on "character and standard of development and intelligence" (Harker & McConnochie, 1985, p. 26). The effect of this act was that it encouraged Aboriginal people to deny their aboriginality in order to escape unfair, restrictive laws that were applied only to Aborigines. Not until 1962 was the exemption clause replaced with the Aboriginal Affairs Act that instituted registration of Aboriginal people and eliminated most discriminatory laws. Assimilation attempts such as these had a destructive effect on the cultural identity of Aboriginal people and their communities. It is this Aboriginal society, struggling to retain a coherent and identifiable Aboriginal culture that also has been subjected to Western education.

Along with the attempts of assimilation and cultural annihilation through laws, Aboriginal communities were subjected to an extensive program of Western education practices, which largely upheld an assimilation policy in terms of content and instructional methods (Harker & McConnochie, 1985;

Woods, 1994). British education attempts resulted in greater cultural dissonance and contradiction and interfered with the reproductive processes of the culture. Harker and McConnochie (1985) identified four ways that this occurred, which included:

1. Attempts to deliberately modify the epistemological base of the culture with foreign models of explanation and knowledge;

2. Introducing a set of teaching strategies which bear little relationship to traditional strategies;

3. Introducing conflict between the socialization processes undertaken by the community, and educational processes undertaken in school that has the effect of weakening the impact of both processes, and of creating cognitive dissonance and confusion in the children,; and

4. Utilizing a curriculum which presents an alternative world view to the child.

The arrival of Europeans brought contradictions to the existing structure, and seemingly certain cultural disintegration. However, at no point was the disintegration complete. Traditional structures have survived and continue to evolve in order to take into account the economic, social and cultural presence of the European majority. Aboriginal communities are still struggling to achieve a coherent society which is functional within contemporary Australia, yet still identifiably Aboriginal. Aboriginal students are not a homogeneous group with easily identified characteristics who share a common set of traditional beliefs and practices. However, no matter what the individual experience of the Aboriginal, it is likely that they will identify with some aspects of Aboriginal culture (Guider, 1991) raising the need for cultural consideration within the educational environment.

In the census period 1991-1996 the number of people identifying themselves as Aboriginal increased by 34% to 303,000 making up less than 2% of the total population. However, the number of these people speaking an Aboriginal language was much lower, comprising approximately 43,000. Aboriginal people live in every state and territory of Australia. Some live in small Aboriginal communities and follow a more traditional lifestyle while others live in urban areas and have assimilated to varying degrees into the ways of Western cultures.

The language of today's Aboriginal people is dependent on the extent to which the Western culture has been assimilated and the locale of the group. The language of those in the traditional settings in the outback may have remained largely intact but as the degree of assimilation increases so too does the

likelihood that the original language will have incorporated some of the English language. Aborigines living in the large metropolitan coastal cities may have 'lost' their native language and have grown up exclusively speaking English. With the younger generation moving away from Aboriginal communities, some tribal languages are lost when the last surviving member of the community dies taking with them the only accurate knowledge of the beliefs and unique language of the tribe.

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Given this volume's linking of language and culture, it is appropriate to look a little more closely at the issue of Aboriginal languages. If we accept that language defines culture, the history of Aboriginal languages is central to understanding how giftedness is conceptualized in Aboriginal cultures and how Australian education systems have failed to respond adequately to the unique needs of its Aboriginal children generally, and gifted Aboriginal children specifically. Similar to many of the other cultural groups described in this volume, "[i]n Central Australia there is no absolute relation between language and country" (Bell, 1993, p. 114). Nevertheless, the importance of language to identity is captured by Aboriginal elder, Roger Hart, who said "When I speak language, it makes me feel home" (cited by van Tiggelen, 2005, p. 25).

Linguists believe that all the Aboriginal languages evolved from one genetic family spoken thousand of years ago, but time brought sufficient changes to create the different languages that have been identified over the past two centuries (Fesl, 1993; Kearney & McElwain, 1976). Wurm (1979) identified 26 major language groups, later extended to 28 by Crystal (2000b) which were further grouped into either Pama-Nyungan or non-Pama-Nyungan. The term Pama-Nyungan combines two words meaning 'man', namely 'pama' from the Cape York area and 'nyunga' from the Perth area.

The Pama-Nyungan group is spoken by people who live in about 90% of the geographical area of Australia. In contrast, the 27 families of languages in the non-Pama-Nyungan group are spoken by people living in the northern most parts of Western Australia and the Northern Territory (Crystal, 2000a). We have already indicated that, at the time of white settlement in Australia, there were 600 dialects and 200 to 250 languages (Blake, 1981; Fesl, 1993). Of these, 55 languages have already been lost and one language dies every two years in Australia, as the last remaining speakers of that language die. This compares to

worldwide estimates of the death of one language every fortnight (Crystal, 2000a). It has been estimated that 27 of Australia's languages only have one speaker and 63 have between two and six speakers; a further 80 Aboriginal languages are almost extinct. In terms of critical mass for the retention of language, it would seem that only 20 languages remain viable (Partington & McCudden, 1992). Language viability is not a simple matter of mathematics, though, because no one person holds all the knowledge of a particular language. Secret parts of the language can only be revealed when people reach a particular stage of life, thus language viability depends on there being speakers of different ages.

The loss of these languages cuts to the heart of Aboriginal identity and culture, as Roy McIvor expressed:

> To see my language dying is a great sorrow. Guugu is a part of our mob, our history. Some of the young fellas still express a bit of identity through traditional hunting but without language we *bama* are just floating around…Language teaches us kinship, keeps us together. When we lose these kinship terms, our whole caring and sharing system breaks down. (cited by van Tiggelen, 2005, p. 28)

In traditional Aboriginal cultures, bilingualism and multilingualism were common and in addition to spoken languages there were also sign languages (used in rituals and hunting) and song languages. There was no written form of these original languages. The first attempts to study and write Aboriginal languages date back to 1770 when Captain Cook's officers recorded words of the Guugu-Yimidhirr language. This language is still spoken in Cooktown in Australia. One of those earliest recorded words was "kanguroo", now an iconic representation of Australia.

Until the twentieth century, then, Aboriginal communities were distinguished by their linguistic diversity, not only in terms of the number of languages and dialects within Australia as a whole but also by the multiple languages spoken by its people. Well-known Aboriginal spokesperson Noel Pearson reflected on this linguistic diversity thus:

> Typically, everyone in camp would be multilingual. They'd speak four to five languages but they'd own a language in relation to their country. They might not live there all the time…but they were connected through language. So the prime function for that maintenance of

> diversity [of languages] must have been identity. The survival of language is paramount for our sense of self. (cited by van Tiggelen, 2005, p. 27)

In addition to its central role in Aboriginal identity, language also encapsulated their history, knowledge and social relations. In traditional Aboriginal communities, for example, language adopted different forms depending on the level of kinship of the speakers. For example, there were different levels of formality according to the nature of the kinship between speakers; there were secret languages used in specific ceremonies; there were different languages known only to males or females; and, different ages were given differential access to parts of the language (Fesl, 1993).

As Aboriginal cultures have been displaced from their traditional lands and lifestyles, the birth of new languages has occurred. Particularly in urban areas, traditional Aboriginal languages have been replaced by Kriols, which, as we indicated earlier, is the Aboriginal term for distinct creoles following English settlement (Fesl, 1993; Sandefur, 1986). These are languages in their own rights and not a pidgin English. A significant percentage of indigenous Australians speak one of the three Kriols but 98% of those people who do not have an Aboriginal language speak Aboriginal English, which can be defined as a dialect of English containing some Aboriginal words and idioms, spoken with an Aboriginal accent (Fesl, 1993; Partington & McCudden, 1992). The rise of Aboriginal English, though, has not occurred without controversy. Many urbanised Aboriginals welcomed the development of Aboriginal English because they saw it as a mark of unity and strength among Aboriginal people for whom English had been the first language. Other Aboriginal people, however, were critical of its growing acceptance. Noel Pearson commented:

> Aboriginal English and kriols are the crown-of-thorns starfish [2] of Aboriginal languages…Rather than people being fluently bilingual, you end up with people who are poor in their own language and poor in English with a language that can't serve them in the white man's world and whose most pernicious effect continues to be on the traditional language. (cited by van Tiggelen, 2005, p. 28)

[2] The crown-of-thorns starfish is a major predator of the native coral living in Australia's Great Barrier Reef and is attributed to causing the large scale death of the reef

This debate is particularly relevant to educational policies and practices, which we consider later in this chapter.

CONCEPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, giftedness has been conceptualised and defined in many ways. The literature indicates that debate surrounding conceptions and definitions of giftedness has led generally to a broadening of the concept (Braggett, 1985; Correll, 1978; Richert, 1987) with a recognition that giftedness is influenced by environment factors (Clark, 1998; Gagné, 2000; Sternberg, 2003) and based in cultural values, beliefs and traditions (Bevan-Brown, 2005; Goodnow, 1988; Harslett, 1992; Keats, 1988; McCann, H., 1995; McCann, M., 2005). Giftedness is a psychological construct which like all constructs "does not exist as a directly measurable quality or behavior; rather (it) is identifiable because certain qualities describe the construct" (Coleman, 1985, p. 59). Since we cannot directly measure giftedness, we must infer it "by observing certain characteristics or behaviors of individuals" (Hagen, 1980, p. 1).

As a construct invented by people, it will be whatever a particular society wants it to be, and therefore its conceptualization will change over time (Sternberg, 2003). Many factors have influenced the evolution of a definition for giftedness making it obvious that the concept of giftedness is relative "to changes in our knowledge, and to changes in our social and political lives" and therefore eludes an absolute definition (Coleman, 1985, p. 16). In fact, it might be assumed that the development of the idea of a culturally based view of giftedness, implies that there will never exist a single definition but rather that there will be many definitions of giftedness and these definitions will change with respect to changing cultural dimensions (Braggett, 1985).

On the other hand, Kirchenbaum (1988) in an article discussing identification of gifted Native Americans, maintained that definitions of giftedness and talent should be based on a general theory of exceptional ability that can apply to all cultural groups. Once this general theory of exceptional ability is defined then researchers can investigate in what manner it is applied to various cultural groups. This view is not shared by Callahan and McIntire (1994) who pointed out that there are certain abilities which schools recognize that may not be valued by particular Native American communities while abilities recognized within some tribes may not be valued in the schools. Therefore, in order to resolve these differences, the

purpose of schooling within each community must be considered and a meaningful definition of giftedness developed specific to the locale.

The disagreement about what constitutes giftedness has led to a confusing array of proposals on how to define giftedness. Coleman (1985) asserted "these definitions are probably a consequence of the values of the person making the proposal, the social climate of the time, and gradual changes in our knowledge about human abilities" (p. 7). Although acknowledging changeability of definitions, like Renzulli (1978) Coleman pointed out that in practical terms, constructing a definition for giftedness is of utmost importance because the way in which giftedness is defined is closely "tied to how one might identify persons with gifted characteristics" (p. 7).

In the last two decades, Australian educators have become more aware of various factors which can result in disadvantage and non identification for gifted students. The Queensland Department of Education Policy Statement (1993), for example, listed a number of factors which might affect identification including "failure to identify students' exceptional potential (especially when masked by behavioural traits or compounding characteristics such as disabilities, low socioeconomic circumstances, isolation, gender, non-English-speaking background and Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander origins)" (p. 1). Policy statements such as this broaden the concept of giftedness to include potentially gifted children who may not demonstrate excellence in academic endeavours.

This development was extremely relevant to gifted Aboriginal children who come from a cultural background which believes all children to be clever and that it is not acceptable to stand out above others (Kearins, 1988). For example, Ungunmerr (1976) discussed the problems of an Aboriginal child who is singled out and praised above the rest of the group. Such praise is an embarrassment and may make the praised child feel as though he or she has let down the rest of the group. Consequently, this child lowers her or his performance to follow cultural mores. In addition, Ungunmerr pointed out that the ethos in Aboriginal cultures is largely egalitarian by nature. They believe that "(n)obody in the village is different from anybody else. If someone is different and he acts it, then his people don't accept him" (p. 6). More recently, Cooper (2005) reported that this ability to belong to the group was indicative of intelligence as viewed by Australian Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. The conflict between the home culture and the school culture of competition and 'topping the class' often make it difficult for educators from

Western cultures to recognise giftedness in Aboriginal students. Any definition of giftedness must recognise that Aboriginal students may not display their potential abilities in the school setting due to cultural mores.

Baarda (1990, p. 167) compared Aboriginal cultures with White Australian culture and found many diametrically opposed philosophies that impact on how Aboriginal children are viewed at school (see Figure 1). Mores such as non-hierarchical decision making, unquestioning stance towards knowledge and teacher, and the importance of social interactions which exist as part of the Aboriginal culture are at odds with the school culture and organization. This often results in unsuccessful school experiences for Aboriginal children.

FIGURE 1 about here

Baarda (1990) further pointed out that Aboriginal children are not expected to complete difficult tasks alone nor are they encouraged to ask questions or make discoveries alone. For Aboriginal cultures, knowledge is privileged, with the community elders holding the knowledge and passing it on as appropriate. Like Ungunmerr, Baarda observed:

> Almost all teachers of Aboriginal children come up against the problem of children not wanting to stand up or do anything by themselves in front of others. They feel real shame when required to do such things. Also they are often unhappy if it is pointed out that they have scored higher or performed better than their friends and relations. (Baarda, 1990, p. 169)

In Aboriginal cultures, there are rules to prevent individuals from striving for personal accomplishment and glory. Instead, Aboriginal children are encouraged to engage in constant interaction with others.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CONCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

The hunting and gathering economy of the pre-European, Australian Aboriginal cultures was dependent on cooperation and a strong sense of group identity. Because of the necessarily heavy reliance by Aboriginal people on cooperation and interdependence, individual choices and behaviours generally were not possible. Based on the Dreamtime and associated laws, Aboriginal cultures identified as most knowledgeable the persons who best knew these laws, how to maintain them, and how to create opportunities to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal cultures with respect to the laws (Harker & McConnochie, 1985).

The term gifted is not used by most Aboriginal people, irrespective of whether they are from a traditional or urban background. In interviews with Aboriginal parents, teachers, and students, the most often used words, which conveyed a similar meaning were ‘clever’ and ‘bright’ (Gibson, 1997; Harslett, 1992). However, this may not be a valid synonym for gifted since a commonly held cultural belief among Aboriginal communities is that all children are clever (Kearins, 1988; Malin, 1990) and that it is not acceptable to stand out above others, as was previously discussed in this chapter. While Aboriginal people don’t talk about giftedness per se, the notion of knowledge is central to their world view. Knowledge is privileged in Aboriginal communities but it is not related to any inborn capacities of individuals; rather, it is a function of age – as you mature you are given access to knowledge which is controlled through secret language.

Australian mainstream culture basically views giftedness in an academic achievement sense. Talents possessed by children from minority cultures are often not in accord with schools' definitions of talent and may not be recognized. Aboriginal children may possess potential talent in popular music, special forms of dance, group (interpersonal) skills, visual art, performing skills, social leadership, humour and witty language, which are not noticed and developed by teachers (Braggett, 1985; Kearins, 1982). While there is collaboration and avoidance of competition generally, there is, nevertheless, a recognition that some children are born with specific talents and they are encouraged to pursue excellence in those areas: these include song, art, hunting, story-telling, language and knowledge (Fesl, 1993). Stan Grant, a well-known Aboriginal media identity, commented that Aboriginal people need to encourage individuality and brilliance more than occurred in the past: “You can still be your own person and succeed in another world, and be tied spiritually to your own tribal area” (as cited in Coolwell, 1993, p. 111).

Research into Australian Aboriginal giftedness

In the last twenty years, state policies on gifted education and Australian federal initiatives such as the National Equity Program for Schools that provided funding for research have attempted to encourage research on gifted students from minority populations and focused the educator’s attention on the issue of underachieving gifted students. This awareness has served in part to broaden educators’ definitions of giftedness beyond Terman's dependence on a high IQ and academic excellence.

Although these initiatives have encouraged a number of general studies on giftedness, the research base related to the identification and appropriate education of gifted Aboriginal students remains limited. Only a small number of studies have focused on the perceptions and indicators of giftedness in Australian Aboriginal cultures and these studies were largely concerned with recognizing and fostering giftedness in a school setting.

In 1983 Kearins (1988) and "a number of Aboriginal interviewers in their home districts"(p. 62) conducted interviews with 178 Aboriginal people from across Western Australia to determine perceptions of intelligence. Responses to the question, "What sort of things would make you think that an Aboriginal child was really clever, out of school?" helped to define Aboriginal perceptions of giftedness and also provided descriptions of behaviours which might indicate that an Aboriginal child is 'really clever' or gifted (Table 1). Although 55 (31%) of those interviewed failed to answer the question or espoused a belief that all children are different, the remaining 123 (69%) interviewees identified six general categories of characteristics, which they considered indicated a 'really clever' child out of school. These similarities pertained across the research sample despite the fact that they drew from different Aboriginal groups across urban and rural Western Australia.

TABLE 1 about here

Similar descriptions of giftedness arose from research conducted by Bevan-Brown (2005) with Maori people in New Zealand. Her research involved Maori who "identify with and adhere to their Maori culture" (p. 150). Bevan-Brown reported culturally specific exceptional abilities including arts, crafts, music, historic and cultural knowledge and traditions, the Maori language, story telling, and speaking. These abilities are comparable to some of Kearins' (1988) Cognitive Characteristics and those areas of ability listed under Specific Skills in Table 1.

Braggett (1985) suggested that Aboriginal children from traditional communities often find school an alien environment where they may be expected to accept white values, adopt different learning styles, and compete with their peers. Many Aboriginal children are brought up to accept cooperation in larger groups. Further, he stated that Aboriginal students are "high in memory skills, excel in visual-spatial ability, are persistent and stubborn, exhibit high internal motivation when interested, and are bored by routine tasks" (p. 3).

Malin (1990) described a study of urban Aboriginal families in South Australia. It revealed that characteristics which were valued and, therefore, encouraged through family interactions and child rearing practices were independence, self-reliance, autonomy, and respect for the rights of others to their autonomy. Also, knowledge of family and extended kinship, as well as skills to fix things such as repairing cars and household appliances were valued areas of ability.

A Western Australia study conducted by Harslett (1992, 1994) involved rural Aboriginal people from several Aboriginal communities living within a 600-mile radius of Geraldton. Drawing on census data and indexes of contact with Anglo society, Harslett (1994) concluded that his research sample was typical of rural Aboriginal groups in their low socioeconomic status and adherence to more traditional lifestyles. Harslett's findings indicated "that a concept of giftedness is compatible with Aboriginal culture, that Aboriginal people believe giftedness is in the main a product of environmental factors" but also results to a certain extent from "some degree of personal natural ability" (1992, p. 354). He found, however, that the areas of ability in which Aboriginal adults value giftedness differed to those ability areas recognized by Aboriginal children. The Aboriginal adults in the study prized giftedness most highly in artistic endeavours and "to a lesser extent in the sensory-motor and then the intellectual" (1992, p. 354). Aboriginal adults valued giftedness least in the socio-emotional domain. On the other hand, the Aboriginal children in the study valued intellectual giftedness most, then the socio-emotional and sensory-motor domains. Least prized by the Aboriginal children was artistic giftedness. The differences between the value accorded to certain areas of giftedness by Aboriginal adults and children most probably come from the contexts in which they operated. For instance, Aboriginal adults may have placed the most value on artistic endeavours because this was seen as a profitable way to earn a living. Aboriginal children, however, may have placed more value on intellectual giftedness because it was seen as useful in the context of school.

Gibson's empirical study (1998) sought to determine the conceptions of giftedness held by Aboriginal people living in urban areas of southern Queensland and to establish the usefulness of Frasier's (1992) ten traits, aptitudes and behaviors (TABs) to identify gifted Aboriginal students in Australia. Frasier's research had determined that the TABs of Motivation, Interest, Communication Skills, Problem-solving, Memory, Inquiry, Insight, Reasoning, Imagination/Creativity and Humour were relevant attributes of the giftedness construct within and across six cultural groups. Face-to-face interviews with 11

Aboriginal parents and a postal questionnaire of 25 Aboriginal teachers in Queensland were conducted to gather descriptions of behaviours that were indicative of cleverness in the Aboriginal culture (Gibson, 1998). Interviews were held at a place chosen by the interviewee. All chose either the public school or a community center for the interview. In the interviews, the only question asked was “What are things that (name of child) does that indicate to you that s/he is really clever or has outstanding ability?” To increase interview reliability and validity, each interviewee was given a copy of his/her interview transcript and asked to confirm that their behaviour descriptions had been appropriately interpreted and coded using Frasier’s TABs by the interviewer and three Aboriginal community members.

To obtain similar descriptions to those from the interviews, the postal questionnaire used the written prompt “Think of Aboriginal children who you consider to be of exceptional ability or capable of exceptional ability. On the lines below, describe the ways in which these children act that lead you to believe they have exceptional ability.” These descriptions, when analyzed using Frasier’s ten TABs, showed results comparable with those from the interviews. Although the Aboriginal people in this study were not construed as representative of all Aboriginal people in Australia, the findings in this study were in accord with previous research (see, for example, Harslett, 1992; Kearins, 1988; Malin, 1990).

The information regarding the number and percent of interviewees or respondents providing an example of core or additional attributes is summarised in Table 2. Interview data revealed that all of Frasier's core attributes were described by seven (64%) or more of the eleven interviewees with the exception of Humour which was described by five (45%) of the Aboriginal parents. Also, it was noted from the table that all eleven (100%) of the interviewees provided examples for the attributes of Reasoning, while ten (91%) of the eleven gave descriptions of Motivation, Communication, Interests and Memory. These results indicated that the Aboriginal interviewees' conceptions of giftedness included all of the ten core attributes plus additional descriptions for attributes which eventually were collectively categorised as Interpersonal / Intrapersonal Ability.

TABLE 2 about here

Similar results came from the questionnaire completed by Aboriginal teachers. From Table 2, it can be seen that all core attributes and the proposed attributes of Interpersonal / Intrapersonal Ability were nominated by at least one respondent. The five core attributes of Motivation, Problem Solving Ability,

Communication, Memory and Reasoning along with the proposed attribute of Interpersonal / Intrapersonal Ability were described by seven (24%) or more of the questionnaire respondents. Three (10%) to five (17%) of the respondents described the attributes of Imagination / Creativity (5), Inquiry (4), Insight (3), Sensitivity (3) and Interests (3). However, Humour was only described by one (3%) of the respondents.

Table 2 also provides the total number and percent of interviewees and respondents who gave an example of the core and additional attributes. From the table, it can be seen that over half of the interviewees and respondents described the attributes of Interpersonal / Intrapersonal Ability (65%) and Motivation (58%). Additionally, half provided an example of Problem Solving Ability with over 40 percent giving examples of Reasoning (48%), Memory (45%) and Communication (43%). The attributes of Interests and Imagination / Creativity were described by one third of the interviewees and respondents, while at least a quarter of them described the attributes of Insight (30%) and Inquiry (28%). Humour was the least described attribute with a total of only six interviewees and respondents providing an example.

Another purpose of the research was to note culturally specific examples that would help to describe more comprehensively the core and additional attributes for urban Aboriginal children. From an analysis of the 20 interview examples and the 17 questionnaire examples which were classified as culturally specific, it was found that all core attributes with the exception of Inquiry, and the additional attribute of Interpersonal / Intrapersonal Ability had been described with at least one culturally specific example. Table 3 shows the frequency of culturally specific examples for each attribute and the number of interviewees and questionnaire respondents providing the example(s) with some of the examples recorded for more than one attribute.

TABLE 3 about here

As can be seen from the table, at least twice as many culturally specific examples were provided for the attribute of Interpersonal / Intrapersonal Ability as for any of the other attributes with the exception of Communication. The next highest numbers of culturally specific examples were provided for the attributes of Communication and Motivation with 12 and 7 examples respectively. All other attributes had 4 or less culturally specific examples given for them.

The 37 culturally specific examples comprised nine subcategories, tentatively established during the analysis of the interview and questionnaire data, which included the following, with the number of

examples in brackets: interest in and concern about cultural issues (9), effectively deal with racism (8), sense of family loyalty (5), ability to switch language codes (4), ability to live effectively in a bi-cultural situation (3), storytelling (3), natural ability of members of culture (2), confidence in cultural identity (1), and confidence in classroom (1).

Problem Solving and Creative Ability Related to Giftedness

One of the goals of this volume is to consider the various conceptions of giftedness among different cultures so that the knowledge and understanding can provide a basis on which to design future research concerned with problem solving, creative endeavours and thinking. The research of Gibson (1997, 1998) which attempted to stimulate discussion of the conceptions of giftedness held by urban Aboriginal people, recorded behaviour indicators of problem solving and creative ability and compared these to Frasier's TABs. The attribute of Problem Solving Ability, defined by Frasier (1992) as "effective, often inventive, strategies for recognising and solving problems", was described by nine of the southern Queensland Aboriginal interviewees with 23 examples. In coding Problem Solving Ability descriptions into four subcategories, it was found that most (15) descriptions, provided by seven interviewees were aptly placed in the "have exceptional ability in devising a systematic strategy for problem solving" subcategory. Relatively few were identified for the subcategories of "change strategy if it is not working" (3), "create new designs" (3), and "be an inventor and innovator" (2). Table 4 indicates these frequencies for the Problem Solving Ability subcategories by interview.

TABLE 4 about here

Of the fifteen examples in the subcategory of "ability in devising a systematic strategy," seven involved an academic context, while five described the child's ability to resolve a social situation through problem solving. The other three examples in the subcategory dealt with problem solving ability in sports, homework or crossword puzzles.

Of the following two descriptions, the first represented problem solving in an academic context, while the second provided an example of a social context where problem solving ability was seen to be exceptional.

A letter came home and just said that she got picked to go into this maths centre to do problem solving. So I was quite happy that she got picked to go in. (Interview 6, p. 5)

I said you just tell me and I'll come up [to school] and do something about it [kids teasing at school]. He said no you'll only make it worse. Just leave it. Anyway I just sort of kept asking him regularly how he was going, if it was okay. And it sort of came home to me then the next year how successful he had been. He was voted in as class captain and student councilor by the very same kids. He sort of turned them around in his own quiet way. And obviously gained their respect in him, never had any problems afterwards so that's something that sticks in my mind as to how he's able to turn the other cheek and solve his own problems. (Interview 9, p. 7)

The following are examples of the Problem Solving Ability subcategories of "change strategy if it is not working", "create new designs" and "be an inventor/ and innovator", respectively.

Because she was offered a job and she thought well I'll get out of the school system because all that was doing, Beth thought, was just pulling her down, the way she was at school. (Interview 8, p. 2)

The carving was something that he does. It's [a table] about that wide and it's just carved with flowers and swirls. And then there's sayings, like "Never judge a book by its cover", carved into the thing and all these different sayings with swirls and carvings and it looks really nice. (Interview 10, p. 7)

He was forever building cubby houses and I don't mean just a couple tin sheets up against the fence or sheets inside [the house] pinned to things. He built the craziest cubby houses. There was one that he actually had dug a hole over in the corner of the yard and laid some old carpet. And around that he built a frame and then used a mixture of the grass that we had after we'd mowed the lawn and mud and other stuff that he'd found and made like a brick. And he

> used those to cover the top of the cubby house....You didn't realise how big it was until you got inside it. It was open, dry inside. (Interview 10, p. 7)

Imagination / Creativity Abilities Related to Giftedness

The research (Gibson, 1997, 1998) also looked at the attribute of Imagination / Creativity which was defined by Frasier (1992) as “produces many ideas; highly original.” Table 5 indicates that all but one of the subcategories of the attribute Imagination / Creativity were described by at least one of the interviewees. The most often described subcategory was "produce many different ideas" with eight descriptions given by six different interviewees. Three interviewees provided four examples each for the subcategories of "be exceptionally ingenious using everyday materials," "have wild, unusual sometimes silly ideas" and “highly curious.” Only one description was recorded for the subcategory of "be keenly observant."

TABLE 5 about here

Two of the descriptions which indicated an exceptional ability to produce many different ideas which were highly original are as follows:

> [17 year old student speaking] So the teacher said you could use any material you wanted to so I said oh I'll use clay then. And I just made all these real big pots and that. And she just goes, “That's your first time you've ever used clay?” and I said, “Yeah.” She goes, “That is really good” cause she reckoned, you know, they looked like the rebirth of just nature 'cause I've got the pots and it looked like a big flower and I've got all Aboriginal art you know like 3-D, 3-dimensional. [Student’s mother speaking] Her imagination keeps going and going and going until she eventually comes up with this thing that she's got. (Interview 8, p. 19)

> Just another thing he does do in his spare time is sit and design sports clothes continuously. I mean I've got pages and pages of jerseys for the Australian football team and cricket clothes for the Australian cricket team. And then he writes up his team list beside it which always includes himself of course. (Interview 9, p. 3)

In the following two examples describing a three-year-old boy and a seventeen-year-old girl, the interviewees provided examples of the subcategory related to having wild, unusual, and sometimes silly ideas.

> A child that can sit up at the table and have a conversation. He does. He has this every night. He must have a conversation every night at the dinner table. If he can't think of anything that's happened through the day, he'll make up a story. And it's usually about crocodiles or sharks. But he'll tell you a whole story about a crocodile or a shark and it's made up. (Interview 1, p. 3)

> She's creative and her imagination.... [S]he's really all into theatre and art and when she was younger she always used to like mucking around with things. You know, using her imagination a lot. And her imagination is really wild. (Interview 8, p. 19)

Finally, the only description to be classified as demonstrating the Imagination / Creativity subcategory of "be keenly observant" is shown below:

> Her imagination is just really vivid. It's almost like... she's been there before or done it or something. (Interview 8, p. 19)

Additional Research Studies

A study of how Aboriginal giftedness is constructed by mainstream Australian society was conducted by Kell (2000). In a detailed analysis of media reporting of successful Aboriginal sportspeople such as Evonne Cawley and a number of Australian Rules and Rugby players, Kell argued that, contrary to the image of Australian sport and the 'fair go', Australian attitudes reproduce inequality and racism. In particular, he identified issues such as racial vilification and unequal access to facilities and resources as endemic in Australian society. For those Aboriginal people who have been able to attain outstanding achievements, there is inadequate appreciation of their giftedness. Kell observed:

> In most cases the success of an Australian Aboriginal person in sport has not led to greater acceptance by mainstream Australia, or a greater sense of unity between mainstream and non-Aboriginal society. In many cases success has rebounded badly on those Aboriginal

> sportsmen and women, making them the target of a media coverage which draws attention to their Aboriginality. (Kell, 2000, pp. 42-3)

Kell drew attention to the pervasive belief that gifted individuals could use sport to rise above their Aboriginality. Their general acceptance as gifted individuals was predicated on their not being like other Aboriginals but their vulnerabilities were interpreted as confirming their Aboriginality. Aboriginal giftedness in sport was thus seen as "black magic" (p.55), that is the outcome of natural talent rather than hard work. Kell concluded:

> A new form of social Darwinism pervades certain sports, hinting that racial attributes make groups either fit or unfit for certain sports. It is a pernicious view that suggests that white men can't run fast and that Aboriginal people are prone to go 'walkabout' in the heat of competition. (Kell, 2000, p. 155)

A similar observation was made by Leonard (2002), whose doctoral thesis explored Aboriginal life histories in the context of Aboriginal Education policies and conceptions of giftedness. Leonard's thesis was stimulated by his observation that at the school where he taught and coordinated the gifted program, no Aboriginal students were identified for the program despite the fact that they constituted a significant percentage of the school's enrolment. When he noted this situation, he made a special effort to ask teachers and the Aboriginal Teacher Aides to nominate any Aboriginal children who might qualify for the program. The same girl was nominated by most of the teachers and aides. When Leonard probed them to explain why she had been nominated, the answer was that she was the closest they could get to an Aboriginal student who was likely to succeed at school. At the same school, Leonard took his Year 9 Science class out to the oval one Friday afternoon to kick a football back and forth. Leonard was impressed when one Aboriginal boy took a spectacular mark (catch) by leaping onto his teacher's upper back. When Leonard recounted this incident to the Sports teacher, the latter commented, "Yes, it's a waste of natural talent. He won't come to footy practice for the school team." An Aboriginal aide happened to be passing at the time, overheard the comment and responded, "It's amazing how much natural talent a person can have, when they spend hours every day for their entire lives doing something!" Leonard's observations are in accord with Kell's earlier work. Aboriginal giftedness was either seen as the person who could succeed in a white

environment (with success narrowly defined as completion of high school) or was seen as a natural talent in sport or certain forms of entertainment and not the outcome of effort.

Another approach to identifying giftedness in Aboriginal populations involved the use of dynamic testing (Chaffey, Bailey & Vine, 2003). This approach was comprised of a test–intervention–retest format where the intervention was designed to address issues associated with academic underachievement. Chaffey and colleagues conducted the study with 79 Aboriginal children drawn from Years 3–5 in rural schools in northern New South Wales, Australia. They concluded that the approach was an effective identification tool as they were able to identify high academic potential in the Aboriginal children in similar proportions to those in the mainstream population. Chaffey and colleagues indicated that many of the children were 'invisible' underachievers and that the dynamic testing process allowed the Aboriginal children's intellectual gifts to come to the fore.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The research described in this chapter suggests some broad principles that need to be taken into consideration for the appropriate education of gifted Australian Aboriginal children. Many of these implications resonate with other cultural groups and with the needs of gifted children more generally.

The first issue relates to the identification of gifted Aboriginal students. Each of the studies reported in this chapter demonstrated the fallibility of using narrow conceptions of giftedness and correspondingly limited tools for identification such as standardized IQ tests. Instead, they advocated identification approaches that involve contextualized observations that are culturally sensitive. The implications of these varied works is that educators need to know the communities with which they work; they need to understand the values and aspirations of those communities; they need to understand how giftedness may be recognized and nurtured; and, finally, they need to work collaboratively to plan programs that are in accord with their communities' needs and expectations.

The second issue has to do with appropriate learning environments and strategies for gifted Aboriginal students. In our work with various Aboriginal communities in Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, we have found that it is counter-productive to single out the lone Aboriginal child for a gifted program. Not only does it look like tokenism but also it often does not work for the child

concerned, particularly in communities where traditional values are more explicitly espoused. Instead, we have experienced a much better fit for the children when we have identified a small group of Aboriginal students to work in a mutually supportive manner in gifted programs. This approach allows the individual to develop their intellectual skills in an environment that allows them to learn in a manner more akin to their values.

We would contend that recognizing and nurturing gifted Australian Aboriginal individuals rests on also recognizing the intellectual strengths of Aboriginal people collectively. Contemporary definitions of intelligence acknowledge that intelligence is culturally defined as those areas that have value to the specific culture (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 2003). Extrapolating from this, we would argue that any conceptualization of giftedness from an Australian Aboriginal perspective must incorporate intellectual strengths that are inherent in their world view. Drawing on the research presented in this chapter and our own interactions with Aboriginal communities (and at the risk of stereotyping these diverse people), the following intellectual strengths typify the diverse indigenous groups in Australia:

1. Linguistic intelligence. Aboriginal languages are more syntactically complex than English (Fesl, 1993). Traditionally, Aboriginal people were multilingual and when exposed to other languages they learned them quickly and well. This is evident in the inclusion of Macassan words in Aboriginal languages in the Northern Territory and of Japanese words in the Lockhart river area. The quickness of Aboriginal people to pick up English was noted both by the explorer Mitchell and Captain Philip (Fesl, 1993).

2. Spatial intelligence. Kearins' (1982) study was one of the first to acknowledge this intellectual strength in Aboriginal children. Other studies have emphasized the strength of Aboriginal children in learning through observation (Harris, 1980; Malin, 1990). The gifted research cited in this chapter also found this to be a consistent strength. Spatial abilities have had their most noted expression in the exceptionality of Aboriginal trackers and the world acclaim for the work of traditional and contemporary Australian Aboriginal artists.

3. Interpersonal intelligence. Australian Aboriginal cultures constitute an egalitarian society where everything is shared. Kinship is central and Aboriginal children are born into groups not into nuclear families (Fesl, 1993). Gibson's (1997, 1998) research highlighted this aspect as does other gifted research

(see, for example, Cronin & Diezmann, 2002). Aboriginal children are raised to be independent and autonomous, both qualities being pivotal in the realization of giftedness.

4. Naturalist and spiritual intelligence. The connection and respect for the land that is central to the Aboriginal world view embraces two of Gardner's (1998, 2000) more recent additions to his theory of Multiple Intelligences (although he does not accept spirituality as a full intelligence at this stage). An indication of this fundamental connection is seen in the fact that Aboriginal place names are related to surroundings not to people (as in English society). For example, Brewarrina in NSW is "the place where acacias grow" (Fesl, 1993, p. 18) and Wollongong (where Wilma lives) means "the place where the mountain meets the sea".

A further observation that we would draw from our work is the importance of bilingual and bicultural education as a context in which gifted Aboriginal students are more likely to be recognized. In our earlier discussion of the issues Australian Aboriginal communities face in the loss of their languages, we highlighted the impact this had on many Aboriginal people's sense of cultural identity. One of the means by which traditional languages can be sustained is through bilingual education. In 1973, the Northern Territory offered bilingual education programs in 16 Aboriginal languages known as 'two way' or 'both ways' schooling (Harris, 1990). Besides assisting in language maintenance, these programs were also important for enhancing children's learning and Aboriginal self-determination (Walton & Eggington, 1990). " 'Both ways' education recognises that while the first language of Aboriginal children has a crucial role to play in their education, it is also important that Aboriginal children should acquire more than 'token' control over English" (Gray, 1990, p. 106).

FUTURE CHALLENGES

One of the recurring issues for us when we explore the conceptualisations of giftedness in Australian Aboriginal communities is the issue of identity. It is an issue that exists simultaneously for gifted Aboriginal people and for those who would educate them. The reality for Australian Aboriginal people is that the traditional lifestyles practised by their forbears have ceased to exist. However, many of their

cultural values persist despite the radically different lives many now lead. The challenge for Aboriginal people in this context is to find an identity that equips them for the contemporary world while retaining the positive values that represent their Aboriginality. By definition, it sometimes seems that giftedness is about being successful in straddling both these worlds. Fesl (1993) refers to this as being “two-ways strong” (p. 188). An example of one such person in Leonard’s (2002) study was Aden Ridgeway, an Aboriginal Senator, whose intellect and personal qualities are widely respected by white and Aboriginal Australians. We suspect that many Aboriginal children fail to realize their gifted potential because they are unable to find that harmony with their identity. The challenge for educators, then, is to help Aboriginal children in negotiating the process of developing self-confidence and a strong sense of identity.

Conclusion

Australia is a small young country that has become a rich multicultural environment. White settlement in the country spans just over two hundred years but the original people who inhabited this land, can lay claim to thousands of years of history. White settlement and control of the social infrastructure, including schools, has brought with it opportunities and challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Gifted Aboriginal students represent the promise of resolving the challenge posed by a dominating culture that has threatened the existence of their traditional values. Educators have an important responsibility to nurture those gifted students and hopefully build a future Australia that allows Aboriginal people to embrace the contemporary world while respecting their traditional values and beliefs. We all have a lot to learn in taking these reconciliatory steps forward.

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The **White Australian Culture is:**	The **Aboriginal Culture** is**:**
1 Competitive 1.1 competing for resources 1.2 competing for status	1 Co-operative 1.1 sharing resources 1.2 equal status
2 Hierarchical 2.1 for decision making	2 Not hierarchical 2.1 decisions by consensus
3 Contractual personal relationships	3 Unconditional acceptance by all in the group
4 Changing law	4 Static law
5 Knowledge for anyone 5.1 can be questioned 5.2 trial and error learning acceptable	5 Knowledge belongs to certain people 5.1 can't be questioned 5.2 mistakes must not be made
6 Challenging learning situations	6 Supportive learning situations
7 Individualism encouraged	7 Conformity encouraged
8 Extroverted behavior encouraged	8 Extroverted behavior usually condemned
9 Verbal communication and approval	9 Non-verbal communication and approval
10 Task oriented	10 Person oriented
11 Privacy desirable	11 Company always desired
12 Separate sub-culture for children	12 No separate sub-culture for children
13 Internal Morality 13.1 children learn to make own rules to ensure acceptance by significant others	13 External Morality 13.1 rules are made and enforced outside 13.2 no internal guilt or self punishment

Figure 1. Comparison of White and Aboriginal Cultural Mores. (Adapted from Baarda, 1990, p. 167).

Table 1
Characteristic categories of "really clever" aboriginal children by number and percentage of responses

Characteristic category	**N (%)**
Independence and helpfulness. Children's actions in helping themselves and others, e.g. ability to cook full meals for all, unasked help in the home, and independence at home and outside were stressed.	46 (25)
Bush skills. The ability to track, hunt, find the way in the bush and feed themselves in the bush.	36 (20)
Sporting ability. Specific sports or particular sports ability such as handling a ball and possessing good balance.	27 (15)
Cognitive characteristics. Included were talking, self-expressions, reliability, responsibility, curiosity, observation, concentration, memory, imagination, being sensible, being a tryer, staying out of trouble.	24 (13.5)
School related skills. Ability in homework, schoolwork helping parents to read mail and complete forms, reading for pleasure.	22 (12.5)
Specific skills. Drawing painting, singing, guitar playing, woodcarving, tool use	8 (8)

(From Kearins, 1988, pp. 63-64)

Table 2
Number And Percent Of Interviewees And Questionnaire Respondents Providing Examples For Core And Additional Attribute of Inter / Intrapersonal Ability

Category of attribute	[1]Number (%) of interviewees providing examples (N = 11)	[2]Number (% of questionnaire respondents providing examples (N = 29)	Total (%) providing examples (N = 40)
Inter/Intrapersonal Ability	11 (100)	15 (52%)	26 (65%)
Motivation	10 (91%)	13 (45%)	23 (58%)
Problem Solving Ability	9 (82%)	11(38)	20(50)
Reasoning	11 (100)	8(28)	19(48)
Memory	10 (91)	8(28)	18(45)
Communication	10 (91)	7(24)	17(43)
Interests	10 (91)	3(10)	13(33)
Imagination / Creativity	8(73)	5(17)	13(33)
Insight	9(82)	3(10)	12(30)
Inquiry	7(64)	4(14)	11(28)
Humor	5(45)	1(3)	6(15)

[1]Aboriginal parents.
[2] Aboriginal teachers

(From Gibson, 1997, p. 243).

Table 3
Frequency of culturally specific examples by attribute and number of interviewees and questionnaire respondents providing example(s)

Attribute	Number of culturally specific examples	Number providing example(s)
Inter / Intrapersonal Ability	20	8
Communication	12	8
Motivation	7	3
Problem Solving Ability	4	4
Memory	3	3
Reasoning	3	3
Imagination / Creativity	2	2
Humour	1	1
Insight1	1	1
Interests	1	1
Inquiry	-	-

(From Gibson, 1997, p. 245)

Table 4
Problem Solving Ability Subcategory Frequencies By Interview

	Frequency by interview											
Subcategory of problem solving ability	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**Total for subcategory**
Ability in devising a systematic strategy	-	1	-	-	-	3	2	2	3	3	1	15
Change strategy if it is not working	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	3
Create new designs	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3
Be an inventor/ innovator	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2

(From Gibson, 1997, p. 174)

Table 5
Imagination / Creativity Subcategory Frequencies By Interview

Subcategory of Imagination /	Frequency by interview											**Total for subcategory**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	
Produces many different ideas	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	2	8
Ingenious use of everyday materials	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
Wild, unusual ideas	2	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	4
Highly curious	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
Be keenly observant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

(From Gibson, 1997, p. 181).