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COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION AND CONTRADICTION

*The Political Implications of Changing Modes of
Communication in Indigenous Communities of
Australia and Mexico*

Leanne Reinke

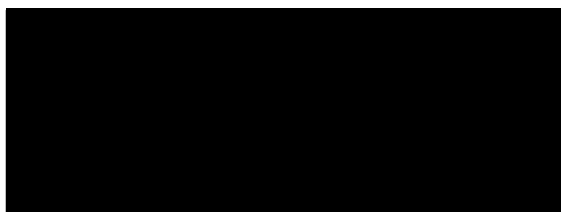
***Community, Communication and Contradiction:
The Political Implications of Changing Modes of Communication in
Indigenous Communities of Australia and Mexico***

By Leanne Reinke BA (Hons)

***Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy through the
School of Political and Social Inquiry,
Faculty of Arts,
Monash University, Australia, 2001.***

The material in this thesis is based on my own research, unless otherwise acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted in whole or in part, for a degree at this or at any other university.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Dated: 2 March 2001

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world we are experiencing a rapid development in technologies particularly in the area of communications. The burgeoning of computer-mediated communicative techniques is increasing the proportion of interactions we conduct at a mediated or disembodied level. This thesis concerns itself with the accompanying decrease in the integrative depth of face-to-face relations and what this may mean for the social formations in which we live. It explores the constitution of community, through the practices of its participants as we turn increasingly to popularised forms of community in their nostalgic or virtual manifestations. The thesis argues that one way of achieving rich and fulfilling community is through reflexively holding on to the contradictory coexistence of modern and traditional forms. That is, I argue it is possible to adopt technological communicative practices while framing this adoption within the integrative depth of face-to-face relations. The thesis will elaborate a theoretical framework that allows for an investigation of the nature of 'integrative community'. This investigation is pursued through examples from Indigenous communities of Australia and Mexico in the fields of political protest and education.

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'Utopia in Chiapas? Questioning Disembodied Politics', in James Goodman (ed.), *Protest and Globalisation*, Pluto Press, London, 2001.

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'Alone in the Company of Others', *Arena Magazine*, No 42, Aug-Sept 1999, pp. 2-3.

'A Virtual Killing in Chiapas', *Arena Magazine*, No 34, Apr-May 1998, pp. 8-9.

PREFACE

Face-to-face, Eye-to-eye

Either of these functions – mask, or window to the soul – is a wonder; together they make an orgy of disproportion compounded by the fact that the face never exists alone; fated in its very being to be only when faced by another face.

Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy
and the Labour of the Negative*, 1999

The face is a representation of human relations and as such is a powerful symbol of honesty and truth. When we are engaged in relationships based on face-to-face communication it has the strength to carry a sense of intimacy and richness. However, these late-modern times have presented us with a faster world where the broadening of our immediate environs is changing the way we communicate and relate to others.¹ There are a potentially unlimited number of social connections we can make within increasingly shorter time-spans, yet, the increased opportunity for connecting has not necessarily offered an equivalent opportunity for developing engaged social relations. In this globalised world, the majority of us in developed countries are faced with an increasing number of situations where we are forced, or choose, to spend more time physically alone, or more time in routinised interchange or mediated interaction. While communication such as mobile phones, the internet, and even modernised forms of transport enable us to keep in touch, they also enable us to stay apart. Knowing one's immediate neighbours seems unnecessary when it is possible to call someone who lives on the other side of the world. New communication extends our reach, but paradoxically places more distance between us. This is associated with a decline in engaged social interactions and has impacted upon the communities within which we live. The more intimate and richer connections between people have become fewer and less sustainable. For many people this is the way of progress.

¹ I argue this to emphasise the propensity of change in the way we relate to each other in contemporary times. However, it should be acknowledged, that the changes in technology and culture throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century also 'created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space'. As noted by Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 1.

The decreasing integrative depth of face-to-face interactions in the contemporary world changes the meaning of the society in which we live. This thesis reflects my concern that those in favour of progress are uncritically adopting new practices such as the technological innovations in communication without addressing the impact upon our communities. Nevertheless, it is my contention that despite the potential for a thinning out of community it is possible to use the new technology in ways that reflexively mitigate against its distancing tendencies. Indigenous² communities, with their continuing emphasis on face-to-face integration provide a setting for studying this possibility. While technology and innovative practices are being adopted by some tribal communities, the face, with its social significance, has arguably remained imperative to the constitution of these communities.

During my research it was mentioned to me by a non-Indigenous researcher that it was a problem that my theoretical analysis included the term 'face-to-face' when I was using examples from Indigenous communities. The suggestion was made that Indigenous peoples avoid looking directly eye-to-eye. This avoidance is often presented as being a cultural act. The evidence is ambiguous, and this ambiguity points to the face as powerfully symbolic. The significance of the symbol of the face within societies reveals the importance of face-to-face relations. These face-to-face relations carry with them practices and conventions often distinctive to the social groupings to which they belong. The face is powerfully symbolic of the things a society holds precious. This is equally the case for Indigenous communities as it is for non-Indigenous communities.

Two recent events are significant for what they tell us about 'face' in Indigenous communities. In April 1997, the Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard, delivered a speech at the Australian Reconciliation Convention at a time when Indigenous issues had begun to receive long overdue attention and concern. The inadequacy of the government's response was realised as the Prime Minister spoke, and a quarter of the audience stood and turned their backs. This act of refusing to face the Prime Minister was a powerful symbol of the refusal to accept John Howard and what he represented. The action signified an observable call of shame. The refusal to face this person who was addressing the audience was momentous in its socially humiliating effect. A second event occurred thousands of kilometres away in Mexico but equally expresses the importance of face. On 1 January 1994

² Throughout this thesis I will be using the capitalised form of Indigenous in all occurrences as an act of political empowerment. Indigenous Australians is used as an inclusive term that refers to both

a political group with balaclava-clad faces held an uprising throughout the southern state of Mexico. The Zapatistas are a predominantly Indigenous political group in Chiapas, Mexico and are recognised for the bandanas and balaclavas that continue to cover their faces. This group of men, women and children, since 1994, has been struggling against the Mexican Government and Army for the right to live autonomously in the south-east corner of Mexico. Their masked faces are said to be both functional – for the protection of their identities – but are equally symbolic. The symbolism resides in the association of the masked face of the Zapatista with the hidden true face of the nation of Mexico by the Mexican Government. The Zapatistas contend that there is an inability of the Mexican Government to be honest and to show the true soul of the country. The Zapatistas say the nation is wearing a mask that hides the face which would reveal the true Mexico. The face for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples symbolises a social practice integral to social harmony.

I suggest that if some Indigenous peoples do not look eye-to-eye that, rather than this action being an embedded cultural or social practice, it is an action that has resulted from the many years of racist behaviour on the part of the white oppressor. Henry Reynolds has written succinctly of this cause for the lowering of the eyes.

What encircled Aborigines – and to a lesser extent Islanders – was an all-embracing, inherited sense of forced subordination ... Many older Aboriginal people would not make eye contact with migloos. Culturally determined reticence or shyness was only part of the explanation for this. More compelling were the expectations of white people, which included lowered eyes and a submissive downward tilt of the head. That was the way to avoid trouble ... Aboriginal oral tradition taught that it was dangerous to backchat a white man. The stories inspired resistance and counselled caution and the need for a show of subordination ... As I read such material I thought as much about the present as the past. It had such resonance, such power of explanation. I understood the reason for the downcast eyes, the fear of challenging a migloo even with too confident a glance, gesture or gait. This was why I had seen such fear in the eyes of Aborigines I met and such caution in the way they weighed up and watched migloos before they dropped their mask, spoke their minds or confided their feelings.³

This explanation has more resonance than one based on long-run cultural practices.

The lowering of one's eyes has analogous resonance for the researcher of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous issues. For two hundred years, Indigenous peoples have had to endure being the object of outrageous and unacceptable research techniques. Being a

Australian Aboriginal peoples and peoples from the Torres Strait Islands.

³ Henry Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth About our History*, Viking, Ringwood, 1999, pp. 37, 121-123.

non-Indigenous researcher myself, I have unresolved concerns regarding the use of Indigenous examples within this thesis. This thesis proceeds as a discussion of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and Australia, however, this is not only an Indigenous story. It is a story about communication and community. Nevertheless, it is a story better represented through Indigenous peoples' examples. It is by this means that we as non-Indigenous people may more easily see the richness that is missing from our own community through the reduction in meaningful face-to-face interactions.

Indigenous Australians have, for two hundred years, had to deal with invaders. The actions and practices of non-Indigenous people have both purposely and incidentally impacted upon the lives of Indigenous Australians. The peoples of Chiapas have had considerably less disturbance and decimation during the 500 years since the land was 'discovered' by Columbus. Regardless of this difference, indirectly, the impact has had similar results upon their communities. Indigenous Mexicans have also had to fight for what is rightly theirs: dignity and justice. While I continue to recognise my position of privilege and remain cautious regarding non-Indigenous researchers undertaking research involving Indigenous peoples, I continue in the hope that this thesis may provoke a possible rethinking of the nature of social formations. As non-Indigenous persons, we have for many years wrongly understood Indigenous communities and moreover, imposed our understandings upon them. Perhaps we may begin an understanding that will encourage us to impose some of the strengths of non-Indigenous communities upon ourselves.

This thesis thus looks to Indigenous communities as a means of understanding the impact of technology on community. I argue in this thesis that it is possible to build rich and meaningful communities, communities in which qualities such as loyalty, truth and honesty are derived through intimate face-to-face relations, within and against the technological race called progress. It is possible to adopt technological innovations into our practices in coexistence with the integrative depth of face-to-face relations as long as this is done with reflexive attention to the intersection of social forms – mediated and face-to-face. In this way, it would be possible to maintain or re-establish those human relations that provide rich and fulfilling communities and lives.

INTRODUCTION

A Coexistence of Social Forms

In Aboriginal Australia the relation of past with present poses an unusual problem for an ethnography. A brief trip to the tin shanties of today's Aborigines in central Australia invites the unaccustomed visitor to interpret their lives as irrevocably dominated, if not destroyed, by Western civilization. Ironically, the eyes of the concerned see mainly poverty and deprivation, rather than the structured social world Aboriginal people continue to maintain. With a view to the imposing, apparently unchanging landscape, the nostalgic may reflect sadly on the intervention of history in a timeless world. But these reactions would be mistaken.

For all its trappings of worldliness and hard knowledge of history's inexorable laws, such a dichotomous "before and after" view reflects a rather shallow grasp of society as human action. Focusing on outward form alone makes it impossible to see the past in the present.

Fred Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*, 1986

It appears, as Fred Myers suggests, that there exists for Indigenous peoples in post-colonial nations an irresolvable predicament between their 'savagery' and their 'civilisation'. The dichotomy of the before (being savage) and the after (being civilised) is one which haunts the political struggles of Indigenous peoples and their very existence in the modern age. The Indigenous person is often relegated to an inauthentic status unless their mode of economic sustainability, their spirituality and ceremonial practices, their method of communication, and their general practices of existence, take a pre-modern form. Any variance on this theme, namely the adoption of 'civilised' ways, particularly of a technological nature, is seen to place them on the path of progression, and therefore, it is argued, enables them to participate on the same playing field as non-Indigenous peoples.

An argument of this thesis derives from the contention that a 'savage and civilised' or 'before and after' dichotomy is misleading. Such thinking tends to prioritise the belief in 'a great divide', in which the savage is continually encouraged to take the inevitable leap into the modern, civilised way of life. Alternatively, it allows that the 'savage' may gain acceptance for a continuing native way of life, but only if such continuance is observed

without change or development. This notion, proclaiming that tribal or traditional society should either follow a linear plane of progression or stay unchanged, is of limited validity. Besides omitting to acknowledge the practices of enforced displacement and assimilation, it makes assumptions about the inability of social actors to play a conscious role in the reconstitution of the communities in which they live. In the contemporary late-modern age in which tribal and traditional practices have become commonly overlaid by modern and postmodern practices there exists a constant tension to give primacy to practices which constitute the tribal or traditional forms. It is within some contemporary Indigenous communities that it is possible to see examples of both traditional and modern practices coexisting as layers of social formation.

Analysing the social formation of community is instructive in rethinking the possibilities for social change. Many different categories of community, as will be outlined in Chapter One, can be observed through an analysis of the practices undertaken by the participants within the community. Through such analysis it is conceivable to see the possibilities opened up by adopting differing methods of action, techniques and practices that would in a commonsensical way belong to a more 'civilised', or more abstract society. In other words, I will be arguing that the use of abstract technologies such as the internet or narrow-cast cable television can be used by tribal peoples without *necessarily* 'modernising' their way of life, at least not in the ethnocentric definition of that term.¹

In effect, the thesis includes an exploration of the possibility of sustaining a form of community in which the technologies of the modern world can be adapted without a loss of the values of the traditional social life. This kind of community which achieves an integration of both the richness and depth of traditional practices while adopting benefits of modern technologies will, in this thesis, be illustrated through reference to certain Indigenous communities in the fields of education and social protest. The existence of this kind of community formation, which I have termed 'integrative community', is also possible for non-Indigenous peoples. This area of discussion has become, and continues to be, imperative in the contemporary world. Practices undertaken reflexively by community

¹ Such a statement could be assisted through reference to the notion of form and content, with content being the parts that are without structure until given form. In relation to the above statement it could be considered that the use of technologies is the content that does not necessarily impact upon their way of life, the form. A further discussion of form and content appears in Chapter One.

participants can allow for the adoption of modernised technology without losing traditional faiths and beliefs. This thesis puts forward an alternative to a linear progressive model of community, that is, a coexistence of different societal formations, the modern and the traditional. As a way of taking this contention further I now turn to defining some of the key terms and introducing the themes of this thesis: community, communication and contradiction.

Community

Through technological innovations in areas such as travel and communications the world appears to be reducing in size. Yet, at the same time that it is becoming smaller, it also faces the paradox of becoming larger in the sense that the ways in which people live in this globalised world are more abstract. 'Abstraction' is the general term used to describe processes of technological or systematised mediation, extension, and distancing. It will be developed more fully as a concept later. As a response to this 'abstract' global expansion, there has been a popularisation of the contrasting concept of 'concrete' community. Community is presented as the place of boundedness and wholeness in opposition to the openness and fragmentation of the global arena.² Many people in the globalised world of larger spaces and declining engaged relationships feel a need for an attachment and anchorage in their lives. This is sometimes expressed by a yearning for the village or the small rural community. There has developed a desire for a boundedness that is assumed to belong to the community of a traditional era. I have categorised this as a yearning for 'nostalgic community' and embark on an analysis of this and other forms of community that have arisen in search of a meaningful society. In particular, there has been a prevailing interest in one of these other forms. This is the community form referred to as 'virtual community' as it relates to computer-mediated or disembodied communication. These communities, however, lack constituents that are crucial for social formations that carry a sustained richness and depth. The difference between these disparate communities

² While this statement is very much resultant of the late-modern era, it parallels in many ways the concerns of the classical social theorist Emile Durkheim whose intellectual project centered around both 'the autonomy of the social as a distinctive level of reality which could not be reduced to the psychological properties of individuals but required exploration in its own terms', and 'the crisis of modernity-the rupture of traditional social ties by industrialisation, the Enlightenment, and individualism.' Beryl Langer 'Emile Durkheim' in Peter Beilharz, (ed.) *Social Theory: A Guide to Central Thinkers*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, p. 70.

and the 'integrative community' for which I argue can be assisted through a discussion of 'place'.

A community is often associated with the small, village-type experience that is situated within a quaint rural setting. This concept of community is borne through a belief that community is somehow tied to 'place'. The analysis of the connection of a community to a particular place is imperative for the analysis of community formations. An 'integrative community' must hold 'place' as part of the framework that builds the depth of the community. Yet, it is possible for the framework of placeness to be carried within the practices of the community, even if it moves from the place to which it has connections to another place. In this way it differs from the nostalgic conception of place to which I refer in the analysis of the 'nostalgic community'. A 'nostalgic community' is premised upon the assumption that for a community to exist, we must remain in, or return to our unchanged place of origin. Place in this view has to be either relatively continuous with past (distorted) memories or reconstructed according to those (distorted) memories of what was once cherished. This image of place is the central constituent that holds nostalgic community together. 'Virtual community', on the other hand, is premised upon the assumption that place is inconsequential and community exists at the intersection of shared interests and commonalities. For these communities a connection to place is the antithesis of its constituted existence. By contrast, the context of place underpins integrative communities and remains implicit within practices even when the community's members are displaced.

The constitution of communities results from the practices and actions of its participants. I analytically categorize practices in terms of modes of practice. These practices, which are both conditioned by the society's structures and determine these structures, are carried out in our everyday lives. In analysing the practices of community participants we consider both the way in which the practice is carried out and the effect of the practice. Therefore, the mode becomes both the means and the effect. It is possible to call upon the work of Anthony Giddens with regard to his notion of recursiveness to clarify this statement. Giddens argues that an actor's participation in social life is based on knowing how to follow a rule, rules which are generated by social practices and which in

turn are constituted in the context of overlapping and interconnected sets of rules.³ We are able to place these practices into different categories, including for example, modes of production, communication, enquiry, organisation.⁴ These overlay and interpenetrate each other to constitute the social formations in which we live. It is my contention that it is in this way integrative community can be formed. Integrative community is constituted through practices which may be conducted at more abstract levels, but are framed and conditioned by more concrete and socially binding levels. Within this dissertation I focus upon the mode of communication to illustrate my thesis.

Communication

The field of communications has experienced and caused considerable change throughout the late-modern times. One of the reasons we are faced with an increasingly globalised world is due to innovations occurring in the field of telecommunications. The introduction of computer-mediated and tele-communications has encouraged a global formation. It comes as the latest development in the practice of communication, a practice fundamental in the formation of all societies. There are a number of different stages in the communication process: oral, written, print and computer-mediated methods of communication. This lineage of methods is often interpreted as a progressive procession. It has taken on a commonsense meaning of progressing or *advancing* along a linear plane. Each of the steps taken is said to prove that the society using these more modern forms of communication has successfully advanced another phase on the path of progress. This thinking is foundational to the belief that a coexistence of different societal formations is not possible, nor desirable. I argue that this results only from a reluctance to rethink the model that has been readily accepted. The reluctance, however, has been notably resisted by writers such as Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media*. He argues that communication mediums do not develop in a linear synergy with social developments. For example, he argues that sense ratios or oral cultures, which can be subordinated in print culture, are

³ Daniel Ross, 'Anthony Giddens' in Peter Bellharz, (ed.) *Social Theory: A Guide to Central Thinkers*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992, p. 122.

⁴ Modes of practice' is a term developed by Paul James in *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*, Sage Publications, London, 1996, and will be discussed at length in Chapter One of this thesis.

reconstituted by electric media, leading to a re-tribalisation of social relations.⁵ In order to rethink the possibility of the coexistence of societal formation, the mode of communication must be analytically examined. The communicative act needs to be analysed as interactive, but also as integrative. To address the method of communication is to address only one component of the communicative act. It is necessary, I suggest, to consider the way in which the interaction is framed, that is, what might be called the 'integrative form' of the interaction. Most simply the mode of communication does not only refer to the conversation that is held, but the way in which it was held, and the pursuant effect this has on the societal structure. These methods and effects may be engaged at changing levels.

The forms of integration can be defined in terms of the level of embodied presence that is constitutive of the relationship between people in the particular acts of communication. The 'levels' which I use throughout this thesis are the face-to-face, the agency-extended and the disembodied levels of integration.⁶ These levels can operate as a category for communicative interaction and are not always, necessarily integrative. The way in which I have used these analytical levels is to assume their interactive component but to also argue for their integrative capacities. The communicative interaction, when analysed as an integrative act, takes into account the effect it may have as a socially binding and structural building practice. In this way, a conversation between two people conducted at the level of the face-to-face, is an interaction between these two individuals but it is also integrative in its social conventions and codes and its constitutive effect. My thesis is built on the belief that, although contradictory, it is possible for changing levels of integration to be reflexively used to frame acts which, in a commonsensical way, belong with different levels.

⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (2nd edn.), Sphere Books Limited, London, 1967, pp. 369-382.

⁶ The levels of integration theory has been developed by Paul James in *Nation Formation*, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-37. His theory describes the different levels of mediation and abstraction from embodied presence. It should be noted that other parallel theories of levels of communication interaction have been developed by John Thompson in *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 82-84, as the face-to-face, mediated interaction and mediated quasi-interaction. In addition, by Craig Calhoun, in 'The Infrastructure of Modernity' in Hans Haferkamp and Neil Smelser (eds), *Social Change and Modernity*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, pp. 209-220, as the primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary. The different levels arguments will also be discussed in Chapter Three.

Contradiction

Changes in communicative practices have produced a globalised world where more abstract practices have become common place. Abstract practices such as internet connections across the globe or education provided through computer packages and computer links are replacing the more concrete, face-to-face exchanges. A result of such changes in the socially binding practices of communication has been of a particularly contradictory nature. The more concrete social formations of communities are reflexively positioning themselves to struggle against the globalising, homogenising, assimilating ideals of the world arena. This positioning is often ethnically based and takes the form of promoting the concrete, cohesive, richness of these communities which exists within the abstractness of the global arena. This has been carried out, however, by utilising the more abstract technologies and communicative practices that are the products of the abstract, globalised world. That is, communities that are trying to retain or recreate the more concrete, local emphasis are paradoxically using disembodied, more abstract practices in order for this to be achieved. The contradiction in the undertaking of such practices impacts upon the constitution of the social form.

The contradictory result of practices, of many differing levels of abstraction, undertaken at differing levels of integration, causes tensions. Such tensions and clashes can be seen to require an explanation, explanations which dissolve the striation in order to resolve things, making them smooth and clarified. However, I argue that these points of collision are telling. It is an analysis of these points of contradiction that enlightens us to the rich and rewarding nature of community constituted at the moment of tension. These telling moments, the points of contradiction between the concrete and the abstract, reflect a community where differing levels of connection coexist. The integrative interactions between participants are conducted at a level of the face-to-face, through an agent or at a disembodied level. The more abstracted actions are framed within a context of a more concrete basis. The coexistence, collision and interpenetration of these levels results in a community with more depth. Such communities are arguably richer in their offerings to their participants than communities constituted predominantly through mediated connections.

Methodology

The method I have used in this dissertation is to setup a social theoretical framework and then to illustrate its application through empirical examples. It crosses a number of disciplines as it proceeds. It analyses and abstracts from empirical examples and in this way it is not only theoretical. It presents and discusses examples from Indigenous communities but is not fully anthropological. It travels across time through archival materials but it is not only historical. It covers issues about language, education, and social protest, but it is not linguistic, pedagogical, nor only political. This thesis traverses many fields in an interdisciplinary approach, and takes from each discipline the methods and techniques that are the most appropriate. This thesis is primarily based in social theory which is all at once political, historical, anthropological, and ethnological. Social theory may claim, among other claims, to present ideas and knowledge to better understand the way people live together and apart. My thesis includes the notion that it is possible to live in the contemporary, modern world by retaining and framing many of our practices currently sustained within the ways of a traditional social form.

It has been my method to base my argument upon that of social theorists. This social theoretical basis has its foundations in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his work on *habitus*.⁷ This work establishes the argument that social formations, such as communities, are constituted through the everyday practices of its participants. I have also drawn upon the works of Anthony Giddens to express my view that such constitution of community is a reflexive project undertaken by the members of the community.⁸ My project shifts from these thinkers to turn to the theoretical framework developed by Geoff Sharp, Paul James and others from the *Arena* group of intellectuals based in Melbourne since the 1960s.⁹ The *Arena* theory has allowed for the foundation of my argument, that is,

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, R. Nice (trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1990, pp. 52-53.

⁸ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, pp. 14-17.

⁹ The foundation for the methodology used throughout this dissertation has been drawn from the theoretical arguments developed (and developing) by the contributors to *Arena Journal* and associated works, particularly the seminal work of Geoff Sharp. Works where this perspective can be seen include Geoff Sharp, 'Constitutive Abstraction and Social Practice', *Arena* 70, 1985, pp. 48-82, and Paul James, *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*, London, Sage Publications, 1996. All references and the conceptual framework throughout this study which include the theory of abstraction and the general levels argument have been adopted from the work of Sharp. James has been used in particular for his work on the integrative levels argument which looks at the face-to-face, agency-extended and disembodied levels of integration.

community as a social formation is constituted through various modes of practice, one of these being the mode of communication. The argument of the differing levels of integration, which is fundamental to my thesis, is also specifically the work of Paul James. The idea of the integrative capacity of changing communicative practices is illustrated within two subject areas: political protest and education. The first of these themes, political protest, is used to demonstrate the communicative practices undertaken by community members who are communicating to the world outside of their community boundaries. The theme of education, in counterpart, is used to consider the practices of communication which are undertaken *within* communities. This dissertation works through a theoretical framework which reviews and reworks established conceptions of community, the significance of changing modes of communication and the constituted contradictions. Empirical illustrations have been used to support this theoretical framework. Two separate case-studies are used, not in comparison of each other, but to illustrate different examples.

The first set of examples comes from activities within Australian Indigenous communities. Many Australian Indigenous communities, particularly in the Eastern coastal region, have undergone devastating displacement, dislocation and enforced projects of assimilation. The examples represented in this study include the activities of communities primarily from the eastern region including from Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. Other relevant examples from throughout the country will be referred to in illustration of various positions. I recognise the privileged position of a non-Indigenous scholar working with ideas and examples from Indigenous practices and communities. I also understand the reticence of Indigenous peoples to engage with non-Indigenous researchers due to the past – and continuing – record of how this position has been abused. For this reason I have chosen to use information and published materials by those people who have respected and established links with the communities.

My interests also led my studies to Mexico, where I was inspired by the struggles of the Zapatistas, a revolutionary group of Indigenous peoples, of the south-eastern state of Chiapas and their acts of rebellion against oppression. The struggle exploded onto the international agenda with their armed uprising on 1 January 1994. The armed struggle lasted only a few days until they accepted an offer to enter into dialogue with the Mexican Government. Unfortunately, this dialogue has been a continual frustration to the Zapatistas

seeking genuine agreements and negotiations. It was the ingenuity and seeming contradictory nature of their campaign which began my thinking of the notion of community and the likely contradictions in its constitution. I travelled to Mexico in 1996, and after attending the First Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, I remained in Chiapas for three months and volunteered at the Fray Bartolome Human Rights Centre. I spent some time in the community of San Isidro el Ocotal in the Peace Camp to observe the actions between the Federal Army and the pro-government supporters and those supporting the Zapatistas. I continued then in San Cristóbal documenting reports from the communities on human rights abuses and the consistent failure of the Federal Army to honour the agreements drawn up in the peace accord. These case-studies will be significantly different due to the virtual isolation of the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas, compared with the various stages in the practices of eradication, protectionism and assimilation by non-Indigenous society in Australia.

Chapter Outline

Part One of the thesis sets up the theoretical framework through a detailed discussion of the three themes of this thesis: community, communication and contradiction. The thesis then turns to the empirical elaboration to apply the theoretical framework to practice. Part Two is concerned with communicating to the outside world through political protest and Part Three is concerned with education within Indigenous communities of Australia and Chiapas.

Chapter One in the theoretical section reviews relevant contemporary theories of the social formation of community. The argument begins with a description of various categories of community: nostalgic, neo-tribal, virtual, and integrative. This thesis contends that it is within 'integrative community' that we find a layering of levels of integration that provides a richer and more rewarding community. The discussion is conducted through the works of social and communitarian theorists, reviewing the work of Charles Taylor and Jean-Luc Nancy. The chapter reviews the contemporary preoccupation with the ideas of 'place and space' and argues against the notion that community exists only where it is unchangingly attached to place. It suggests that communities can be constituted within the *framing* of place, even though dislocated and physically removed to elsewhere. This

discussion begins with a critical discussion of the work by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and that of Liisa Malkki and proceeds with an argument for 'integrative community'.

Chapter Two illustrates the usage of modes of practice and acknowledges the importance of modes of communication in a societal formation. This chapter undertakes its analysis through the theory of Georg Simmel which focuses on the importance of social practice. The argument is augmented by a review of communicative theory by Jean Baudrillard, which establishes the idea of simulation in the modern age and by Mark Poster who argues the benefits of disembodied communication. This critical review attempts to move beyond the assumptions of these writers to establish the contention that contemporary 'nostalgic community' and 'virtual community' are relatively empty simulations. 'Integrative community' constituted primarily at a level of face-to-face integration in comparison, provides a rich and rewarding form of social grouping.

The following chapter, Chapter Three, incorporates the methodology of the thesis by outlining the relevant steps in the theoretical analysis. It begins with an adoption of some of the works of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically that of *habitus*, but then goes on to expand on the idea of reflexivity, using the work of Anthony Giddens. This results in the development of the argument that social practice, within categories such as production, organisation, or communication, constitutes the social formations within which we live. Within the contemporary world these practices are being undertaken at increasing levels of abstraction. Those undertaking these practices are, however, reflexive subjects who are able to frame their practice at differing levels of integration. The conceptual framework being used in constructing the argument is enabled through the adoption of the levels-of-integration argument developed by Paul James. While an action may be primarily considered to operate at one level of integration, it may be framed within the context of another. It is argued in this chapter that the layering of different levels of integration, through the changing domination or subordination of each layer, depending on its framed context, does create contradictions and tensions. The chapter explains that such contradictions provide a point at which the richer and more rewarding community is created. The moment of contradiction should be embraced and recognised for what it creates and is not deserving of being neatly reconciled away.

Following the elaboration of the theoretical framework, the case-studies are explored through two themes in order to illustrate the contradictory nature of community and the implications of changing modes of communication. Part Two addresses the theme of the political organisation of the communities and the implications of forced association with more dominant styles of organisation and the associated struggles against them. Chapter Four applies the theoretical framework to the political processes embarked upon by Indigenous communities with the world beyond their face-to-face communities. The two cases address two different forms of intersecting integrative extension. The first is political resistance conducted through the abstract medium of writing but petitioning institutions of agency-extension. That is, the Australian Indigenous peoples undertook written correspondence with institutions, including the British monarch. The second will be the struggle undertaken in Chiapas by the Zapatista sympathisers corresponding via the internet with the globalised civil society. The chapter sets up these examples by analysing the impact of resistance upon the formation of community, challenging the idea that a community is sustainable just in its sharing of communicative action at a distance. It also explores the creation of an unseen and unknown public through the reach of communicative extension.¹⁰

Changing communication in the political arena is explored in Chapter Five and the following chapter. In Australia the Indigenous population faced considerable upheaval through the enforced government policies of assimilation. The major doctrine of the assimilation process was to *civilise the natives* in order to absorb them into the broader, white community.¹¹ This project focused particularly on enlightening the Indigenous peoples with religion and on educating them through speaking and writing the English language. It is the imposed system of writing that will be taken up in this chapter. This mode of communication, while thought to be the agent of conformity with more civilised ways, was subverted by the Indigenous peoples. Rather than the action of writing providing a path of absorption into the community it was used by the Indigenous peoples as a

¹⁰ Thompson in *The Media and Modernity*, *op.cit.*, p. 84, considers the notion of communication with an unseen, unknown public when discussing the level of mediated quasi-interaction. This level of interaction, he argues, is a one-way flow of information produced for an indefinite range of potential recipients.

¹¹ See Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1989, pp. 1-31, and Bob Reece, 'Inventing Aborigines', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1987, pp. 14-23.

momentary practice in political and personal campaigns against the government and its agents throughout the late 1800s and the 1900s. Letters were written to denounce the practices of removing children, destroying temporarily vacated homes, offering below-award wage-payments, refusing of rations and staving off the return of land. The missionary of the Lake Tyers Station from 1862 until 1925 bemoaned having given them the power of writing.¹² Many of the letter-writing campaigns are documented in the national archives including personal letters, petitions and letters to the King and Queen of England. The practice of writing to the King and Queen is one that will be explored. It will be suggested that the written form of communication was framed in such a way as to strengthen the face-to-face integrative nature of the Indigenous community rather than to accept its 'progressive' agency-extension. Certainly more abstract layers of interchange would come to overlay face-to-face relations, but the continued framing of the interactions by the face-to-face level will exemplify the reflexivity of the practice undertaken.

Chapter Six documents the case of the electronic announcement, and computer-mediated support of the uprising of an Indigenous political group in Chiapas. Members of the Indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico engaged in an armed political uprising in January 1994. The intention of this group called the Zapatistas was to fight against the oppression and poverty being experienced through the actions of the state. Their call was for political autonomy and the right to their land. The Zapatistas announced their uprising to the people of Mexico and the international civil society by way of faxed communiques and messages issued through email and the internet. This chapter draws upon the use of communicative media by groups who in their daily practices have a greater reliance upon less mediated methods of communication. The illustration exemplifies the possibility of communities who are struggling to retain their political and cultural autonomy, which is based primarily and significantly upon a face-to-face existence, using advanced modes of communication without eradicating relations of face-to-face integration. The chapter argues that this reflexive framing practice results in contradictions and tensions but not necessarily the dominance of more abstract practices.

¹² Michael Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-1886*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1979, p. 182.

Part Three of this study addresses the changing nature of pedagogy in light of new methods of communication. There have been significant steps taken in promoting the use of computers in educational practices, use that encourages the distancing of students from institutions and face-to-face teaching methods. This section explores self-organised community education-systems in Mexico and alternative education projects in Australia. The emphasis on the face-to-face educational practices and the advocating of local decision-making and community involvement shows significant support and success in education in Indigenous communities. Chapter Seven introduces Part Three of the thesis by exploring the examples of communicating within communities. It addresses the practice of pedagogy and considers various examples of teaching and learning by applying the theoretical framework of 'integrative communities'. This exploration focuses upon the idea of reinforcing the face-to-face practices of integrative communities through the use of abstracted communicative technologies. The analysis looks at disembodied and embodied education, addressing the concepts of that which is supported by face-to-face practice and alternatively, that which is not, and proceeds to theorise the relevant impact. The contention of this chapter is that both embodied and disembodied educative technologies will be productive only when they reinforce the presence of face-to-face practices.

There have been a number of projects and funding delivered into research and development of computer-based education and language of Indigenous communities of Australia. These projects include distance education for remote students, CD-ROM language packages, and the collation of words and meanings of some Indigenous languages. Chapter Eight explores some of these projects in order to ascertain whether such projects are being carried out solely at the level of the disembodied. An example of this is the production of a dictionary on the world-wide-web for a language that is not spoken at the level of the face-to-face. When the language is not practiced within the community to which it belongs, such a resource appears to do little more than romanticise the language as a nostalgic remnant. Alternative projects conducted at the level of the face-to-face are analysed to explore the differences between the projects developed at comparative integrative levels. These projects include a Bachelor of Education from Victoria University of Technology being offered remotely in a community in northern Victoria, a community directed Koorie school in Morwell, Victoria and a remote teachers program from James Cook University in Queensland.

Chapter Nine documents the educational practices and their political influence in Mexico. Historically there has been evidence of community-led struggles to control and reform education within rural and Indigenous communities. This chapter will discuss some of these struggles and in particular, the New Education Movement recently established in Chiapas. Also, as a result of the significant international support for the plight of the Zapatistas of Mexico, various acts of solidarity have been ventured. One of these projects has been a secondary school project in which the funding and the construction of the school have been undertaken by international organisations and visitors to Chiapas. The school has been constructed in the community of Oventic, miles from the closest city within an autonomous zone of the Mayan land. This project is now proceeding with the training of Indigenous local teachers and lessons are conducted in the Indigenous languages and in Spanish. The project has only been possible through international financial support, in addition to assistance of manual labour provided by international visitors. The call for the project has been made primarily using the solidarity networks of the internet while providing concrete, on-the-ground pedagogical support. The changes in the practices of education evident through this project and other new education movements in Chiapas exemplify the promotion of local, community-based integration in response to and, contradictorily, due to the modern communication technologies which have characterised the global arena in which they sit.

It is my hope that this dissertation will encourage a rethinking of the constitutive nature of community. It is not my intention to present another romantic notion of community that simply replaces the nostalgic notion that already exists. Rather, I argue for the richness of community that for many people is a practical desire. This 'integrative community' which is constituted through a reflexive practice will potentially be rewarding in more than a romantic sense. It will potentially provide depth, stability, meaning and loyalties. It is also my hope that such a rethinking may provide an avenue to empower historically oppressed Indigenous people who have faced displacement of their land and aggressive, and often successful, attempts to deny them their way of life. One day, instead of judgments that contend that their rights have been 'washed away with the tide of time', I hope it will be recognised that the propensity of Indigenous peoples to hold onto the richness of continuing face-to-face relations warrants them their land and much more.

PART I

**COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION AND
CONTRADICTION**

CHAPTER ONE

Community: Place or Space?

Movements, speed and slowness, are sometimes enough to reconstruct a smooth space. Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.

Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1988

In a world which is becoming more abstracted through its global broadening there has appeared a modern inclination to yearn for the bonds of community. Often this yearning is for a community that has been created through a nostalgic imagining. Such an imagining resembles small country towns, where streets are lined with trees and there are perhaps just one or two friendly smiles. It is a place where people know you – *really* know you. Nostalgic community is an illusory construct of false and misleading memory, it is a myth. Alternatively, there have been imaginings of communities founded on disembodied anonymity, with participants believing that strong and meaningful relationships can be engendered through computer networks. These nostalgic or anonymous illusions have appeared as a response to the fragmentation and break down of traditional community formations. The emphasis on the fragmentation of our identities and our societies has led to a popularisation of types of communities that are hoped to prove wrong the proponents of societal break down. The 'nostalgic community' is one of these categories of community that has been proffered as a possible alternative to fragmentation. Other contemporary writings have focused on community with slightly different slants: neo-tribal community, ephemeral community and an increasingly popular one, the virtual community.

This chapter will critically analyse examples of alternate community. While the concepts 'nostalgic', 'neo-tribal', 'ephemeral', or 'virtual community' are presented by many commentators as being sufficient to describe the ways in which we live in the late-

modern world, I will argue that they are neither complete nor adequate. Community can be considered as a social formation in which there is more than a utopian ideal, more than a reaction to something that is lacking in contemporary societies. This can be achieved through mutual constitutiveness and the integrative nature of concrete thought and abstract action. It is through an exploration of the constituents of community that it is possible to conceive of an 'integrative community' which can be a rich and fulfilling social formation. Integrative community understood in this way is not a utopian construct. Rather, integrative community is a construct formed within the coexistence of practices from both modern and traditional social forms. This thesis will argue that it is possible to maintain or re-establish forms of 'integrative community'.

Communities can provide a mythical sense of idyllic warmth, but in order to be complete and satisfying they must do more than share this myth. Community is often misunderstood as an organic and natural coming-together of people with shared interests.

Usually when we think of a locality we have in mind a relatively small place in which everyone can know everyone else; that is, social life is based upon face-to-face relations. It is assumed that the intensity of the day-to-day contacts will generate a common stock of knowledge at hand which makes misunderstandings less frequent.¹

This misconception leads to community being seen as a place of understanding and unimpeded sharing. It is often overlooked in the arguments for alternate communities – nostalgic to virtual – that a rich and fulfilling social formation is constituted through obligations as well as rights. A community that gives rise to integrative depth carries obligatory bonds that are maintained and created through everyday practices. The belief that the bonds and the boundedness of everyday lives have been 'lost' in the modern age, corresponding with the increase in the abstraction of social interaction, has encouraged a search for the nostalgic community. The reality that a social formation carries bonds which are obligatory as well as enhancing is one that is undesirable for those constructing community from mythical ideals. Obligatory bonds are the result of integrative practices within social formations that offer depth and richness.

The popularised forms of community either accentuate a particular place as the thing that has been lost, as in the nostalgic community, or claim place to be irrelevant, as in

¹ Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*, Sage Publications, London, 1995, p. 107.

the virtual community. Unlike nostalgic or virtual community, integrative community as defined here is not defined by a nostalgic yearning for something lost, nor does it exist without a sense of place. Integrative community is attached to place as a determining characteristic, or as a framing for the everyday practices. While it may be possible to physically carry a community away from a rooted place, a sense of *place* is fundamental to the creation of community through the practices of everyday life. Integrative community is therefore determined by or framed within an ontology of place even when persons are away from that particular place they call home. In this way, a sense of *place* can be carried within an individual or group away from specific place, as is the case of the majority of Indigenous peoples of Australia who have been dispossessed of their land – the place under which their communities were originally established. These *displaced* communities know no continuing boundedness of land, and yet they search for the recognition and reconciliation with the land which 'acknowledges' their spirit and their collective meaning. Place is a determining constituent of the space of integrative community.

The construction of integrative community occurs through the practices of everyday life, such as through the means of production, exchange, organisation, and communication. These practices have become increasingly abstracted. They are no longer consistently or singularly conducted under direct, face-to-face interaction. It is the advent of such abstraction that has invited the yearning for bounded relations, and at times takes the form of the nostalgic, neo-tribal, ephemeral or virtual communities. Unfortunately, the myth is perpetuated at the expense of recognising or discovering how an integrative community is actually constituted. A community exists under diverse interactive conditions, both abstract and concrete, and such conditions of practice will be examined. It is through this exploration we will begin an investigation of communicative practices and establish their implication upon the composition of integrative community.

The Nostalgic Community

The notion of community is a popular one. It is a groovy term.² Shopping strips have renamed themselves 'communities', often on *ye olde* village-like signage. The

² See Nikolas Rose, 'The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 3, August 1996, pp. 327-356, in which he refers to the rise of the contemporary

popularisation of community has emerged in response to the broadening global environs created through technological innovation. The creation of new categories of community has occurred to fill a void that is feared to be opening up. These communities are being anxiously created to replace the declining engaged social relations. Conceptions of community in the modern age are fast becoming nostalgic inventions, gaining popularity as desired alternate forms of social existence.

Community is one of those many good things that we recognize chiefly in their absence. When people feel that no one cares about them, they mourn the loss of community. When they see society falling apart, they recognize the need for community.³

The invention of this nostalgic community is a creation of a theoretically desired state of living that has rarely been experienced. It is a mythical creation to deter the claim that society is fragmenting in response to technological innovations. The attraction to a nostalgic community arguably also exists because some people wish to hold onto, and wallow in, the feeling of loss. Life in developed countries is mobile, administered and sometimes disembodied in this modern, late-modern, or postmodern age. This has resulted in a longing for the bonds, restrictions and limitations of a community. Nostalgic thinking responds to this sense of loss by creating an idea of community which provides these bonds and attachments. However, the opportunity to live a life which may comply with the idyllic properties of a 'nostalgic community', is an opportunity which is rarely taken when offered. I would argue that few people really want to live in the 'nostalgic community'. It is a creation that has very few connections to reality.

There have been theoretical discussions surrounding the rise of the community apart from a nostalgic one as described above, however, they too seem founded in a desire for something lost. Michel Maffesoli in *The Time of the Tribes* presents community not as a bounded formation, but rather as tribes.⁴ Maffesoli's tribes are not tribes in the old sense, but unconstrained, unfettered, tattooed groups. They are romanticised identities undertaking ritualistic expressions without 'civilised' boundaries. Maffesoli states

salience of the vocabulary and language around community in his argument that community has become a new spatialisation of government.

³ John B. Cobb Jr., 'Defining Normative Community', in W. Vitek and W. Jackson, *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996, p. 185.

⁴ Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, D. Smith (trans.), Sage Publications, London, 1996.

We are witnessing a veritable re-enchantment with the world ... in the case of the masses which are diffracted into tribes, and the tribes which coalesce into masses, the common ingredient is a shared sensibility or emotion.⁵

Further, this shared sensibility or emotion is the attribute that, he argues, aggregates the whole. It is an attempt to reclaim what has been lost in rationalised and bureaucratised polities. Such reclaiming is a grasping for the concrete, the reaction to the individualism of Western society, the loss of bonds and restrictive relations. His work is located primarily in a framework of post-individualism that assumes the time of the tribes is a reaction to the fragmenting of social existence.

Maffesoli's work places much emphasis on the proximity of people in their tribal 'coming-together', stating that it is the physical proximity and daily realities which are the container that prevails over all else.⁶ This contention of Maffesoli is one which I have some sympathy with, being that the proximity of people is necessary in face-to-face relations, however, his argument does not extend its concern for the integrative depth of this proximity. While he does admit the spatial should not be considered an end in itself, allowing for the consideration of practice, his theory is restrictive because he ultimately argues that it is only through physical proximity that the practices of tribes exist.

I return to my main hypothesis: there is (there will be) an increasing to and fro between the tribe and the mass; within a defined matrix, a multitude of poles of attraction are crystallizing. In both of these images, the glue of the aggregation – which we could call experience, the lived, sensitivity, image – is made up of proximity and the affectual (or the emotional), which is evoked by area, the minuscule and the everyday.⁷

Even though Maffesoli proposes that the everyday practices of physically close groupings of people are important in the thinking of social formations, his theory is embedded in a romantic concept of the search for connections. This desire is one borne from the individualising mass of modern society which is failing to fulfil organic longing. Not unlike the nostalgic community, the neo-tribal community is a construct arising out of an absence.

While Maffesoli acknowledges the importance of space in his theorising of the tribe-mass dialectic, he omits to deal with another important category of social being: time. This category may also impinge on the notion of community. There are short-lived

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

communities, groupings of people who come together for specific events that may happen more than once but without expectations for continued membership. These communities I will call 'ephemeral communities' and can be exemplified by the sense of community pervasive on election-day or the neighbourhood street-festival. At such times, there is a sense of being-in-common for a particular project, but at the same time, there is no sense of continued responsibility. There is not even a necessary commitment to contribute with the same energy or passion, or to not even contribute at all, to the repeat event – even though it is recognised that such a repeat will occur. It is an act of sharing in a common project and it embodies a desire to be part of the community sentiment, but it is meaningful only for a fleeting moment.

While there has been a popularisation of the reinvention of bounded community, there has been an alternate view. Iris Marion Young argues that community is negative, oppressive and consists of hierarchies.⁸ It is her contention that forms of community based on concrete interactions are idealised and widely utopian. She suggests it is better to live in unoppressive cities which are based on a politics of difference, a 'city of strangers', enabling an escape from sexism, racism and alienation, those things existing in an idealised community. This desire for a non-oppressive coming together, in which a participant's identity is given little importance, is one which has some connection with another category of reinvented community; the virtual community. While the aspect of anonymity has parallels with a 'city of strangers', the virtual community is still claimed to offer strengths in its connectivity.

Virtual communities are experienced through the technological connections made by way of the internet. The internet is being proffered as a replacement means of interaction for the nostalgic boundedness of community which has been arguably lost in the fragmentation of modern societies. It is presented as an opportunity where "people connect with strangers without much of the social baggage that divides and alienates."⁹ David Holmes effectively describes this view of virtual community in his edited volume, *Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace*.

⁸ Iris Marion Young, 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference', in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Routledge, New York, 1990, pp. 300-323.

⁹ Mark Poster, 'A Second Media Age?', *Arena Journal*, No. 3, 1994, p. 84.

An alternative view of virtual and abstract communities accepts that extended forms of interaction are not simply supplementary to existing forms of face-to-face communication but constitute, at the level of social dynamics, their own sealed realities. They are self-contained, self-referential and constitute within themselves the substance of the social relationship, with declining reference to the social event that they may simulate at the level of relation and form. Extended communication technologies and agencies cannot be viewed as instruments serving pre-given bodies and communities; they are instead contexts which bring about new ways of being, new chains of values and new sensibilities about time and the events of culture.¹⁰

Writers such as Mark Poster and Sherry Turkle have written about how computer-mediated communication with the removal of the body from the interaction enables people to play with their identities.¹¹ This has implications for the way in which communities of disembodied strangers may come together within the 'virtual community'. Howard Rheingold has written extensively of the abundance of rewarding friendships and resources and unlimited joy available to those who venture on to the 'electronic frontier'. He describes at length the relationships he has assembled through the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), a computer-conferencing system. But even for Howard Rheingold, the virtual nature of his community failed to be enough. He had to meet his WELL family in the same physical space, under real-time conditions.¹² Both the reality and the benefits of anonymity work against the building of a community in which relationships have depth and stability.

The contemporary yearning for alternate communities has demonstrated the social anxiety for bounded social forms. The analysis of writings such as those above have raised doubts for the ability of these communities to provide rich, rewarding and fulfilling social formations. It is through an exploration of 'integrative community' and how that kind of community may be constituted, that it is possible to highlight these doubts further. Nostalgic community is little more than a construct of a place where life is imagined to be better, more loving, and where things and people are warmer. Nostalgic community, in other words, exists only as a fairy-tale, a fallacy. Rather than an illusion, it is a delusion. It is because of this illusion, or delusive state, that those yearning for nostalgic community

¹⁰ David Holmes, 'Virtual Identity: Communities of Broadcast, Communities of Interactivity', in D. Holmes, *Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace*, Sage Publications, London, 1997, p. 29.

¹¹ Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990 and Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1996.

¹² Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, 1993, p. 2.

choose not to see the alternatives beyond it. Virtual community is construed as an identity-free zone of liberatory existence. Other contemporary approaches to community, such as neo-tribal or ephemeral, are also created as a response or a reaction to the modern age. The constitution of community requires an exploration that considers how it is formed to further demonstrate how these popularised formations fail to offer social connections with integrative depth. This chapter will now proceed with a discussion of how a community comes together in order to begin an illustration of the differences between the alternate communities and integrative community.

Obligatory Bonds

In order to begin a discussion of the constitution of integrative community, a construct formed through the coexistence of practices from both traditional and modern social forms, we can draw on the formation of community as theorised by Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Inoperative Community*.¹³ While popularised ideas of community have focused upon commonalities and natural affinities of its participants, Nancy begins to define community by departing from a focus upon essence and commonality.

But I start out from the idea that such a thinking – the thinking of community as essence – is in effect the closure of the political. Such a thinking constitutes closure because it assigns to community a *common being*, whereas community is a matter of something quite different, namely, of existence inasmuch as it is *in common*, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance. Being in common has nothing to do with communion, with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed ... The community that becomes a *single thing* (body, mind, fatherland, Leader ...) necessarily loses the *in* of being-in-common. Or, it loses the *with* or the *together* that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being of togetherness. The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in the retreat of such a being.¹⁴

Nancy emphasises the lack of form in community, an exteriorised space, and a “workless or inoperative activity ... not a matter of making, producing, or instituting a community ... it is a matter of incompleting its sharing.”¹⁵ Nancy’s sense of community is a given, not a ‘work’ to be done. It is here that his theory takes on more of the mythical sense of the nostalgic community rather than the reality of an integrative community. An integrative community does require, and inspire, work. Everyday practices are the ‘work’ that constitutes

¹³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, P. Connor (ed. and trans.), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

integrative community. It is work with or without an implicit intention to create community, but that does, through its *habitus* – the everyday practices of subjects that, along with structure are mutually constitutive determinants of society and culture – constitute community. While Nancy argues that a community is not a 'work' and can not, therefore, be a project, an integrative community is constituted through the work of practice.

The theorisation of community proffered by Nancy and the nostalgic community fail to address the boundedness of social formations. In the case of the nostalgic community, they only do so in a superficial, romanticised way. The boundedness of integrative community is an important component of this social formation. These bonds may best be explored by turning away from the theories which emphasise the lack of origin and the dearth of essence to those which may lead us beyond to one constituted through lived practices. Through a study of the modes of practice which constitute our everyday lives, we are able to discover the need for interactions which extend the collectivities of communities beyond an amalgam of individuals expressing their own rights, but paradoxically bring with them obligations. Such obligations are just as essential in the societal formation as the ability to provide rights in the attainment of a just and fulfilling society.

Charles Taylor provides a detailed discussion of the coming together of a liberal and communitarian perspective of society which benefits this exploration. Taylor debates the assertion that human beings are self-sufficient and atomistic in their ability to live without society.

What has been argued in the different theories of the social nature of man (sic) is not just that men (sic) cannot physically survive alone, but much more that they only develop their characteristically human capacities in society. The claim is that living in society is a necessary condition of the development of rationality, in some sense of this property, or of becoming a moral agent in the full sense of the term, or of becoming a fully responsible, autonomous being.¹⁶

Moreover, and more interesting for the exploration of integrative community, Taylor posits that the society in which we conceive a 'properly human life' is one which can be developed. This is unlike Nancy who asserts that the formation cannot be a constitutive work. Taylor states,

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences, Philosophical Papers 2*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 190-191.

Social theories require a conception of the properly human life which is such that we are not assured it by simply being alive, *but it must be developed and it can fail to be developed*; on this basis they can argue that society or a certain form of society is the essential condition of this development.¹⁷ (my italics)

According to this position, it is necessary for human beings to be a part of society that is developed through the practices of experience. It is also a component of such societies to carry with them obligations, and not solely carry the principles of rights for the individuals making up such a societal formation.

Theories which assert the primacy of rights are those which take as the fundamental, or at least a fundamental, principle of their political theory the ascription of certain rights to individuals and which deny the same status to a principle of belonging or obligation, that is a principle of which states our obligation as men (sic) to belong to or sustain society, or a society of a certain type, or to obey authority or an authority of a certain type.¹⁸

Taylor, in his argument refuting those who voice the primacy-of-rights position argues that purporting such a principle over-rides and ascribes a conditional status to the principle of obligation.

A collective form which is historical in its practices and its work is one which carries with it both rights and obligations. To be autonomous in the sense of having a freedom to live in a societal form that is rich and satisfying cannot exist without carrying obligatory bonds. It is a paradox that cannot be avoided through a nostalgic romanticisation, but must be experienced in its contradiction. It is these paradoxical and contradictory constitutive interactions which give rise to the construction of an integrative community. This chapter will now turn to an analysis of the constitutive character of place and its importance to 'integrative community' in order to begin a demonstration of how 'integrative community' differs from the alternate categories. Such a demonstration will provide a theoretical basis for the contention that it is 'integrative community' which provides a rich and fulfilling community.

Arborescent Place

So far in this chapter I have undertaken a descriptive account of the categories of community which have been recently popularised. I have suggested that the basis to these

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

communities in general has been the invented and imagined sense of community, opposed to a concrete formation that carries obligations as well as rights. The nostalgic community is mythical, the ephemeral is inconsistent, the neo-tribal is unstable and the virtual is shallow. I will now, in an exploration of integrative community that satisfactorily contrasts these negative aspects, consider the arborescent or rooted sense of community. Such a sense of rootedness, however, does not necessarily mean permanence in a particular place. It is still possible for integrative community to be flexible and movable, however, a sense of place must be built into the practices of the community to enable it to retain a depth of integration. This ability to move is contrary to the flowing, unattached, unbounded sense of community that founds the alternate categories. In order to begin a consideration of the concept of place and its connection to the constitution of community I have chosen to make a selected reference to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.¹⁹

Deleuze and Guattari have used a number of concepts in their extensive works of which I will refer to only a few. Their work allows for a reconsideration of the particularly Western association of community with a resolute attachment to a particular place. In their work, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two types of space: smooth or striated. These concepts have been described as follows.

The striated: capturable, describable, reducible to language, measurable, constraining movement. The smooth: explosive, aesthetic (in the Greek sense of *acsthesis*) expressive itself (but perhaps not capturable in other expressions), a space of happenings and becomings rather than of Being. Striated space is the space of the State. It is the space of laws and principles, of maps and roads. Smooth space, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the space of the nomad – those who live outside the State. It is the space in which movement is not channeled and directed or subjected to the strictures of instrumental reason ...²⁰

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari present the idea of *rhizomes* which allows them to describe the smooth space, an alternative to the commonly held arborescent view of social formations. The rhizome is an "acentred, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system"²¹ in which participants are nomadic. With reference to nomads, Deleuze and Guattari continue; "History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary

¹⁹ The works of Deleuze and Guattari is extensive, complex and dense and in order to achieve my objective of analysing the concept of place in relation to community, I have used only a small aspect of their conceptual complexity.

²⁰ Jonathan Maskit, 'Deleuze and Guattari and the Impossibility of Wilderness', in A. Light and J.M. Smith (eds), *Philosophy and Geography III: Philosophies of Place*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Maryland, 1998, p. 272.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, B. Massumi (trans.), The Athlone Press, London, 1988, p. 21.

State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads."²² The work of Deleuze and Guattari is an example of postmodern theoretical works in which the subject becomes decentered, unattached and floating. In their example they present the State-less nomad as an alternative to the rooted, striated State. While I do not subscribe to this extreme alternative or this postmodern position, I have chosen to present their work to demonstrate that the striated space is the basis for the contextualisation of place within popularised community. The notion of community has suffered from a sedentarist reading. Community is a concept that has continued to be written and spoken of in its attachment to land. This has occurred through concepts such as 'rootedness' and the importance of 'soil', or that which has been referred to as its 'arborescent nature' by Liisa Malkki.²³ This work of Malkki can also be drawn upon to highlight the idea of 'sedentarism' within our generalised thinking of community. It is from such thinking that we find the idea of community being attached to a particular place.

The consequence of the notion of being attached to place is highlighted in the late-modern age of increasingly amorphous space in conjunction with infinite time. It is not, however, a simple act of choosing from place or space to describe community. Both concepts are integral to the understanding of the constitution of community. The polarisation in the contextualisation has fundamental implications for the notion of communities. The notion of place ties the community to a particular space, grounding the social structure to earlier modes of practice. For example, in the category of communication, the earlier mode of oral communication requires those communicating to be within the same space at the same time.

Successive generations have invested in a form of nostalgia in which the past is viewed as the epitome of coherence and order, something which was more simple and emotionally fulfilling, with more direct and integrated relationships. The assumption here is that one's identity and those of one's significant others are anchored in a specific locale, a physical space which becomes emotionally invested and sedimented with symbolic associations so that it becomes a place.²⁴

The notion of community being utterly rooted in a place encourages an evolutionary view of community, one that argues a progressive linear path from traditional community to modern

²² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²³ Liisa Malkki, 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees', in A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (eds), *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1997, pp. 58-61.

²⁴ Featherstone, *loc. cit.*

(and now late-modern or postmodern) society. This linear path does not allow for the contradictory nature of different communicative methods, existing in changeable dominances, experienced in differing modes of practice. But does a community exist only because of face-to-face relations? Given the assumption of a community being 'rooted' in place, does this infer that abstracted, even disembodied practices, evoked by advanced technologies destroy the formation? As both place and space are integral, it formulates a contradictory relationship within the construct. While the face-to-face interaction of community may dominate the contemporary thinking of community, especially that of nostalgic community, there are times when the idea of space will dominate. It is the practices that are of a more abstract nature, particularly when they involve more disembodied forms of interaction, which will direct our thoughts to a community constituted away from a rooted sense of a place.

Attachment to Land

Linear progression theory²⁵ has implicated contemporary debate surrounding Australian Indigenous communities. If we focus on one area of this important debate, that of land rights, we can see the emphasis on the ontological category of space once again displayed as creating a dichotomy between the traditional and modern social forms. While those dominating the debate, particularly within the government and legal arenas, have at times recognised the Indigenous peoples' spiritual attachment to the land, this recognition is only of the traditional character of the attachment.²⁶ The spiritual attachment is displayed as something 'primitive', referring back to a 'great divide' that translates to a stage in development yet to be overcome. This explanation of the effect of such posturing gains credence from the stipulation written into the Australian Native Title Act which refers to the need for the original inhabitants of the land in question to have *continually* lived on that

²⁵ Linear progression theory is one that assumes an historical, evolutionary shift in societal structures as more abstract technologies are introduced. See for example Poster, *The Mode of Information*, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

²⁶ This was evidenced in the judgement by Justice Olney in the *Yorta Yorta* judgment (18 December 1998) which "determined that native title did not exist over Crown land and water within a 2,000 square kilometre claim area straddling the Murray River in New South Wales/Victoria. In a strict interpretation of the *Mabo* judgment he said the 'tide of history' had washed away the Yorta Yorta's traditional laws and customs and thus any claim to recognition of contemporary native title. The Yorta Yorta action was the most extensive and significant claim before the Federal Court from south-eastern Australia where, unlike in the Kimberley, Aboriginal societies were first and severely disrupted by colonisation." Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Home-Page, *Issues: Native Title* (http://www.atsic.gov.au/issues/native_title/Default.asp)

land.²⁷ Such a proviso reinforces the belief that the ontological formation of Indigenous community is one that is pre-modern, and privileges the sedentarist thinking of attachment to place constituting community. This viewpoint would encourage the belief that once people have moved from their original land they have begun the progression to a new and better way of living, or in this scenario, a modern way of living. A particularistic attachment to land, within this thinking cannot coexist within modern social forms. The coexistence is seen to be contradictory and therefore cannot be lived. This is an example of the linear progression theory influencing policy and general debate. There is no encouragement or even allowance under the Act, or even within the debate, for Indigenous peoples to return to their land which is their culture and heritage. Rather, the way the discourse is presented is to indicate that to return to this way of life would be a digression, leading to a degenerate form of living.

The provision in the law that demands a continual physical relationship with the land, projects the sense that a great divide still exists. It also fails to take into consideration three major points. Firstly, that the moving away from the land over which a clan is custodian has often been necessary, and successfully managed, throughout the history of Indigenous occupancy. Food gathering, seasonal variations, disease, ceremony and kinship ritual fulfilments such as marriage, or death of a clan member (which generally meant the community leaving the area for a period of perhaps two years)²⁸ as legitimate reasons have all been ignored. In many of these cases the custodianship over land was undertaken by neighbouring clans until the return by the rightful occupants was possible. In this way the attachment was never broken, it was a connection which has an 'everlasting' bond. Secondly, those now asserting that continuity must exist were responsible for the forced permanent removal of the original occupants from the land. Thirdly, even though the invasion of the Europeans caused significant physical dispossession, which is now generally accepted to have been reluctant and violent, it is possible to see that the essential connection cannot be easily broken. There are accounts now of Indigenous peoples in Australia

²⁷ National Indigenous Working Group on Native Title, *Co-Existence - Negotiation and Certainty: Indigenous Position in Response to the Wik Decision and the Government's Proposed Amendments to the Native Title Act 1993*, 22 April 1997, p. 7.

²⁸ Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*, Allen & Unwin, 1996, especially pp. 24-26, and H.C. Coombs, *Aboriginal Autonomy: Issues and Strategies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 14-16.

returning to their 'homelands' which is proving difficult but spectacular in its restorative success.²⁹

The example above has been used to demonstrate that even though the community exists outside of its *place*, the existence continues because the roots to the land, while being detached physically, have never been spiritually broken.³⁰ Integrative community can also exist beyond the attachment to the particular place, in another space that has been created. However, it can only do this with the knowledge of its determining place underpinning its everyday practices. It is in this way that integrative community differs from the disembodied communities of the internet. While the virtual communities of those who know only the computer call-names of each other appear true and real, they will only ever offer a virtual existence. These communities cannot offer the attributes of integrative communities because their interactions have no basis in the fundamental ties of face-to-face relations. While it is possible for abstracted practices such as those conducted on the internet to be undertaken in integrative communities, they are undertaken with an understanding and consideration of the more concrete and integrative underpinnings of their social formation. These integrative practices are fundamental to the constitution of social formations, and an analysis of the constitutive role played by the modes of practice is to what this chapter now turns.

The Constitution of Integrative Community

Further to the establishment of the existence of obligatory bonds between the participants of integrative community and an analysis of place as a constitutive property of integrative community, this chapter will now explore the practices that are constitutive of social formations. Beyond the popularised categories of community that are formulated in the absence of something, 'integrative community' is formed through the practices undertaken by its participants. These practices are undertaken as *habitus*, which while undertaken within determining structures, also structure our lives. In this sense the constitution of the integrative social formation is more than the nostalgic desire for the loss of closeness and

²⁹ Dick Leitchleitner Japanangka and Pam Nathan, *Settle Down Country - Pmere Arlalt'eweke*, Kibble Books, Malmesbury, 1983.

³⁰ This can be evidenced by the strong ethnic communities existing outside of their original homelands, such as the Horn of Africa community living in the Western suburbs of Melbourne.

concreteness. It is a product of contradictory interactions and practices, and paradoxes of rights and obligations. It may be beneficial at this point to turn to the idea of form and content as theorised by Georg Simmel. Adopting Simmel's analytical concepts of form and content allows us an understanding of the constitutive nature of the modes of practice and *habitus*. Donald Levine, a scholar of Simmel has explained Simmel's concepts of content and form thus: "Contents are those aspects of existence which are determined in themselves, but as such contain neither structure nor the possibility of being apprehended by us in their immediacy."³¹ His distinction between these and forms is that forms are the "synthesizing principles which select elements from the raw stuff of experience and shape them into determinate unities."³² Each of the activities undertaken within the differing modes of practice and through different methods of interaction, like contents, are discrete and together are an immense aggregate. They are without structure and relation until they are given form.³³ Again, Levine encapsulates this as follows: "The world consists of innumerable contents which are given determinate identity, structure, and meaning through the imposition of forms which man has created in the course of his experience."³⁴ I argue in this thesis that modes of practice and the *habitus* as the contents, constitute the integrative community as the form.

While the form and content distinction as developed through Simmel and Levine is beneficial, it could be criticised for suggesting that the synthesising form is a 'magical' component that determines the meaning and selects the raw stuff to constitute the societal formation. While the form contains the principles that may aid in determining the construct, I would suggest that the content can also determine the form. Applying this then to modes of practice, it is the complex, interrelational conjuncture between these practices in conjunction with altering principles of interaction which determine the formation of community. Interrelational complexity carries with it contradictions and paradoxical relations which cannot simply be explained through an evolutionary, linear progression theory from tradition, through modernity, and currently resting with late-modernity or

³¹ Donald Levine, 'Introduction', in G. Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971, p. xv.

³² *Ibid.*, p. xv.

³³ Rudolph Weingartner, 'Form and Content in Simmel's Philosophy of Life', in K. Wolff (ed.), *Georg Simmel, 1858-1918*, The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1959, pp. 40-41.

³⁴ Levine, *op. cit.*, p. xxxii.

postmodernity. This reductive theory often arises in association with arguments incorporating epistemological binary oppositional explanations of social formations.

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson recognise the binary oppositions in the discussion of a romanticised notion of the localised community. They state that "'the local' is understood as the original, the centred, the natural, the authentic, and opposed to 'the global', understood as new, external, artificially imposed, and inauthentic."³⁵ This local versus global argument closely follows the thinking that has augmented the idea of the nostalgic community. That is, the nostalgic community is created as a return to the 'concrete' in the face of the 'abstract'. Similarly, it is also advocating the return to 'place' in fear of amorphous 'space'. This was previously criticised in this chapter for the simplistic notion of a choosing between one and the other. Similarly, the opposition between local and global is overdetermined and simplistic. It is an epistemological binary opposition which is reminiscent of that which was prominent in the social theorisation of the 'traditional' or the 'primitive' when faced with a change in the constitutive practices of what is now referred to as 'modernity'. This dichotomous thought encourages the use of a linear progression theorisation that assumes a natural, organic coming-together of social formations.

we must turn away from the commonsense idea that such things as locality and community are simply given or natural and turn toward a focus on social and political processes of place making, conceived less as a matter of "ideas" than of embodied practices that shape identities and enable resistances.³⁶

This reference to the making of community through process can be understood in terms of the modes of practice which constitute the community. These modes of practice may take the form of abstract or concrete practices but can coexist within integrative community. A linear path that asserts abstract practices can only occur within modern forms is limiting. Integrative community is constituted through the subordinating and dominating of practices with differing integrative levels.

Modes of practice, as used in this thesis, should be distinguished from some other notions of practice. Modes of practice that constitute the structure of integrative community can be blurred with the practices that may contribute to the sense of a nostalgic community.

³⁵ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 'Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era', in Gupta and Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

Mike Featherstone discusses the concepts of local culture and its sustainability through the practice of ritual and memory.

[A local culture] is often taken to refer to the culture of a relatively small, bounded space in which the individuals who live there engage in daily, face-to-face relationships. Here the emphasis is upon the taken-for-granted, habitual and repetitive nature of the everyday culture of which individuals have a practical mastery. The common stock of knowledge at hand with respect to the group of people who are the inhabitants and the physical environment (organization of space, buildings, nature, etc.) is assumed to be relatively fixed; that is, it has persisted over time and may incorporate rituals, symbols and ceremonies that link people to a place and a common sense of the past.³⁷

And he continues:

A sense of home is sustained by collective memory, which itself depends upon ritual performances, bodily practices and commemorative ceremonies. The important point here is that our sense of the past does not primarily depend upon written sources, but rather on enacted ritual performances and the formalism of ritual language.³⁸

If a definition of practices were to be considered in this way it would be possible to argue that these practices create the nostalgic community. It is therefore crucial to differentiate between these practices and the modes of practice that constitute integrative community. While myth and ritual have been an integral part of many social formations, and the nation is a particularly invaluable example in this argument, alone they do not constitute integrative community. In many cases myth and ritual may contradict the modes of practice which I have referred to as constituting integrative community.

The modes of practice categorisation is an analytical theorisation adapted from the marxist conception of the mode of production.

Rather than assuming the primacy of the mode of production (as in orthodox marxism), social formations are understood to be constituted (historically overdetermined) by a complex of *modes of practice* – modes of production, exchange, organization, communication and enquiry. These patterns of practice are enacted within and across variously extended social boundaries.³⁹

Such analytical tools, in conjunction with considering the *habitus* of social formations provides us with a framework in which to consider the processes that determine the notion of integrative community. Rather than a conception of community being localised and romanticised, consisting only of face-to-face interaction and modes of practice that can only

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁷ Featherstone, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

operate under such concrete conditions, such analysis allows for community to exist under more abstract conditions playing a dominant role. This will be further illustrated later in this thesis with the case of the Indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. While the political revolutionary group, the Zapatistas, and their sympathisers in Chiapas live predominantly under conditions of face-to-face interaction, they have used advanced modes of communication, namely interactive computer technology incorporating disembodied interaction, in their struggle for the freedom to choose their own way of life. Such complex coexistence of differing modes of communication carries with it inherent contradictions. Although contradictions are often avoided or smoothed over, it is possible for the contradiction to become part of the everyday practices of integrative community and provide a rich and rewarding existence.

Conclusion

Popularised categories of community have arisen in response to the broadening of the global environs. This broadening has occurred primarily because of the advances in technological innovation. People, while adopting these practices which they see as progressive, are leaving behind the practices that have provided the attachments for which they now yearn. Those now in search of attachment and bonds are creating ideals of community such as the nostalgic and virtual communities that are illusory and without integrative depth. Contemporary attraction to the debate over what constitutes community and what it can offer flourishes. A nostalgic view of community is enticing and desirable for those who fear the unfettered implications of the loss and absence of engaged social relations. The nostalgic community offers the bonds and restrictions for which members of the 'mobile, limitless, modern age' seem to yearn. Other popularised categories of community have been analysed in this chapter, however, I have argued that these alternate communities do not provide the integrative depth necessary to provide a rich and rewarding social formation. The nostalgic, ephemeral, neo-tribal and virtual communities all fail to provide a complete social formation that carries obligatory bonds, is constituted through an attachment to place, and is recognised through the modes of practice undertaken by its participants.

³⁹ Paul James, *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*, Sage Publications, London, 1996, p. 20.

I have argued in this chapter that an integrative community, which incorporates practices commonly assumed to be both traditional and modern, offers the integrative depth required in sustaining a fulfilling social formation. The analysis of popularised communities suggests that rather than a coexistence of different social forms, a choice must be taken. In the popularised thinking constitutive practices must arise from either the traditional or the modern form, because together they are conflictual and contradictory. Yet, contradiction is an important aspect of integrative community that is constituted from contradictory modes of practice and *habitus*. It is this contradiction which we need to accept and explore in order to understand the social formation of community and this will be taken up further in the following two chapters.

This chapter has introduced integrative community and emphasised the modes of practice as an integral constitutive component. One of these modes, the mode of communication, has played an important role in the constitution of social formations. Social theory has often emphasised communication as a fundamental practice in the formation of society. There is also significant contemporary debate regarding the changing nature of society from an industrial society to an informational society. It is the mode of communication that constitutes the fundamental interactions of community members and plays an integral part in the process of structuring all societal formations. In order to develop the framework which distinguishes integrative community the thesis will now focus upon one of the modes of practice, that of communication.

CHAPTER TWO

Communication: Practicing Practice

If the technological structure of the Internet institutes costless reproduction, instantaneous dissemination and radical decentralization, what might be its effects upon the society, the culture and the political institutions?

There can be only one answer to this question, which is that it is the wrong question.

Mark Poster, 'Cyberdemocracy',
Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace, 1997

The field of telecommunications is experiencing extraordinary expansion through technological innovation. This has had significant impact on broadening our communicative reach, and consequently debate has arisen surrounding how these changes are impacting on our lives. The debate, however, has focused upon an assessment of whether such technology is good or bad *for* society. A presentation of the issues in this way assumes the pre-existence of a social formation upon which the technological practices of communication do or do not impact. In order to conceive of integrative community it is necessary to consider the constitutive character of practices. It is argued that everyday practices undertaken by members of a community determine the structure their social formation will take. It is crucial then to consider communicative practices as constitutive of community rather than only as affective upon the social formation in which we live. In this chapter I wish to further explore the constitutive character of the mode of communication, one of the analytical categories of the modes of practice. It is through such an exploration that the importance of this mode of practice in the constitution of social formations will be demonstrated and, in turn how the structure of the social formation implicates the practicing of practices.

The mode of communication is crucial to the existence of a social formation. Emile Durkheim argues in *The Rules of Sociological Method* that in deference to individual psychological explanations, the subject is constructed through social actions. He states:

Even if [my acts] conform to my own sentiments and I feel their reality subjectively, such reality is still objective, for I did not create them; I merely inherited them through my education ... The system of signs I use to express my thought, the system of currency I employ to pay my debts, the instruments of credit I use in my commercial relations, the practices followed in my profession, etc. function independently of my own use of them. And these statements can be repeated for each member of society. Here, then, are ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that present the noteworthy property of existing outside individual consciousness.¹

The changes in the field of communications are particularly relevant to the constitution of social formations. Communicative practice is an everyday practice that, while conditioned by society's structures, plays an integral role in determining these structures. In considering the mode of a practice we should consider both the way it is carried out and the effect it has upon the constitution of social formations. In this way, it is ensured that we are taking account of not only the interaction that occurs in a communicative act but also the integrative depth of this act. That is, it is necessary to analyse a communicative practice in terms of its method, whether it is spoken, written or computer-mediated, and its social connectivity and constitution through the level of its integrative depth. I am arguing throughout this dissertation that the integrative community is constituted through practices which may be conducted at more abstract levels, but are framed or conditioned by more concrete and socially binding levels.

In order to demonstrate the distinctive character of communicative practice that constitutes integrative community, I will contrast virtual community and nostalgic community that were described in Chapter One. A virtual community is one in which its participants exchange communications across the computerised networks of the internet. It is not my objective to prove that a virtual community, founded on disembodied exchanges, is emptier and less enriching than integrative community – although I do not disagree with this statement. My objective is rather to use this illustration to argue for the necessity of considering the different integrative character of different practices. Virtual community is founded only through abstract practices. Practices within integrative community have the capacity of more integrative depth. Integration differs from interaction in that integration carries with it a sense that beyond the interaction there exists the propensity for an interrelational bond.

¹ Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, (8th edn.), S. Solovay and J. Mueller (trans.), The Free Press, New York, 1938, pp.1-2.

In order to fully develop the major difference between integrative and alternate community formations it will be beneficial later in the chapter to draw upon the work of Mark Poster and his writing on the informational society, and also the work Jean Baudrillard and his work on the 'simulacra'. The work of these writers will be used critically as both, in their own ways, write with a view of societal formation that omits or subordinates the constitutive practices of integrative community. While Baudrillard proposes a hyperreal existence without meaning, the argument of Poster results in an expectation that the adoption of modern communication will produce a utopian existence.

The final section of this chapter will further develop the conceptualisation of an integrative component to communicative interactions. All communicative acts whether oral, written or computer-mediated can be understood by an associated analytical category of integration. The theoretical framework being developed in this thesis requires consideration of the integrative depth of a communicative practice in addition to the consideration of the method that is used to convey that communication. The socially binding depth of the interaction, or its level of integration, can be analytically determined. Commonly a linear theory of progression in which the later mode dominates the prior mode has been favoured to avoid contradiction. The contradictory consequences of analytically defining the levels of integration within the mode of communication will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

A Communicative Practice

Practice is both structuring and structured. Through the *practice* of practices our cultural and social forms are constituted and reconstituted. It is an evolving process in which we are both actively agents and passively actors. As social actors we undertake practices according to our commonsense experience, but we also have the capacity to reflexively and self-consciously construct everyday practices. Practices consist of interactions but can be analytically categorised as having an integrative depth. This integrative depth can be of a concrete character as in the face-to-face, or of a more abstract character as in the disembodied interaction. The opportunity to reflexively construct our practices has intensified in the increasing abstractness of modernity. Throughout this chapter, I will develop the argument that through the multi-layering of practices with differing integrative depth we are able to reflexively frame our practices. That is, the modes of practice can be

employed at intersecting levels of intensity resulting in this framing of practices often being complex and contradictory. In order to develop the argument and explore the integrative character of modes of practice, I have chosen to focus upon the mode of communication.

Through an investigation of the mode of communication it is possible to illustrate both the socially constitutive character, and the integrative character, of modes of practice. Charles Taylor, who proved beneficial in the discussion of the formation of community attributes communication with an instructive position in such a debate.

Opening a conversation is inaugurating a common action. This common action is sustained by little rituals which we barely notice, like the interjections of accord ("unhuh") with which the presently nonspeaking partner punctuates the discourse of the speaker, and with rituals which surround and mediate the switch of the "semantic turn" from one to the other.²

Methods of communication have become increasingly abstracted. Yet, as previously discussed, it is not only the method of communication that must be analysed in order to fully understand the impact of communicative practice. With the method of the practice we must consider its integrative character. That is, the practice can be undertaken within a complexity of meanings. It is here we need to consider upon what foundations the communicative practice is enacted and understood by those undertaking the practice. This undertaking will contribute to the constitution of community formation. Our way of being implicates the way in which we undertake the everyday practice, and the form of practice is also implicated by our way of being within our community formations. It is necessary therefore to discuss the ontological categories that implicate the everyday practices of the mode of communication.

An analysis of social formations through an ontological framework can include categories such as time, space and the body. Modes of production and exchange and other modes of practice have impacted upon the significant changes in the conceptual categories of time and space. It is however, the mode of communication that has received particular attention for these changes in the ways of being. Zygmunt Bauman, when writing of the changing ontological categories of time and space, particularly in relation to businesses, suggests the following:

² Charles Taylor, 'Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate', in N. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 167.

With time between communications imploding and shrinking to the no-size of the instant, space and spatial markers cease to matter, at least to those whose actions can move with the speed of the electronic message.³

As the body, space and time have become significantly altered with changing modes of communication the constitution of community is problematised. The alternate community formation of the nostalgic community relies crucially upon an attachment to place and the virtual community relies upon the boundedness of disembodied, same-time relations. To illustrate, with regard to attachment to place, we can return to the example from Chapter One of the Native Title Act in Australia. Appadurai writes of the ascriptions of 'native status' which carry with them ideas of their existence relying on the confinement of the 'native' to a particular space. "Natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places."⁴ We can illustrate this by the continuing debate over native title in Australia which carries with it a condition that there must be a continued *physical* attachment to the land in question for there to be the possibility of a native title claim by those who originally inhabited the land. The forced displacement is one of the arguments, beyond modes of communication that will be considered within the political thematic of this thesis. The theorisation of the integrative community however, can deal with such analytical circumstances through its consideration of both constitutive and integrative character.

In demonstration of an ontological analysis of modes of integration it may be advantageous to draw upon the work of Georg Simmel and his principles of interaction. Simmel argues that the "properties of forms and the meanings of things are a function of the relative distances between individuals and other individuals or things."⁵ It is his theory of distance that we may critically utilise in relation to the modes of communication and the differing forms of integrative analysis. Simmel argues that to be truly social requires face-to-face interaction and not just common values. Levine explains,

Another consequence of Simmel's principle of interaction is the importance of the dimension of *distance* in his thinking. For Simmel, the truly "social" begins when individuals face one

³ Zygmunt Bauman, 'Time and Class', *Arena Journal*, No. 10, 1998, p. 73.

⁴ Arjun Appadurai, 'Putting Hierarchy in Its Place', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1988, p. 37.

⁵ Donald Levine, 'Introduction', in G. Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971, p. xxiv.

another, directly or in fantasy. This means that society, or social interaction, depends on the distance between individuals in relation to each other.⁶

He goes on to state that Simmel, in this way, argued that society is enabled through conflict rather than always through common norms (which are a mere by-product). When the distance becomes too great between individuals to express their conflict, then that is when society no longer exists. A focus on physical space such as this disregards other possible extensions of integrative community, such as the continuation of relationships by way of written correspondence or computer-mediated correspondence. The intersections of modes of communication, and other modes of practice, across levels of integration do not rely on distance. The intersections of these constituents, are often contradictory but nevertheless the emphasis on physical distance is not a primary determinant of integrative community. It is rather the level of integration that constitutes the communicative act. It is not the physical that invites integration as discussed in Chapter One with regard to space. Yet it is this distancing which is an essential component of the postmodern theorists claim that society is changing. In the following discussion the work of Poster will exemplify a theorist arguing that abstraction in communicative interactions is positive for social formation. In comparison, the work of Baudrillard will be drawn upon as one who argues that the result of distancing destroys the social through a reduction in the depth and richness of social formations.

Utopian Communication

With the introduction of interactive communication technology, there has been significant debate about the potential impact this may have upon the formation of identity and the associated impact upon society. It is suggested that the end of historical constraints, the diminishing of identity politics and the shifting away from grand, overwhelming consciousness is the potential being realised by interactive technology and the postmodern society. Poster has written extensively on the positive potentialities of this technological advancement. Poster has taken up the issue of the change from broadcast methods of communication and what this now means as we transverse to the interactive or narrowcast method of communication. His postmodern theoretical arguments proclaim the

⁶ Donald Levine, 'The Structure of Simmel's Social Thought', in K. Wolff (ed.), *Georg Simmel, 1858 - 1918*, The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1959, p. 23.

ineffectiveness of national borders, the creation of new spaces and communities, and he asserts that the formation of identities is being altered.⁷

Poster bases his arguments for the utopian potential of new communicative technologies on the fundamental transgression from a passive, non-democratic method of communication to an interactive, and disembodied, communicative mode. Poster quotes Mitchell Kapor, former developer of Lotus 1-2-3:

There are two extreme choices. Users may have indirect, or limited control over when, what, why, and from whom they get information and to whom they send it. That's the broadcast model today, and it seems to breed consumerism, passivity, crassness, and mediocrity. Or, users may have decentralized, distributed, direct control over when, what, why and with whom they exchange information. That's the Internet model today, and it seems to breed critical thinking, activism, democracy, and quality.⁸

Poster develops his argument for the inherent utopian features of the internet by firstly addressing the idea of the internet as a source and carrier of information. He suggests that the key is to look beyond, or within, the technology to realise that it is not simply a movement of information, but more accurately a creator of spaces. His argument centres on the virtual spaces that are created behind or beyond the reality of the computer screen. These spaces, he argues are the communities that do not exist in 'real time' but in virtual time. They are referred to as the virtual communities of cyberspace and are distinguished from real life or 'Newtonian space'.

With representational machines such as the computer the question of the interface becomes especially salient because each side of the human/machine divide now begins to claim its own reality; on one side of the screen is Newtonian space, on the other, cyberspace.⁹

Poster continues his argument by referring to Howard Rheingold, an avid internet user who has written emphatically of his development of newfound relationships through interactive chatting relays. Yet, Rheingold begins his book, *The Virtual Community*, with a narrative about the time he personally met, in 'real-life', the members of his virtual community. He states that these people looked significantly different than how he had imagined and he makes the following comment: "I can't count the parties and outings where the invisible personae who first acted out their parts in the debates and melodramas on my computer screen later manifested in front of me in the physical world in the form of real people, with

⁷ Mark Poster, *The Second Media Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

⁸ Mitchell Kapor, 'Where Is the Digital Highway Really Heading?: The Case for a Jeffersonian Information Policy', *Wired*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1993, p. 55 as cited in Poster, *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹ Poster, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

faces, bodies, and voices."¹⁰ Had his virtual community proved in some way insubstantive, requiring a real-life, look, feel, touch meeting? It is an example such as this that leads us to analyse communicative practices, such as disembodied practices, to demonstrate their integrative capacity and the relevance of integrative levels to social connectivity.

For Poster, new communication systems have the revolutionary potential to initiate a massive restructuration of human identity, the likes of which has not been seen since the middle ages.¹¹ Poster argues that the media technologies have abilities beyond increases in efficiency, and offer "a broad and extensive change in the culture, in the way identities are structured."¹² He further states that the development of virtual reality effects a simulational practice 'which alters forever the conditions under which the identity of the self is formed.'¹³ Through the function of bulletin boards, where people are able to communicate with pseudonyms and, in his view, therefore able to disguise any of their attributes such as gender or identity, the communication technology is allowing the individual to invent themselves.¹⁴ The argument made here by Poster and other writers such as Sherry Turkle¹⁵ suggests that disembodied communicative interactivity allows for people to come together identity-free, forming utopian communities.

I contend that the argument that proposes disembodied communication as identity-free, is flawed. Communication even without the presentation of a physical body, carries with it socially normalised identity-markers. Arguments that suggest disembodied technology is identity-free can be criticised by referring to the work of Robert Markley in the introduction to *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents*. He states: "Cyberspace, then, can never separate itself from the politics of representation precisely because it is a projection of the conflicts of class, gender, and race that technology both encodes and seeks to erase."¹⁶ Therefore, communication in virtual space carries with it identity-markers. Disembodied communication is not identity-free, and therefore does not produce a utopian

¹⁰ Howard. Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, 1993, p. 2.

¹¹ C. Wise, '(Post) Modernity/(Post) Coloniality', *Arena Journal*, No. 5, 1995, p. 45.

¹² Poster, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁵ Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1996.

¹⁶ Robert Markley (ed.), *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996, p. 4.

space where those people communicating can completely escape their gender or race as they may wish.

The space that Poster argues for, is a symbolic one presented as an area that can substitute for reality. This symbolic space, however, is not a utopian, liberated and free space. For those who fear the abstractness of the modern, late-modern or postmodern world are searching for a social formation which will offer boundedness and connectivity with depth. This depth is not provided within a virtual community where communicative practices do not have integrative depth. Markley argues that cyberspace mediates between real-life and an 'ethereal' place and because of this it cannot "transcend the problems of materiality, embodiment, or capital."¹⁷ The space that is required to provide a rich and fulfilling social formation is constituted through practices which maintain or can be reflexively framed within a deep, concrete level of integration. An integrative community will provide this integrative depth through its capacity for practices of different integrative depth to intersect and coexist. A virtual community, where abstract communicative practices are dominant, fails to provide this depth. The nostalgic community also fails to provide integrative depth due to its omission of a consideration of the constitutive outcome and the impact of dynamic everyday practices.

Simulated Nostalgia

A nostalgic community differs from integrative community in its inability to account for constitutive practices that consist of a complex layering of integrative levels. A nostalgic community relies on false memory to create an ideal and desirous community formation. An exploration of the concepts of nostalgia and memory prove revealing in this discussion. There is a difference between nostalgia and memory. Nostalgia is the desire for something that is missing in the present, and is based on a fallacy or myth. Memory, on the other hand, is something that is an active component of the way we live and carry out practices. The mythical or the nostalgic is something that Arjun Appadurai refers to as 'ersatz nostalgia' – it is nostalgia without memory or what I earlier called '(distorted) memory'.¹⁸ Today, much of the reference to nostalgia is created by the mass media for the purposes of mass

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, p. 82.

consumption. The consumer product-advertisements that create 'ideal' products or places are an example of ersatz nostalgia. The creation of an ideal, warm, small country community, for which we become nostalgic, is a creation of those seeking an alternative community. This is due to their fear of losing social connections and boundedness. For most people, nostalgic community is something of which they have no experience and of which they have no active memory.

Nostalgia is mythical and represents a created illusion. Memory may also be mistakenly considered mythical because it sometimes represents a reality in a changed form. Memory is changeable and may develop into something that does not necessarily represent its origin however memory – unlike nostalgia – has a place within the constitution of integrative community. Within integrative community the role of memory is in the interpretation and re-interpretation of modes of practice. Anthony Giddens states "memory is an active, social process, not merely identified with recall."¹⁹ It is this idea of memory playing a 'working' role in the lived community which sets it apart from the nostalgic community created through, again based on Appadurai, 'armchair nostalgia' – nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory.²⁰ These differentiations are important for leading us into a discussion of tradition, which is bound up with memory. Giddens refers to tradition and memory as organising the past in relation to the present, in this way the past is not preserved but continuously reconstructed on the basis of the present.²¹ If we understand the modes of practice to be adaptive practices, changed through the *practice* of the practice, it is possible to see that an analysis of nostalgic community can not account for the constitutive character of modes of practice because it relies on a constant practice. Nostalgic community is founded on an unchanging traditional form. In order to understand the constitution of community while recognising the significant changes in the practices of communication, it is necessary to understand that practices are changeable.

Baudrillard develops an argument of how social formations can be understood in the face of the dynamic modern communication age. This theoretical understanding has

¹⁹ Anthony Giddens, 'Living in Post-Traditional Society', in U. Beck, A. Giddens, and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 63.

²⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²¹ Giddens, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

implications for illustrating the inadequacies of the popularised nostalgic community. The nostalgic community could be described as a simulacrum, a consequence of the hyperreal, which is a concept developed by Baudrillard. He introduces his idea of the hyperreal by describing the fable of Borges in which a map of a territory is constructed in such detail that it takes on life-size proportion and eventually covers the territory. Baudrillard states that "this fable has now come full circle for us, and possesses nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra."²² He continues,

Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – *precession of simulacra* – that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself.*²³

In this way, the nostalgic community is a place that is a representation or a simulation of something that is constructed by its absence. A nostalgic community is created in a mythical space that is an illusion or false memory. It is not created from the memory of a community that was once present, but rather it is created in the nostalgic space of what is absent.

To dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But it is more complicated than that because simulating is not pretending ... pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false", the "real" and the "imaginary."²⁴

Baudrillard also refers to the idea of communication and the consumer society in his development of the concept of simulacra. He argues that it is by way of the media that we exist in this simulated world. His reference to the media directs us again to recognising the importance of the mode of communication to the theorisation of social formations.

However, there are a number of criticisms of the work of Baudrillard that are important to consider for the development of the argument for integrative community. The overall tenet of his post-structural, postmodern theorising is the assertion that all now exists in the abstract realm: there is no longer a concrete level, it has "become an ideology of

²² Jean. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, S. Faria Glaser (trans.), The University of Michigan Press, USA, 1994, p. 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

transcending all prior limits of human existence."²⁵ Gerry Gill in an article entitled, 'Post-Structuralism as Ideology' has outlined a number of these criticisms.²⁶ One of the criticisms relates to the 'over-essentialising of the logic of exchange systems' in Baudrillard's development of the sign/commodity form. This criticism is particularly interesting for the pursuing of the constitution of community. Baudrillard defines the principles of difference in distinguishing societies based on differing modes of exchange, for example, tribal societies based on reciprocal exchange and capitalist societies based on commodity exchange. His essentialist view does not allow for societies with mixed modes. It is through such a critique that we are able to recognise the constitutive layering of levels of integration within modes of practice. It is a layering which produce the tensions and contradictions indicative of integrative communities, rather than an essentialist collapsing of the levels as indicated by the example from Baudrillard relating to the mode of exchange. There must be a coexistence of modes of practice with differing integrative levels for a social formation to provide integrative depth. Integrative community is constituted through practices that occur at varying levels of abstraction, dominating and subordinating in a dynamic and tense relationship.

It is important to adopt these criticisms developed by Gill when applying the writing of Baudrillard to the conceptualisation of nostalgic community. While it is possible to see the similarities between the concept of nostalgia and Baudrillard's concept of the simulacra, Baudrillard's argument does not allow for meaning at all.

Information is thought to create communication, and even if the waste is enormous, a general consensus would have it that nevertheless, as a whole, there be an excess of meaning, which is redistributed in all the interstices of the social – just as consensus would have it that material production, despite its dysfunctions and irrationalities, opens onto an excess of wealth and social purpose ... Information devours its own content. It devours communication and the social.²⁷

The act of *staging* communication and meaning *exhausts* that communication and meaning. Through the increasing abstraction of communication, by way of technology, the meaning of the communication is emptied through the simulation of the act. In this way, we can understand nostalgic community as a community that is largely emptied of its meaning through the staging of the social formation. The simulation, through abstracted means of

²⁵ Gerry. Gill, 'Post-Structuralism as Ideology', *Arena Journal*, No. 69, 1984, p. 94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-96.

²⁷ Baudrillard, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

communication, erodes the formation of depth and richness that is produced by integrative community. The conceptualisation of nostalgic community is a simulation that cannot accommodate dynamic modes of practice that are both constitutive and integrative. By comparison to nostalgic community, integrative community as I have defined it is constituted in the telling moment of contradiction, the intersection of the abstract and the concrete. It is here, at the place of contradiction between more abstract and more concrete modes that we are able to see the crucial relevance of the argument for an integrative community.

The Integrative Depth of Communicative Practice

The mode of communication has been considered as one of the fundamental practices constitutive of integrative community formation. The significant changes in computer-mediated communication such as the internet has opened debate on the social implications of the field of communications. There have been a number of theorists who have written of a major social transition from an industrial society to an informational society.²⁸ These theories, in tracing communicative advances, have tended to incorporate a bias towards an evolutionary linear progression. This bias has also been emphasised in the theories surrounding the progression of social formations from the traditional, to the modern or late-modern or postmodern social forms. This linear progressive framework is carried through in the field of communications. Emphasising a linear progressive model assumes prior methods of communication are dominated by more abstract methods and therefore coexistence of forms is not possible. However, integrative community is constituted through the coexistence of both traditional and modern practices because of the capacity to analytically recognise integrative depth. In order to explore the constitution of integrative community, the integrative depth of the practices must also be considered.

This chapter has expanded the argument from Chapter One that modes of practice are constitutive of integrative community. I have argued that the theoretical framework of the integrative community can accommodate the changes and development of the mode of

²⁸ See for example Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990, pp. 6-7, David Lyon, *The Information Society: Issues and Illusions*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. vii-7, and Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume II*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, 1997, pp. 1-2.

practices that occur through the *practice* of practices. It has also been suggested that an integrative theoretical framework analytically identifies the integrative character of modes of practice. The theoretical framework offers the proposition that practices of a certain integrative depth can be reflexively framed within others of differing levels of integrative depth. This framework allows that traditional and modern practices can coexist, rather than necessarily the conclusion that the more abstract form has to dominate the prior form. This differs from the commonly held belief that social formations develop in line with technological innovations along a linear path of progression.

The commonsense idea resulting from a linear progression theory within the mode of communication assumes a progression from oral to written to electronic forms of communication on a linear plane. Given this, it follows that once these less advanced forms of communication are surpassed, previous forms are either no longer required, or required only as a basis for the existence of the transcending form. In this way the earlier form is always subordinated to the later form. This reliance upon a foundational form differs from the framing of a more abstract practice by a more concrete practice because it is always subordinated and considered as foundational. The transcendence argued in the evolutionary theory is one that assumes that the previous mode of practice can no longer exist of its own accord, and particularly, can no longer dominate the 'more advanced' tool.

A commonsensical progressive linear notion leaves no place for the contradictory complexity of the overlaying of differing modes of communication. This linear theorisation of communicative (and other) methods collapses the differing modes together, not allowing for the changing dominance and subordination of the different modes. Rather than a succession of more technologically advanced forms of communication dominating the previous forms, we can see that within actually existing integrative communities differing forms of communication are used in order to satisfy different requirements. In Chapter Six of this dissertation I will be describing a situation for the Zapatistas in which a computer-mediated form of communication has been used in a situation of predominantly oral communication. This abstracted technique has been used as a tool for a particular purpose and does not succeed the previous communicative form. While in complex intersections of modes of practice such as this it may be necessary to draw upon another existing mode, this

does not necessarily achieve transcendence, succession or a dissolving of the earlier method.

Interactions which deny or manipulate ontological categories such as the body can be fulfilling only when the practice is framed by less abstract levels of integration. For example, an internet interaction across geographical borders, in immediate time and without attachment to embodied identities which has not been founded upon previous or coterminous face-to-face embodiment, will not provide a communicative experience as meaningful as one which has. This is not to say the concrete practice must dominate, but for it to be non-existent places the practice solely in absence without an association with presence. In this way, it is possible for a communicative practice conducted at more abstract level to be undertaken without dominating a more concrete integrative form. On the other hand, the use of a disembodied communicative practice between two people who have based their relationship on, or have framed it within, face-to-face interactions may experience a rich and fulfilling relationship through the extension of practice.

The integrative depth of a communicative interaction can be illustrated by the work of Jack Goody and Ian Watt. A lengthy quote from Goody and Watt explains the conceptualisation of a communicative interaction as carrying a level of integrative capacity.

The transmission of the verbal elements of culture by oral means can be visualized as a long chain of interlocking conversations between members of the group. Thus all beliefs and values, all forms and knowledge, are communicated between individuals in face-to-face contact; and, as distinct from the material content of the cultural tradition, whether it be cave painting or hand-axes, they are stored only in human memory.

The intrinsic nature of oral communication has a considerable effect upon both the content and the transmission of the cultural repertoire. In the first place, it makes for a directness of relationship between symbol and referent. There can be no reference to 'dictionary definitions', nor can words accumulate the successive layers of historically validated meanings which they acquire in a literate culture. Instead, the meaning of each word is ratified in a succession of concrete situations, accompanied by vocal inflections and physical gestures, all of which combine to particularize both its specific denotation and its accepted connotative usages. This process of direct semantic ratification, of course, operates cumulatively; and as a result the totality of symbol-referent relationships is more immediately experienced by the individual in an exclusively oral culture, and is thus more deeply socialized.²⁹

²⁹ Jack Goody and Ian Watt, 'Consequences of Literacy', in J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, p. 29.

Their extensive work on the implications of literacy on social formations demonstrates the significance of an analysis that accounts for the integrative depth of communicative practice.

Social practice, which is the basis to the constitution of social form, does not necessarily rely on only one level of interaction between those undertaking the act. An analysis of interaction can identify categories of different levels or intensities of presence. Interactions may be conducted as practices within a face-to-face presence or alternatively practices within a disembodied mode of absence. The integrative community is constituted through its ability to draw upon differing methods of interaction and levels of integration. These layers can operate simultaneously, overlaying one or the other. They do not necessarily collapse into or upon each other and become progressively dominated. Practices of a more abstract nature, such as computer-mediated connection that does not require embodied presence, can in practice be framed by the face-to-face as a dominant integrative mode. This purposeful, reflexive act denies the assumption that the analytical disembodied interaction necessarily dominates the practice and determines the constitution of the ensuing social formation. This overlaying complicates the integration and it is through this complexity and intensity that integrative community is a richer and more fulfilling social formation.

Conclusion

The debate over changing communication and its social implications appears to be driving at a steadfast pace toward presenting a future of utopia or alternatively damnation. The debate has focussed upon the potential advancement or the alternate destruction it will ensue upon society. I have argued within this chapter that analysis surrounding communicative practices has, for the most part, omitted to consider the different constitutive character of different forms of practice, focusing primarily on the one-dimensional impact of changing communication *upon* society. Through a consideration of both the constitutive and integrative character of the practice of communication I have in this chapter further developed an analytical framework of integrative community.

A conceptualisation of integrative levels and their capacity to be reflexively practiced at subordinating and dominating levels, allows for a consideration of the correlation between concrete and abstract practices. It is possible to conceive of oral communities taking on computer-mediated communicative techniques without necessarily having gone through the stage of becoming print communities. This is particularly relevant for Indigenous communities. It is possible that the integrative depth of face-to-face communication provides a bridge to the interactivity of computer-mediated communication that makes this transition more comfortable and successful than linear progression theory would have it.

The crucial constitutive role of modes of practices, and particularly the mode of communication in social formations leads further into the thesis. Chapter Three will continue to develop the 'levels' approach and apply the analytical 'levels of integration' to communicative interactions. This will highlight the capacity of these levels to overlay, subordinate or dominate each other dependent upon the way a practice is undertaken. Integrative depth operates at a complex intersection of dominating or subordinating levels, some more concrete, others more abstract. These layers, rather than collapse into each other, often are contradictory and these points of contradiction are often where the intensity of integrative community is derived.

CHAPTER THREE

Contradiction: A Telling Moment

Only the foolhardy attempt to resolve paradoxes. My task is merely to ask what it means to create one.

Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers*, 1993

The moment in which contradiction occurs is telling. The advent of the late-modern globalised world has meant that our daily actions are increasingly abstracted and therefore carry differing levels of integration. Integrative community is created at a collision point, where everyday practices constituted at differing integrative depth intersect in moments of contradiction. Integrative community can be analysed through our modes of practice and integration, our changing ontologies, and our reflexive capacities. While we act within a set of structures, it is also our action, how we think to undertake it and how we frame it, which contributes to the forming and the manipulation of these structures. These structures, implicated by the technological changes throughout the world and the associated changing of our identities, determine the way in which we live. We can however, in turn, determine them through reflexive and evolving practice. It is through these social practices that community formation is constituted. It is therefore essential to theorise community formation as a structure that determines our practice and which is determined by our practice. In this way, community formations determine the way in which we live, but at the same time can be rethought and re-enacted to change our meanings and the way in which we live our lives.

It was suggested through Chapters One and Two that our modes of practice are constitutive of our social formations. This chapter will consolidate the argument for the place of practice and extend an understanding of the methodology used in establishing the theoretical framework for integrative community. It is necessary to return to the conceptualisation of modes of practice in further depth to demonstrate its changing constitutive character. Through the use of the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the *habitus*, it

will demonstrated that it is through our practice, and the *practice* of these practices, that our communities are formed. Moreover, it is through these formations that we derive our meaning and identity. The way in which these practices are undertaken will be further analysed. It is possible for practices to be reflexively practiced by the participants within a social formation. The capacity to be reflexive has been theorised by Anthony Giddens. The work of Giddens will be critically examined to demonstrate the reflexive framing of practices at differing levels of integrative depth. Through this further analysis of practice we are able to identify a layering and intersecting of modes of integration, often resulting in points of tension and moments of contradiction.

Social practice incorporates both a method for its undertaking and levels of integrative depth. Both of these attributes are coterminous and changing, and are implicated through the shifting meaning of ontological categories. Ontological categories such as embodiment, space, and time have all been influenced by the changing nature of communicative techniques. The technological abstraction of communication has resulted in a distancing through the broadening of our global reach. This has affected the ontological meaning of our bodies through an ability to communicate at a disembodied extension. It has affected our sense of space through the ability to communicate across further distances with greater ease. And, it has implicated our sense of time through an expectation to communicate with a greater immediacy. These shifts in our ways of being have implicated the way in which we approach, understand and undertake our modes of practice. Our practices are continually changing through the *practice* of practice and through the shifting ontology of meaning and identity.

Changing practices that are constitutive of social formations contain integrative characteristics of both traditional and modern forms. Practices can be reflexively undertaken so as to achieve a framing of intersecting practices. A practice that has been borne out of the late-modern age, such as computer-mediated communication, may be adopted as a technique and framed within the integrative nature of a face-to-face level, a level more commonly associated with a pre-modern era. The reflexive layering and intersecting of practices of differing integrative depth results in contradictions and tensions. It is at this point of contradiction that we are able to return to the theorisation of integrative

community. Integrative community is constituted at a point of tension, a point where both abstract and concrete practices coexist, collide and interpenetrate.

Bourdieu's *Habitus*

It is necessary to begin a discussion of the methodology that defines and explores integrative community, and alternate community formations, within the late-modern age by emphasising the importance of social practice. This thesis argues that integrative community is a rich and rewarding social formation that is constituted not only in the face of contradictory practices, but as a *consequence* of contradictory practices. Furthermore, it argues that it is constituted through a coexistence of practices commonly associated with both traditional and modern forms. Modes of practice are both determining and determined and are both structured and structuring. Practices are actions that play out and reinvent ritual. Individual and collective practice and practices that connect with the practices of others are the determinant of social formations. In the previous two chapters it was argued that the role of practice in constituting social formations was crucial. This chapter will take this argument further through a detailed investigation of practice and its capacity to be reflexively undertaken.

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is an enlightening point of entry to a discussion of the significant role of practice. It is here that we find the re-assertion that practice is fundamental to the structuring of social formations. Bourdieu's theory of practice allows for both structure and a subject to exist and to be mutually constitutive determinants of society and of culture.

The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring disposition, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions.¹

Rather than a theorisation that places the structure as all-determining, leaving no space for the agency of the actor, the concept of *habitus* suggests that the agent has a significant role in determining the way practice is undertaken. While the concept of *habitus* allows for an

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, R. Nice (trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1990, p. 52.

actor to be an integral part of the process of practice, Bourdieu does suggest that the actor's role is 'second nature', one that could be considered an unconscious act.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.²

The actor, or cultural agent, acts within a *doxic* experience, one that is circumscribed by a commonsensical, learned adeptness. Richard Jenkins represents this competency suggesting that:

Within them they have grown up, learning and acquiring a set of practical cultural competencies, including a social identity – 'the sense of the position one occupies in social space' – which renders them largely incapable of perceiving social reality, in all of its arbitrariness, as anything other than 'the way things are'; necessary to their own existence as who they are.³

It is the representation of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* which leads to consideration of an unconscious agent. I will now argue a view of an unconscious agent is emphasised at the expense of an alternative view that would allow for reflexive agency.

I suggest it is necessary to critically examine the work of Bourdieu in order to understand the role of practice in its constitution of community as both structured and structuring, but also as actions that can be purposefully practiced by agents. The actor may operate in a manner of 'second-nature', and through understanding the practicing of practice there is opportunity for being sensitive to changes and evolvement of practice. However, there is also opportunity to recognise more than an unconscious, un-reflexive actor in a methodology of the constitution of social formations. While Bourdieu places the subject in a position of agency in the social practice, it is one which is more often read as determined by circumstances which are outside of their own consciousness, or reflexivity. While he acknowledges the potential and the materialisation of changing practice, he does not emphasise the reflexive nature of them. It is the point of reflexivity that I argue can be added to the writings of Bourdieu, and in the following section of this chapter I will develop this argument. The reflexivity of social action is a critical constituent in the understanding of the role of social practice, the practicing of practice and its methodological importance.

² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³ Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 70.

The continual evolution of the form of practice may be attributed to the adoption of changing methods, or to challenges through intellectual thought (which all contribute to the increasing abstraction of modes of practice). While acknowledging that the continuing *habitus* may change through evolving practices, Bourdieu's theory can be extended to forge a place in which actors are able to construct their own meanings and identities through self-conscious and reflexive acts. I would suggest that it is the changing nature of ontological being, the increased abstraction of social practice, and the reflexivity of the practices undertaken by actors which all contribute to constitutive practice. This enables a conscious framing of differing integrative methods with the adoption and adaptation of practices. This may result in a more abstract act being undertaken while being framed within more concrete meanings. The layering of levels of integration, through reflexive practices, produces the contradictions and tensions that constitute integrative community. I will now extend the exploration of reflexivity through an examination of the work of Giddens to demonstrate the position of reflexivity in the argument for integrative community.

Reflexive Practice

The work of Bourdieu in relation to the concept of *habitus* has been examined to establish the significance of social practice. I argued that it was possible to diverge from his contention that the agent acts in an 'unconscious' way, suggesting that the agent can act in a purposeful, reflexive way. Now I will take up this idea of reflexivity and its position in the discussion of the construction of identity and the constitution of community. The reflexivity of an individual in the undertaking of social practice is a concept that has been presented with enthusiasm in discussions of modernity. It has been favoured as a differentiating point when considering the transition from a traditional age to a modern age or what I would more accurately describe as the age dominated by the ontologies of modernism. Anthony Giddens has written at length on the nature of modernity.

Modernity's reflexivity refers to the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information and knowledge. Such information or knowledge is not incidental to modern institutions, but

constitutive of them - a complicated phenomenon, because many possibilities of reflection about reflexivity exist in modern social conditions.⁴

His theory takes up a number of developments that characterise the modern age. These he contends are the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social systems attributable to time-space distancing, and the reflexive ordering and reordering of social relations through practice.⁵

The concept of the reflexive individual has been theorised in response to the conditions of modernity in which traditional markers for establishing meaning and identity are argued to be declining. One of these markers argued to be in decline is that of the connectivity of community. In Chapter One it was argued that this is one of the reasons for the popularisation of a 'nostalgic community': namely, to replace a connectivity that is feared to be in dramatic decline. An extended quote from Martin O'Brien documents the abstracted conditions of modernity and its association with the reflexivity of persons as theorised by Giddens:

Ontologically, self-identity is grounded in relations of trust and security, risk and anxiety. In conditions of modernity, traditional parameters for fixing self-identity - such as kinship, locality or community - break-down: individuals encounter a much wider range of ambiguous social networks and institutions that represent an equally wide range of, often contradictory, personal choices. Individuals must place their trust not in well-tryed, familiar kin or communal networks and institutions but in often untryed and unfamiliar expert or global networks and institutions. The conditions and parameters of trust and risk spread far beyond the contexts of anyone's personal experience. Amongst other things, the modern world is 'post-traditional' in the sense that individuals are exposed to and actively seek out multiple sources for establishing and maintaining a self-identity. The (late) modern self is an uncertain personal relationship with an indeterminate social world. Theoretically, self-identity comprises a 'reflexive project', one whose coherence must be worked at and striven for across many different social and institutional contexts. As Giddens puts it, the contemporary world is full of 'clever people': it is a world populated by skilled and knowledgeable individuals who are experienced and practised at *moving between* social contexts and *using* institutions as resources for sustaining security and stability in their everyday lives. The reflexivity of these individual-social-institutional mediations consists in their openness or susceptibility to continual revision in the light of new knowledge and information.⁶

Giddens' argument for the 'project of reflexivity' focuses on the individual within modern social formations.

⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1991, p. 20.

⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, United Kingdom, 1990, pp. 14-17.

⁶ Martin O'Brien, 'Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Identity and Environment in Giddens' Social Theory', in M. O'Brien, S. Penna and C. Hay (eds), *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Identity and Environment in Giddens' Social Theory*, Addison Wesley Longman, Essex, 1999, p. 20.

Reflexivity, in conjunction with individualism and abstract systems and institutions, is certainly an aspect that cannot be denied in the construction of individual identity.

In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems ... Yet because of the 'openness' of social life today, the pluralisation of contexts of action and the diversity of 'authorities', lifestyle choice is increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity and daily activity.⁷

His establishment of the reflexive project, in fact, relies on the conditions of modernity producing a fragmented individual in comparison to a traditionally connected community participant. While I acknowledge the determination of his conceptualisation relying on such a distinction, I suggest it is still possible to derive a beneficial base understanding of reflexivity that can transcend this determination. The transcendence for which I am arguing is one that suggests that the capacity for reflexive practice can exist in traditional and modern social forms.

In the modern era, it may be argued that reflexivity is a more intense aspect of practice due to the input of knowledge advancing from a greater number and diversity of 'expert systems' and modern institutions. However, I argue that the practice of reflexivity is one that may occur within any time period in which social practice is undertaken although it may carry differing intensities. It is possible to argue that time periods, ontologies and other situational determinants result in qualifying reflexivity. Reflexive practice can be subtle and may occur due to a recognition that it is the required action, but without being defined and acknowledged in its undertaking. On the other hand, the reflexivity of an act can become emphasised and an endorsement of the practice being undertaken. These differing levels of reflexivity will be illustrated in the examples of political protest explored in Chapters Five and Six. The case of the Indigenous peoples of Australia in the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century (Chapter Five) establishes practices which carry a low level of reflexivity, while the practices used by the Zapatistas in contemporary Mexico documented in Chapter Six illustrates an intense reflexive practice.

⁷ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, op. cit., p. 5.

Social practice, ritual, and *habitus* all evolve and change, the agents of the practice adapting the practices to environments, circumstances, and differing inputs. This is a reflexive practice. It is one that can be seen in the work of Bourdieu's *habitus*, even though it is not emphasised as such. Bourdieu argues:

It is, of course, never ruled out that the responses of the *habitus* may be accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to perform in a conscious mode the operation that the *habitus* performs quite differently, namely an estimation of chances presupposing transformation of the past effect into an expected objective. But these responses are first defined, without any calculation, in relation to objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present, things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable, 'upcoming' future (*un à venir*), which – in contrast to the future seen as 'absolute possibility' (*absolute Möglichkeit*) in Hegel's (or Sartre's) sense, rejected by the pure project of a 'negative freedom' – puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence that excludes all deliberation.⁸

The reflexive capacity of social action is crucial to the undertaking of practice. If we consider that we as social agents reflexively monitor our action, it is possible to understand that actions can be consciously undertaken by us. They can be undertaken within purposely chosen frameworks that may not necessarily be considered *natural* to the particular action. This conscious constitution of social acts, resulting in the overlaying of differing levels of abstraction and integration, is created largely through the changing nature of ontological categories such as the body, time and space.

Tyranny of Immediacy

With technological innovation, particularly within the field of communications, the conceptualisation of 'distance' has entered popular debate. The broadening of global environs has produced more accessible spaces while at the same time it is argued that communicative techniques have bridged distances making them smaller. 'Distance' is a concept that is encapsulated within the contemporary thinking of community formations. The importance of the debate over attachment to a specific place as opposed to a spatially free-floating existence has been discussed in Chapter One. Distance is also irremovable from the extended exploration of social formation and identity formation. The changing nature of the late-modern world has inscribed upon us evolving patterns of ontological categories. Popularised categories such as embodiment, temporality and spatiality are all crucially entwined with the mode of communication. The world is becoming smaller with

⁸ Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

increasingly infinite time, yet larger as a result of broadening space, and some may argue less differentiated with decreasing ties of continuing embodied relations. We may in fact question whether what was once the tyranny of distance may now be the tyranny of immediacy.

The prominence of ontological categories, particularly time and space, have become so pervasive that it is easy to assume their legitimacy in theoretical method without question. However, this assumption should not be taken without recognition of other writings that deny or subordinate their influence. Such an example is that of Tony Swain in *A Place for Strangers*. Swain begins his investigation of Indigenous being by contending that "central to [his] whole argument is the position that Aborigines themselves do not, or at least once did not, understand their being in terms of time, but of place and space."⁹ Swain argues that the concept of history is absent from Australian Indigenous being. This may in fact be true, but it is difficult to disregard the impact of life and death, day and night, seasons and so on, particularly upon ritual and ceremony, and also the debatable correlation of time with history. I raise his work only to point to the existence of contention surrounding ontological categories, such as time.

Anthony Giddens has approached ontological changes in the formation of identity through his writing on time-space distanciation. Giddens argues against the assumption that societies develop from simple to complex ones. He states:

Quite apart from their involvement in evolutionary theories which suggest that there is some sort of 'adaptive logic' propelling human societies along a path towards increasing complexity, there is good reason to distrust the terms 'simple' and 'complex' as applied to classifying societies. Many 'primitive societies' have very complex modes of kinship organisation, and all possess languages of a structurally differentiated kind. Rather than using the terminology of simple/complex, I wish to introduce the notion of time-space distanciation to analyse some of the phenomena with which evolutionary theorists have been concerned. By 'distanciation' here I mean to get at the processes whereby societies are 'stretched' over shorter or longer spans of time and space.¹⁰

While his work focuses primarily on the ontological categories of time and space, the body cannot be omitted from the theorisation. The important concept that should be drawn from a discussion of time, space and the body, is the concept of 'presencing', "the continual

⁹ Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 2.

¹⁰ Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Vol.1 Power, Property and the State*, Macmillan Press, London, 1981, p. 90.

intermingling of presence and absence that constitutes social conduct."¹¹ It is through analysing ontological categories that we are able to explore presence and absence and also distinguish the differing levels of integration. Giddens writes of social interaction as follows:

All social interaction, like any other type of event, occurs across time and space. All social interaction intermingles presence and absence. Such intermingling is always both complicated and subtle, and can be taken to express modes in which structures are drawn upon to incorporate the long-term *durée* of institutions within the contingent social act. Structures convey time across time-space distances of indeterminate length.¹²

It is, therefore, through the broadening of space, extension of time, and the increasing non-requirement of a human body in social interaction, that presence is argued to no longer be an essential component of the constitution of social formation. The increasing abstraction of communicative techniques within the modernised world has produced an anxiety for alternate community formations. It is because of distancing and disembodiment that virtual and nostalgic communities have become popularised.

The increasing abstraction of the mode of communication that has become the focus of discussion relating to disembodiment is occurring within the contemporary world. It is possible to also recognise the implications of distancing upon communicative practice within pre-modern social forms. I would like to refer to a lengthy quote from Jack Goody to present an example of distancing that can be illustrated as occurring within a traditional social form.

In southern Ghana, the recording of funeral contributions has been even further formalized by an enterprising printer who has produced books of receipts in triplicate for just such an occasion. One fills in the form, tears out a sheet and dispatches the coloured piece of paper to the home of the donor by the hand of a small boy.

The format requires a word of explanation. It is an acknowledgement by the bereaved of a monetary contribution to the expense of a funeral. Thanks are not normally given at the time of the ceremony itself but on a subsequent visit to the giver which is known as 'greeting'. The sentence at the foot of the form (above the legitimating signature) is a prepackaged apology for the absence of the face-to-face encounter. It is a written substitute for oral contact, like the visitors' book of the former colonial commissioner which still stood, at least in the mid-seventies, in a sentry box outside the residency of the Chief Regional Officer in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana, or like the visiting card formerly left at the house of a newly-arrived neighbour.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

We are witnessing here a process of distancing, of depersonalizing, social contacts. Indeed, in the spatially mobile situation in which they live, with not only the educated but also labourers travelling from less to more developed areas to sell their services, social relationships inevitably get dispersed widely over the ground and writing becomes the main means by which people can keep in touch. Nevertheless, when communication can be reduced to a few marks on a piece of paper rather than take place in the more concrete ambience of the face-to-face situation, the quality of interpersonal relationships is inevitably thinned; the multiplex relations of the village give way to single-stranded contacts that are more functionally specific, more manipulable, more 'impersonal'.¹³

This fascinating record of funeral formalities in southern Ghana provides an example of the occurrence of distancing through changing methods of communication, but more importantly, through changing integrative depth.

Time, space and body are examples of ontological categories that have influenced lived experience. The changing nature of the ontological categories impacts upon the mode of practice that is being undertaken. These categories can be analysed in order to understand the increasing abstraction of modes of practice. Through work such as the 'time-space distancing' argument of Giddens, it is possible to understand how there are differing levels of integration: face-to-face, agency-extended and disembodied. These levels can be practiced in such a way as to subordinate or dominate, overlay and interpenetrate one or the other. It is possible for this overlaying of levels to change in dominance dependent upon the practice and the actor or actors practicing the action. The enacting of particular practices at changing, differing levels such as this produces a contradiction that is a telling moment. It is not a contradiction that needs to be resolved away although this is often attempted through a theoretical explanation of linear progression. Rather, it is a contradiction that tells of integrative community, one with layers of integrative depth. This chapter will proceed with a deeper exploration of the layering of practices with differing integrative depth illustrating the tensions and contradictions that are produced.

Coexist, Collide, Interpenetrate

For this methodological analysis I have adopted the three levels of integration proposed by Paul James in *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*. The work of James describes the levels of integration as that of the face-to-face, the agency-extended

¹³ Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 145-146.

and the disembodied level of integration.¹⁴ It is the levels of integration which "come to mediate and abstract from relations of embodied 'presence'."¹⁵ The face-to-face level of integration is the most concrete and at its most primary requires the actors to practice the relationship between one and other *as if* they are in each other's presence.

The concept of 'face-to-face integration' draws upon this complexity to refer to the level of integration at which the modalities of co-presence, the modalities of being in the presence of the other, are central and predominant in maintaining a continuing association of persons even in their physical absence from one another. Understanding the face-to-face as a level of integration entails putting emphasis upon the importance of the modalities of co-presence rather than the fact of co-presence, the acts of interaction.¹⁶

The agency-extended level is more abstracted but still carries with it a strong sense of presence through people acting as the agents of particularised others and of institutions.

With agency-extended integration, social integration is abstracted beyond being based predominantly on the directly embodied and/or particularised mutuality of persons in social contact. At this level, institutions (agencies) such as the church or state, guild or corporation, and structuring practices of extension such as commodity exchange through merchants, traders, pedlars and the like (agents as mediators), come to bind people across larger expanses of space than is possible under face-to-face integration.¹⁷

The disembodied level of integration is one that is the most abstract and is a level of integration that belies presence through its subordination of embodiment.

The phrase 'disembodied integration' is used to refer to a level at which people are part of a network of connections where the full modalities of face-to-face interaction and the continuing practices of intermediating agency are not the salient features of the social relation. At this level the social relation transcends time and space quite apart from any personal intermediation.¹⁸

These levels of integration are analytical categories that can be derived from everyday practices. These levels have the capacity to overlay one and the other, changing in their dominance and subordination. It is this changing and shifting of levels of integration which can be reflexively undertaken within changing modes of practice.

Other theories which use a levels approach include that of John Thompson which he outlines in *The Media and Modernity*.¹⁹ Thompson's levels of interaction are the face-to-

¹⁴ Paul James, *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*, Sage Publications, London, 1996, pp. 20-37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁹ John Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 82-84.

face, the mediated and the mediated quasi-interaction. Face-to-face interaction is described as occurring in a context of co-presence and is dialogical. Mediated interaction involves the use of a technical medium which enables information or symbolic content to be transmitted to individuals who are remote in space, in time, or in both. Mediated quasi-interaction also employs a technical medium but differs in that it is a one-way flow of communication where the sender does not require, or generally receive a direct and immediate response.²⁰ Craig Calhoun also identifies levels of relationships with primary and secondary being classified as direct and tertiary and quaternary as indirect.²¹ The tertiary and quaternary levels correlate with Thompson's mediated and mediated quasi-interaction. While these theories have parallels with that of James', I have chosen to use James' theory of the levels of integration as foundational due to its ability to capture the integrative propensity of social relations as opposed to non-binding interactions.

The practice that is undertaken in a reflexive way, framing an act commonly assumed to belong with a more abstract level of integration within a more concrete level, is not enacted freely. Such reflexive practice produces contradictions and tensions that must be constantly negotiated to achieve the maintenance of integrative depth within social relations. The contradictions that are produced can be understood through a recognition of the complex relationship between, and composite, of the differing levels of abstracted integration.

[I]t is the change of the form of social interrelationship which is treated as critical. The central underlying argument being that persons constitute their social life and work up their relation to the material world within identifiable forms of social interchange. These forms are set at different levels of constitutive abstraction and as such set qualitative limits to modes of socio-material practice. An emergent form of constitutive abstraction always both exists in intersection with and drives towards abstraction from its predecessor.²²

The contradictions that follow the overlaying and reflexive framing of practices within differing levels of integration can be exemplified through empirical examples. I will make reference, once again, to the work of James in an extended quotation that illustrates such an example through the social formation of the nation.

The nation is at once assumed to be a rich and inalienable relationship of specifiable compatriots; at the same time it connects anonymous strangers most of whom will probably

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Craig Calhoun, 'The Infrastructure of Modernity' in Hans Haferkamp and Neil Smelser (eds), *Social Change and Modernity*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, pp. 209-220.

²² Geoff Sharp, 'Constitutive Abstraction and Social Practice', *Arena*, No. 70, 1985, pp. 69-70.

never even pass each other in the street ... Such contradictions, themselves historically specific, form the background to my attempt to characterize the nation as a changing but distinctive kind of abstract community ... More broadly, it is due to an inattention to the implications of contradictions arising out of the wider, *material* abstractions of social relations. How can the nation be experienced as a concrete, gut-felt relation to common souls and a shared landscape, and nevertheless be based upon abstract connections to largely unknown strangers and 'unvisited places'? As part of the 'nation of strangers' we live its connectedness much more through the abstracting mediations of mass communications and the commodity market than we do at the level of the face-to-face, but we continue to use the metaphors of the face-to-face to explain its cultural power.²³

The increased abstraction of modes of practice that lead to contradictory practices have been demonstrated in Chapter Two with the mode of communication. The abstraction process specifically in communicative techniques has included the oral, the written and the computer-mediated modes of communication. These distinctions are predominantly made in a linear progressive sense. I argue that a linear progressive model of conceptualisation is limiting. This thinking does not allow for the coexistence of practices from both traditional and modern forms to coexist. The mode of communication has seen significant changes from oral, written and computer-mediated modes. The introduction of print also resulted in significant implications for the written mode. This development in the abstraction of communicative techniques has implicated the constitution of community formations. Walter Ong writes of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print as being 'primary orality'. He states, "it is 'primary' by contrast with the 'second orality' of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print."²⁴ The development of the primary and secondary levels of Ong correlate to the levels of abstraction approach. The primary level of orality relates to the face-to-face level of integration while the secondary orality relates to the levels of agency and disembodied extension. In the following passage the different levels of abstraction can be evidenced with the school teacher representing the agency-extended level and the student's immersion in the text representing the disembodied level of abstraction.

Primary orality fosters personality structures that in certain ways are more communal and externalized, and less introspective than those common among literates. Oral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself. A teacher speaking to a class which he feels and which feels itself as a close-

²³ James, *op. cit.*, pp. xi-xii.

²⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Methuen, London, 1982, p. 11.

kmit group, finds that if the class is asked to pick up textbooks and read a given passage, the unity of the group vanishes as each person enters into his or her private lifeworld.²⁵

While Ong continues to emphasise the distinction between traditional communicative modes and modern communicative modes, he does allow for an understanding that can view the traditional within the modern. It is the ability to conceptualise the interpenetrating of the changing modes, rather than a one-way, linear progression model, which will allow the thinking of integrative community in which the layering of changing modes and differing integrative levels coexist.

Through a linear framework there is often an assumption that more abstracted methods of communication dominate the previous more concrete method of communication. In the following quote, Ong argues that the written mode of communication has become such an assumed part of our lives that we no longer view it as a technology. It is the 'interiorising' I wish to draw upon in order to demonstrate assumptions such as these are what hinder our opportunities to think beyond linear models.

Because we have by today so deeply interiorized writing, made it so much a part of ourselves ... we find it difficult to consider writing to be a technology as we commonly assume printing and the computer to be. Yet writing (and especially alphabetic writing) is a technology, calling for the use of tools and other equipment ... Writing is in a way the most drastic of the three technologies. It initiated what print and computers only continue, the reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist ... Such shaping of a tool to oneself, learning a technological skill, is hardly dehumanizing. The use of a technology can enrich the human psyche, enlarge the human spirit, intensify its interior life. Writing is an even more deeply interiorized technology than instrumental musical performance is. But to understand what it is, which means to understand it in relation to its past, to orality, the fact that it is a technology must be honestly faced.²⁶

The oral communicative form in this explanation is subsumed by the written method of communication. Rather, than a layering of the levels, the progressive explanation collapses the levels together, denying the actor any reflexivity in framing actions of differing dominance in its layering. It can be argued that a theoretical explanation of the progression of a society utilising oral communication, to a society using written communication still acknowledges the use and need for the oral form. If this is approached by way of a levels approach in which the practices are layered, the dominance of the more abstracted mode need not be assumed.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

It is possible through an analysis of the mode of communication that accounts for both interactive method and integrative depth to avoid the inadequate linear progressive theoretical model. Eric Michaels has argued throughout his work and in particular in his essay, 'Hollywood Iconography: A Warlpiri Reading' that evidence of the persistence of a unilineal theory is everywhere. In particular he discusses the persistence in relation to the communicative media and Indigenous communities. Michaels argues that the Western world's media development sequence has been naturalised from orality to literacy, print, film, and now electronics.²⁷ His discussion in defending such a statement begins persuasively with the terminology that is used. For example the use of terms in contrasting societies as 'literate' and 'preliterate' as opposed to the take-up of the term 'non-literate' assumes an evolutionary advancement.²⁸ His thesis however, rejects such unilinealism as he documents the Australian Indigenous peoples of Warlpiri's rapid adoption of electronic media: a move from oral directly to electronic society.²⁹ This can be further evidenced through the argument of Marshall McLuhan, that is the ability of oral culture being reconstituted by electric media as discussed in the introduction of this thesis.³⁰ Moreover Michaels' research has refuted the alarmist 'culturecide' argument about the introduction of video and television to Indigenous communities. The watching of videos has shown some analogies with the tradition of story-telling in the Warlpiri community.

For Warlpiri viewers, Hollywood videos do not prove to be complete, authoritative texts. Rather, they are very partial accounts requiring a good deal of interpretive activity on the part of the viewers to supply contents as well as contexts with which to make these stories meaningful. When home video made it possible for Warlpiri to control the place and membership of viewing groups, it became possible to assemble the small, interpretive communities that are associated with other performances in which stories are told and their associated graphics displayed. At this point, video-viewing became a most popular and persuasive camp activity.³¹

According to this research, electronic communication technology provides an attraction to Indigenous communities that is not provided through the reading of literature. The conceptualisation of integrative community through a 'levels' approach allows for moving

²⁷ Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons*, Allen & Unwin, 1994, pp. 81-82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁰ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (2nd edn.), Sphere Books Limited, London, 1967, pp. 369-382.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

between oral and computer-mediated communicative methods while retaining the depth of face-to-face integration.

While I do not hesitate in acknowledging the work of Michaels as a pioneering development in the exploration of Indigenous communicative techniques, it is important to highlight that the adoption of these practices does not occur without contradictions. I would argue that the use of communicative technologies within the Indigenous communities is likely to produce tensions and contradictions that require constant negotiating and continuous mediating. The complexity of the reflexive undertaking of practices constituted at differing levels of abstractions required by Indigenous communities in the studies of Michaels³² has been indicated in the discussion of the contradictions produced by undertaking socio-material practices above. Michaels argues in his work that the Indigenous communities, in watching and producing television programmes, use interpretive codes based on an integrative depth such as kinship obligations. In other words, the 'invention' of the abstracted technology of television by these Indigenous communities is framed by the level of the face-to-face. Michaels provides an example of this in a discussion of video-viewing rituals: "When Hollywood videos fail to say where Rocky's grandmother is, or who's taking care of his sister-in-law, Warlpiri viewers discuss the matter and need to fill in what for them is missing content."³³ Dick Hebdige in his foreword to Michael's book suggests in relation to this quotation:

But when he cites these examples he does so for a reason. Here for instance, it is to point up the different principles on which Warlpiri interpretive codes are posited and the extraordinary intricacy and ubiquitous compulsion of Warlpiri kinship obligations, rather than the naivete or inappropriateness of their response.³⁴

Such framing of everyday practices is a complex procedure and produces contradictions for those undertaking the practices and upon the constitution of the integrative community. The capacity of Indigenous peoples in these situations to maintain or reconstitute an integrative

³² It should be acknowledged that Michaels did not refer to his research as a 'case-study': Refer to .
Dick Hebdige, 'Foreword', in Michaels, *op. cit.*, p. xiii who writes: "What immediately establishes the uniqueness of Michael's work is the way it places the issues raised by the Warlpiri uses of TV technology at the very center of contemporary concerns. Michaels refuses to reduce the analysis of those uses to the status of a "case study," a diminution that would effectively consign the Warlpiri Media Association to just one more poignant footnote in the triumphalist history of capitalist development an/or cultural imperialism."

³³ Michaels, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³⁴ Hebdige, *op. cit.*, pp. xi-xii.

community is one which invokes a constant tension which must be recognised and acknowledged.

Conclusion

A community is a social formation constituted through the practicing of practice. The modes of practice both evolve through the undertaking of the practices and change due to the increasing abstraction of our contemporary world. The everyday practices are determined by the structures of the society, but are also determined through a reflexive undertaking by actors. This reflexivity allows actors to frame the undertaking of everyday practices that carry certain integrative depth with practices commonly assumed to carry a different level of abstraction. Integrative community differs in the richness and the rewards it offers to those who participate in their constitution due to this layering and interpenetrating.

I have argued that those social formations, which offer face-to-face connection as the determining layer on which other levels of integration such as agency-extended and disembodied levels are built, can continue to be rich and complex. The layers may shift and change in their dominance and subordination, but it is possible for a fragile balance to be found between these integrative practices. The linear progression theorisation collapses the levels together and normalises the dominance of the more abstract. This conceptualisation does not allow for the diversity and the difference in everyday practices which integrative community can engender.

The communities which have been popularised as possibilities for ways of living in the abstracted, late-modern world as discussed in Chapter One do not adequately produce a social formation with integrative depth. Both nostalgic and virtual communities are not conceptualised to incorporate changing levels of abstraction. For virtual community the social formation is one which is constructed at the most abstract level of disembodied integration. The nostalgic community is one that is mythologised, with this illusion focusing on the face-to-face level of integration. Neither of these categories allows for the undertaking of practice to occur at various *layered* levels of abstraction. Integrative community is constituted by practices that are reflexively undertaken at changing levels of

integrative depth. In this way it is possible for practices commonly assumed to belong with a traditional social form to be undertaken as a framing for modernised practices. Integrative community therefore offers the potential of maintaining the primacy of face-to-face relations while using modern technologies. Often the layering of practices produces tensions and contradictions that add to the intensity of the overlaying constitution. Integrative community can be explored beginning from the moment of contradiction. It is the moment of contradiction which allows the reflexive practice of framing relatively abstract connections between people within a setting constituted by less abstract practices. This framing constitutes a layering of the levels of integration.

Integrative community has been defined and a theoretical framework has been established to defend this definition throughout the first part of this thesis. To theorise through categorical and modal analysis enables us to track the path of the constitutive practices which shape social formations and our social lives. It is, however, empty if not related back to real-life illustrations. The following chapters of this thesis will explore examples of Indigenous communities within Australia and Mexico which display characteristics or qualities of 'integrative community'. Part Two will address issues of communities communicating with those outside of their immediate social formations with regard to political protest. Part Three will address the impact of changing modes of communication within community formations through examples regarding pedagogical practice.

PART II

COMMUNICATING THE COMMUNITY TO THE OUTSIDE

CHAPTER FOUR

Indigenous Community and the Modern Age Beyond

Under the influence of the general predisposition to immediate remedial action, social movements are taken into consideration solely on account of their capacity (or lack thereof) to modernize institutions or to produce political reform. But this is to forget, or to ignore, that the reduction of contemporary social movements to their political dimensions alone is tantamount to solving the 'symptom', to suppressing the message contained in their specifically communicative character ('symptom' literally means to 'fall together') and simply moving about the problem in the background.

Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes*, 1996

The formation of community is constituted through the actions and practices of its members. Communicative practices and actions are crucial to this constitution. Communication plays an important role as a practice that connects participants within community structures, but is similarly important for the way in which communities create themselves and present themselves to the outside world. One of the ways in which communities communicate to the outside world is through political protest and social movements. This thesis is concerned with the way in which community is constituted and how this constitution may be purposefully structured through practices to produce a community formation with integrative depth. This chapter will demonstrate the way in which acts of protest illustrate communicative practices that can be reflexively practiced and their role in the constitution of integrative community.

The focus in analysis of protest movements is commonly upon its resulting reform, yet the *practice* of protest action has important implications for the originating group. Beyond assessing the outcomes for the group against the goals and demands they set themselves, and besides the determinations and aspirations that may have been focused upon, there can be other resulting effects of social practice. The act of protest is generally

accompanied by campaigns and strategies under which associated practices will have many and varied effects. The action itself will change, constitute and re-constitute the community. While the outcome of social protest action may indeed successfully keep a school from closing, stop a river from being dammed, or stop the culling of an endangered species, there is likely to be additional manifestations. The very process of enacting a protest movement, of practicing practice, can change the way in which a community is constituted. The chapters in this part of the thesis will consider such implications.

The role of communicative practice is critical in social movements due to the necessity of communicating the message of those protesting. Protest is an act that communicates a demand or desire from a group or from a community, to an outside agitator. The community formation through its members' contact with others outside may have implications beyond any assumed and commonsensical ones. Rather than focusing solely on the demands and results of protest movements, as indicated above, the way in which the movement is enacted through its communication should be addressed. These communicative practices, *in themselves*, can produce social formations and ways of being that those protesting may desire. The changes in communicative techniques are therefore crucial for an analysis of social protest and the resulting community formations. The increasing abstraction in the everyday methods of communicative practice does not necessarily correlate with its integrative depth. It is possible to illustrate through the act of protest the reflexive framing of more abstract methods of communication within less abstract modes of integration.

It is the intention of this chapter to apply the theoretical framework set out in Part One: that is, to critique a commonsense assumption that the adoption of more extended modes of communication would necessarily dominate prior modes, and community formations would be completely transformed by more abstract practices. This commonsense assumption is one based on a linear progressive theory. Such a model assumes that the extension from the face-to-face to agency-extension or disembodied extension would produce an inescapable path of progression where the face-to-face becomes completely dominated. It will be demonstrated that such an outcome does not necessarily follow. It is possible by a reflective undertaking of practices, in this case the practice of communication, to retain the principles and intensity of the integrative nature of the face-to-face while

layering the extended modes upon each other. This argument will be illustrated through the communicative practices used to enact protest movements.

The intention of the case-studies in the following two chapters is to explore the implications such outward-focused communication has on community formations and structures. These case-studies provide two different examples of levels of integration. The first, in the case of the Indigenous peoples of Australia exemplifies an act of protest undertaken within the context of institutions of agency-extension, namely, the state and empire. The example from Mexico illustrates an emphasis on techniques of disembodied communicative action. Both of these modes of integration are more abstract than the more concrete level of the face-to-face mode of integration. The cases highlight the level of reflexivity in the undertaking of these more abstract modes of integration while framing them within the less abstract mode. In both cases the primary level of integrative practice, the face-to-face, continues to play a constitutive role in the formation of the community. The momentary practice of the more abstract mode of integration does not supercede the previous mode and render it redundant. Rather, the less abstract mode of the face-to-face integrative level continues to be an important and determining level in the social practice of integrative community.

The Act of Protest

The argument of this thesis is to demonstrate the capacity of modern and traditional practices to coexist in such a way as to produce a social formation that offers integrative depth. This part of the thesis will be exploring examples of communicative practice used in protest movements. In order to proceed with an analysis of the implications of protest movements upon community constitution, it begins by briefly discussing some of the methods of defining social movements.

Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison have delineated three major theoretical approaches to social movements. The first of these can be described as the collective-behaviour approach, the second as resource mobilisation and the third quite recent school of

thought has been labeled as the 'new social movements' approach.¹ The collective behaviourists focused primarily on why individuals come together forming groups in order to act collectively. It was felt, however, that the researchers working within this field remained "locked in an individual-oriented social psychological problematic on the one side, and into an abstract structural-functionalist grand theory on the other."² The resource-mobilisation approach differed in their concern for the organisation rather than the individual, and focused on how a group acts in order to achieve their goals. "Here the prime research question is not who the actors are or what motivates them, or what wider historical or structural meaning a particular movement may have, but rather why some movements are more successful than others."³ Finally, the third major approach has been that of the 'new social movements'. This approach sees social movements more as "transforming agents of political life".⁴ Habermas states:

[New conflicts] no longer arise in the areas of material reproduction; they are no longer channeled through parties and organisations; and they can no longer be alleviated by compensations that conform to the system. Rather, the new conflicts arise in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation. They are manifested in sub-institutional, extra-parliamentary forms of protest ... In short, the new conflicts are not sparked by problems of distribution, but concern the *grammar of forms of life*.⁵

The 'new social movements' approach tends to place the movements into a historical context and broadens their conceptualisation. This broadening allows for recognition of the impact of the protests' methods, particularly the communicative methods, upon social formation.

In order to challenge our thinking of protest movements beyond assessing the results of protest we need to move beyond 'collective behaviour' and 'resource mobilisation' approaches. However, I would argue that it is still common for social movements to be considered within the terms of 'resource mobilisation'. This is apparent in the emphasis placed on the ability of political protest-groups to seize state power. Much of the theoretical analysis of peasant and guerilla struggles places an emphasis on the limited possibility of movements seizing power. The Zapatista struggle is one which is forcing a change in this thinking, and in this way challenges our thinking of political protest. Instead

¹ Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 10-44.

² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

of wanting to seize state power, the Zapatistas have focused upon achieving a different system of power relations across the international arena. They believe they are able to achieve this through the mobilisation of the civil society. For this reason the Zapatistas have engaged the imagination of many people across the globe. Even though there has been an emphasis on the military strength and an assumption that taking control of state power is prominent in guerilla movements, it has still been recognised that there is a need to obtain wider support beyond military strength.

Not all guerrilla movements succeed in moving beyond their modest beginnings; when they do so, peasant support is the premium mobile in the regions where they operate. Yet peasant support is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for ultimate success; most movements that have garnered peasant support have failed. Those that seize power must meet two other conditions: they must be militarily strong enough to confront the government armed forces; and they must strip the incumbent government of moral authority and cloak their own movement with that aura, shifting the loyalties of the nonpeasant population to their movement.⁶

It is necessary then to consider how such support may be mobilised. One of the ways in which abstracted communicative techniques are impacting upon protest movements is through the use of the internet. The internet has the capacity to carry extensive global networks of numerous affiliations and this has been an area which has been adopted by solidarity groups in what could be referred to as cyber-solidarity networking.

New technologies and the new means of communication have provided opposition groups as well as the state with an intermediate space and a new means of disseminating information in a "virtual space" beyond their limited conceptual and physical spaces. But more for the opposition than for the state, the Internet and other media, such as fax machines, cellular phones, satellite dishes, and cassette tapes, provide a new space for airing grievances with minimal risk.⁷

This area of abstract communicative technologies and the impact upon communities in relation to protest will be critically examined in Chapter Six through the study of the Zapatistas of Mexico. It is the challenges of changing protest and changing method which encourage us to rethink social movements beyond how or why they exist, and to interpret what the nature of the action can mean to the forms and ways in which the lives of those participating are constructed. This can be achieved through emphasising the communicative mode of practice within social movements.

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, 'New Social Movements', *Telos*, Vol. 49, Fall, 1981, p. 34.

⁶ Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, 'Comparative Sociology of Guerrilla Movements', in S. Eckstein (ed.), *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Protest Movements*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, p. 143.

⁷ Mamoun Fandy, 'CyberResistance: Saudi Opposition Between Globalization and Localization', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1999, p. 127.

Beyond an analysis of the collective forms of social movements, the achievement of goals, the resources that are utilised, and so on, it is possible to think of social movements in terms of the action that is practiced and what this may mean for community formations. The practice undertaken in the process of social movements can be explored by considering not only what the struggle may be against, but also, by what the action may produce through the constitutive practice that is carried out. Anthropologist June Nash writes:

A movement is not only the rejection of a domination; it is also the affirmation of a positive principle and of values from which the world can be recreated. Those who see only the positive side are submerged in utopia or reformism, both of which are a constant threat to ecologists. But those who reduce the action to the struggle against a domination condemn themselves to creating a militant organisation and handing power to a praetorian guard or a militarised party.⁸

It is at this point that I wish to indicate the benefit of the reflexive elaboration of Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* and this notion of reflexivity as discussed in Chapter Three, and the advantage of the 'new social movements' approach. It is the various tenets of the 'new social movements' approach that allows us points of access to consider the reflexive potential in the constitution of community of social movements. Jan Pakulski argues that the recent school of thought allows us to consider the similarities between different movements in their self-reflexive attempts to resist institutional intervention in their everyday lives.

'New' social movements are both symptoms of, and responses to these crises. Despite their apparent heterogeneity, they display some common features: a self-reflexive nature, anti-statism, scepticism towards comprehensive ideological blueprints, self-limitation, and reformist orientations. They resist the (increasingly futile) expansion of political administrative interventions in everyday life or, in Habermas' words, they attempt to arrest the 'colonisation' of life worlds by 'formal, organised spheres of action'.⁹

This self-reflexive nature is an important concept in the impact of protest action upon the constitution of community, both historically and in contemporary times. The self-reflexivity discussed here can be illustrated through the reflexive undertaking of increasingly abstracted communicative practices evident through changing methods of practicing protest.

⁸ Alain Touraine, Zsuzsa Hegedus, François Dubet and Michel Wieviorka, *Anti-Nuclear Protest: The Opposition to Nuclear Energy in France*, P. Fawcett (trans.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p. 91.

⁹ Jan Pakulski, *Social Movements: The Politics of Moral Protest*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, p. 26.

One of the ways in which the nature of self-reflexivity has been made possible is through the changing mode of communication. Social movements have adapted new modes of communication in such resourceful and reflexive ways in order to enhance their achievement of goals. Alberto Melucci has been a significant theorist in considering communication and its implications on the field of social movements in the contemporary era in his book, *Challenging Codes*.

We are witnessing, with mixed feelings of amazement and fear, the impressive development of communication technologies, the creation of a global media system, the disappearance of historical political cleavages, the collision of cultural differences within national societies and at the world scale ... Social movements too seem to shift their focus from class, race, and other more traditional political issues towards the cultural ground. In the last thirty years emerging social conflicts in complex societies have not expressed themselves through political action, but rather have raised cultural challenges to the dominant language, to the codes that organize information and shape social practices.¹⁰

In considering the reflexivity of social movements or acts of protest, it is possible to think of such practices as a work. This will remind us of the way in which integrative community was argued to be an outcome of ongoing work in Chapter One. The point was made in response to Nancy's idea that (inoperative) community could not be an object of practiced work. In the discussion it was proposed that the theory of Nancy, despite itself took on more of the mythical sense of the nostalgic community in comparison to the integrative community. It was suggested that an integrative community does require, and inspire, work. Alain Touraine, *et. al.*, in the book *Anti-nuclear Protest*, which documents the events surrounding the protest action in opposition to nuclear energy in France, comments on the community work of protest action.

There could be no political action without organisation, but it deteriorates rapidly if it is not supported by a community movement in which we can actually live, in resistance and fraternity, our hope for a transformed world. At a single stroke, the defence of the community and the counter-project for society had been linked through a specifically social will to struggle.¹¹

It is the work of everyday practices – with or without an implicit intention to create community – which through its *habitus* constitutes community. And, it is the practice of the communicative act of protest, that is an example of the work of everyday practice that creates community.

¹⁰ Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 8.

¹¹ Touraine, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 85-86.

Ritualising Rebellion and the Place of Land

The everyday practices that are constitutive of community can be exemplified through the act of protest. This can be illustrated by the way rebellion is ritualised. Social movements or acts of protest may be considered from the perspective of its reason for existence or its resourcefulness and ability to achieve its desired outcomes, or it may be studied from the perspective of the commonalities of the individual participants. However, through an alternative analysis it is possible to recognise the implications of these movements and actions on the constitution of social formations. It is the conditions such a movement creates through the *practice* of these practices that is a focus that allows us to explore its constitutive nature.

In order to establish the importance of the practice of protest as constitutive, it is beneficial to return to Nash who has conducted considerable research of social movements, especially in Latin America. She contends that the practice of protest is one that is often ritualised. The ritualisation of rebellion is an example of the processes of resistance that should be explored in order to discover the impact of protest practice on the everyday lives and the consequent constitution of community.

Primordial beliefs and rituals provide deep roots for people's sense of their identity. Surviving from precolonial periods, they generate a sense of self that rejects subordination and repression. The cultural roots of resistance to alien control can generate social movements that restructure the society, influencing the choice of timing for political acts of protest as well as the place and form in which rebellion arises.¹²

Nash gives an account of such ritualising of resistance in the depiction of the Bolivian tin miners in the 1960s.

Management rejection of the *ch'alla* reveals the complete transformation of the ritual from one in which worker-management solidarity was reinforced to one in which the ritual becomes the basis for communication of rebellion.¹³

She continues:

The power of these preconquest beliefs reinforced by ritual observances lies in their stimulus to collective identity and the sense of when that has been violated. The ritual calendar becomes a schedule for acts of protest that have frequently upset governments and disturbs a given covenant in industry. These events and the political repercussions that follow become

¹² June Nash, 'Cultural Resistance and Class Consciousness', in S. Eckstein (ed.), *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Protest Movements*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, p. 182.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

part of the collective memory of people as they draw upon their indigenous traditions to resist exploitation.¹⁴

A ritualisation that is based upon convention and habit often suggests a static character. Rather, I would argue that ritualised practice *develops* through its repetition, meaning and identity, and therefore indicates the dynamic and evolving character of practice.

In addition to understanding protest action as an act that is a ritualised practice and constitutive of community formation, it is also possible to understand the goals or desires of such action as fundamental to the way in which the meaning of community is understood. Ritual, experienced through everyday practices, is a significant constitutive characteristic of traditional forms. An area of meaning, which can be analysed in this way, is that of the attachment to place. This is to return to the significance of *place* as previously discussed and recognise the connections this has with protest movements. In Chapter One it was argued that an attachment to place, even when one is physically removed from it, is significant to the depth and meaning of integrative community. The relevance of land to the overall argument of this thesis resides in the criticism of the common assumption that an attachment to land must be physically continuous. The assumption of physical continuance presupposes the acceptance of a model of linear progression. This theory suggests that the existence of a pre-modern social form will progress to a modern form when it comes into contact with modern practices and technologies. Land is central to this as it is assumed that when a community has left its original and determining *place*, it has embarked upon its inevitable path of progression, leaving behind its tribal or traditional 'savagery'. Land is also relevant to a linear progressive theory, which does not allow for a coexistence of social forms, due to its ability to act as an enclosure. Communities undertaking traditional practices can be relegated through political policies and racial attitudes to enclosed areas where such behaviour is deemed acceptable, rather than within the wider modern society. It is for these reasons that the analysis of the prominence of land in political protest movements is particularly significant.

The issue of claims for land rights must be analysed beyond a simple assumption that the claim is for control over a piece of land. It is the context in which the land is a central tenet of the community that is important. Land should be considered beyond its

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

materiality, as more than a piece of property that is lived upon and from which produce is reaped. The land as a *place* of significance affects practices and meanings and in this way impacts upon the constitution of community formations and consequent understandings. This contextualising brings us closer to the understanding of land as more than functional to considering land in a possibly spiritual context. Such contextualisation is not possible without retaining the concreteness of the integrative level of the face-to-face. A contextualisation of land that is able to take up a spiritual context, moving beyond a functional relationship is only possible when a concrete connection is a part of the practices which are undertaken upon, or away from, that land. The place of land within social movements must therefore be considered beyond simply a struggle for a particular piece of material property. Many struggles include the concept of land and land rights as symbolic for the meanings of the practices that they undertake. The emphasis placed on land represents the need for an attachment to a particular place that carries the constitutive and integrative character of the practices that constitute integrative community.

The importance of land as a defining constituent of community formation, and the prevalence of land as a point of struggle is common to the case studies in the following two chapters. The case studies of Australia and Mexico describe protest that has land as an important tenet. The Zapatista rebellion calls for control over land due to the revocation of a section of the Mexican Constitution that allowed for communal ownership and communal production systems. It is interesting then to recall the issue of land in the constitution of community that was explored in Chapter One. Land can be considered as a primary determinant in community constitution, however, this can be reductive. It was established that an attachment to land is necessary for the constitution of integrative community yet it must be understood as an attachment that can be physically broken. It is possible for the meanings of the particular land to be taken away with a community, within their practices and their understandings, even though they may be physically removed from their original, determinative *place*.

Through both an exploration of the practice of protest, through its ritualisation and the common call of protest for land, it is possible to see the implications of protest movements upon the constitution of community. In further establishing these implications of protest it is necessary to analyse the protest through its dominant or intersecting

communicative modes. If the communicative technologies that are in use in the protest movements exist in layers of differently abstracted practices rather than collapsing into a single plane as anticipated by a linear progression theoretical position, it is possible, I suggest, to recognise the formation of integrative community.

Communicating Beyond the Face-to-face

The practice of protest action in everyday, ritualised modes of practice impacts directly upon the lives of those undertaking such acts but also constitutes the structures which assist in determining our ontologies. The primary mode of practice in the act of protest is that of the mode of communication. It is the communicative mode, both between participants of the movements, and more obviously, from the movement to the outside world, that is enacted in order to achieve recognition, support and solidarity for the demands of the movement. The practices of communication, as previously established, have both constitutive and integrative character. The integrative mode of the communicative act of protest will be analysed through an application of the categorical levels used throughout this thesis: the level of the face-to-face, the agency-extended level, and the disembodied level. The 'levels' approach will demonstrate the capacity for differing methods of communication to be framed within differing levels of abstraction. Through this theoretical framework it is possible to conceive of the coexistence of practices from both traditional and modern social forms. Such an analysis will lead us to argue that the integrative depth found within the formation of integrative community results from, among other practices, the reflexive practice of the communication of protest movements.

It is possible to illustrate characteristics of integrative community through practices undertaken within various Indigenous communities. The coexistence of practices from both traditional and modern forms indicative of integrative community can be recognised within these examples. It is a common assumption that the introduction of the project of modernity, which carried with it the discourse of science and individualism, impacted with devastating finality upon the prior way of being. In many social formations this resulted in a shift in the ordering of sociality from a traditional form to a modern form. The construction of the modern world view was one that was based upon a temporal-historical or linear

evolutionary ordering rather than the traditional spatial or synchronic ordering.¹⁵ The modernising construction was also one that privileged the individual. This had significant implications for communally based cultural ways of being such as those practiced by Indigenous peoples in Australia. This individualising process can be illustrated by the changing emphasis placed on individual sin rather than communal shame. The individualising process practiced upon Indigenous peoples by missionaries has been described by Bain Attwood in *The Making of the Aborigines*.

Outside this domain of public buildings, the village green was, more than anywhere else in this structured landscape, a place where the empty spaces between the Aborigines' cottages had as much meaning as the physical constructions themselves, both speaking clearly of the missionaries' attempt to structure Aborigines as *individuals* and to redefine their notions of social space. The missionaries sought to make each an integrated centre of consciousness, distinct from the natural world and other Aborigines; they were to become accustomed to choice and the achievement of status, rather than being bound by the obligations of a kin-based society which ascribed status; the individual was to replace the group as the crucial moral or ethical unit, a strong sense of sin and responsibility for their own salvation replacing notions of shame.¹⁶

Barry Morris in *Domesticating Resistance* argues that the perpetuation of shaming was engendered through a desire for social homogeneity achieved through the separation of Indigenous peoples through institutionalisation which was ironically intended to control such distinctive practices.¹⁷ These constructions of linear evolution and practices such as individual sin were used to construct the belief that Indigenous peoples were a race 'frozen in time'.¹⁸ This belief however did not take into account the resistance, the subversion and the continuation of traditional practices which have persisted throughout this time of attempted domination and are proof that the traditional modes of practice are able to coexist with modern, technologically advanced practices.

The emphasis on orality in traditional communicative practices continues to be a foundational practice to many Indigenous cultures in the modern era. This orality functions importantly as a practice which produces an act of binding and engaging, but also as an act of obligating through the social structures of the communities. The face-to-face character of orality is a significant and often dominating layer that has a communal, integrative effect. This is not to suggest there is an inability to use other forms of communicative technology

¹⁵ Barry Morris, *Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Berg, Oxford, 1989, p. 98.

¹⁶ Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1989, pp. 18-19.

¹⁷ Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

such as written or computer-mediated forms. But where these alternative modes of communication are used it is possible to observe their use as framed by the dominance of the more concrete mode of integration.

Oral traditions can be illustrated through the example of an important aspect of orality: story-telling. Linda Tuhiwai Smith has written an important book regarding the history and practice of research and Indigenous peoples, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*. She writes of the significance of story-telling due to its focus on dialogue and conversation and for its ability to tell about cultures. She states that these "approaches fit well with the oral traditions which are still a reality in day-to-day indigenous lives."¹⁹ The ability of story-tellers to be fluid and adaptable, and to change to different social situations and contexts, is significant in an oral culture. Margaret Clunies Ross establishes the variability and contextuality of performance modes in comparison to the relative fixity of the written text:

On any specific performance occasion in a non-literate culture the nature of the resultant performance is likely to be determined by a series of choices. These choices are imposed by the nature of the performance occasion itself on the communicative structures of the various media out of which the performance may be composed. The choice of a particular form for a particular occasion may be relatively straightforward or it may involve multiple choices of formal variants dependent on highly complex socio-cultural determinants ... This sensitivity to context is fundamental in determining a number of other characteristics of formal performance in non-literate societies which set them apart from forms encoded in a written tradition. The technology of writing enables a text to have an existence on its own, removed both as an artefact and as a conceptual entity from its performance contexts.²⁰

It is for this reason that it has been argued that Indigenous peoples may feel uncomfortable with printed material, preferring the face-to-face contact and the associated sociality and liveliness in keeping oral cultures alive.²¹

While it is argued that some Indigenous communities have an oral tradition and they do not use writing in a strict sense, it must also be recognised that there is a non-verbal sign system. Clunies Ross states:

there is abundant evidence from all over Australia and from the period of first settlement by Europeans to the present that they developed other complex systems of communication by

¹⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books Ltd, London, 1999, pp. 144-145.

²⁰ Margaret Clunies Ross, 'Modes of Formal Performance in Societies Without Writing: The Case of Aboriginal Australia', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, No. 1, 1983, pp. 20-21.

²¹ Michael Rose (ed.), *For The Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p. xxii.

means of visually perceived standardised symbols in a variety of media: sign languages using various body parts, message sticks, sand pictures, ground sculptures, paintings on rock, bark or earth.²²

Greg Gardiner also acknowledges the employment of inscription devices.

In the absence of writing an oral culture does not think *in* writing; that is, it sees language as an aural event connected to a speaker, not a visual event connected to a page. This has vast implications for the production and consumption of culture, and for the means whereby important social messages are to be transmitted and remembered. This is not to suggest that oral cultures are devoid of methods of inscription. Many traditional cultures employ a wide range of inscription devices and physical materials to preserve and communicate important aspects of social, religious and cultural life.²³ This non-verbal system is one that differs however from the written mode of communication that visualises representations for the articulation of language sound systems.²⁴ Rather than carry the non-variability of text it continues to allow for the inexhaustible form of an oral tradition.

The continuing importance of oral traditions is evidenced in contemporary society. Tuhiwai Smith comments on the implication of oral traditions in settings that have not historically been sensitive to such differences.

In addition to [this] literature, however, are the stories, values, practices and ways of knowing which continue to inform indigenous pedagogies. In international meetings and networks of indigenous peoples, oracy, debate, formal speech making, structured silences and other conventions which shape oral traditions remain a most important way of developing trust, sharing information, strategies, advice, contacts and ideas. In Maori language there is the expression *Kanohi kitea* or the 'seen face', which conveys the sense that being seen by the people – showing your face, turning up at important cultural events – cements your membership within a community in an ongoing way and is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained.²⁵

The 'ability' of a culture to adopt practices such as writing and speaking a dominant language is assumed to change, if not to civilise, that culture. Diana Eades writes of the possibility of continuing to differentiate between Indigenous cultures and European cultures through an analysis of the ways of speaking. Indigenous cultures use language to sustain their priority on 'developing, maintaining and strengthening social relationships'.²⁶ They do this through kinship terms of address and the conversational avoidance of certain relatives. Eades also recognises the ability of speakers to use language in particular ways that illuminate distinguishing social practices in relation to making and refusing requests,

²² Clunies Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²³ Greg Gardiner, 'Orality, Myth and Performance in Traditional Indigenous Cultures', *Koorie Research Centre Discussion Paper*, No. 4, 1996, pp. 3-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁵ Tuhiwai Smith, *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

seeking and giving information, and seeking and giving reasons for actions.²⁷ This particularising language-use enables Indigenous communities to adopt new technologies while still retaining practices that distinguish their communities as maintaining integrative depth.

In an analysis of the mode of communication used to enact protest it is important to focus upon the outward-bound communication. Communicating to world outside of the community formation to disseminate information and garner support is an imperative element of social protest.

In contemporary systems, signs become interchangeable and power operates through the languages and codes which organize the flow of information. Collective action, by the sheer fact of its existence, represents in its very form and models of organization a message broadcast to the rest of society. Instrumental objectives are still pursued, but they become more precise and particular in their scope and replaceable. Action does still have effects on institutions, by modernizing their culture and organization, and by selecting new elites for them. At the same time, however, it raises issues that are not addressed by the framework of instrumental rationality. This kind of rationality is devoted to the effective implementation of whatever has been decided by anonymous and impersonal powers operating through the apparent neutrality of technical expertise.²⁸

It is important, however, not to consider the method of communicating to the outside world without also considering the level of integration also occurring. It is this consideration which allows us to recognise more abstract modes of communication being practiced through the framing of differing levels of integration. The Indigenous peoples undertook their campaigns through focusing on organisational structures, such as government, bureaucracies, and interestingly directly to the King or Queen of England. The study of the Indigenous Mayans of Chiapas, Mexico, is an exploration of a group who has undertaken their protest action with particular emphasis on computer-mediated communication. It has been political struggle that has garnered a significant international solidarity movement through its use of the internet to disseminate information. It has also been acclaimed as the first 'postmodern' rebellion, gaining attention for its cyber-solidarity networks and attributed with the undertaking of a 'net-war'. This disembodied level of communicative integration has received notable attention while the face-to-face level of integration that has framed the other levels, has received little.

²⁶ Diana Eades, 'They Don't Speak an Aboriginal Language, or Do They?' in I. Keen (ed.) *Being Black: Aboriginal Cultures In 'Settled' Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, pp. 101-113.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Melucci, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

Constituting Community in the Face of the 'Other'

By undertaking an analysis based on a levels argument we are able to rethink the impact of protest movements, such as the Mexican and Australian examples which will be explored in the following chapters, upon the constitution of community. Within this chapter, I have highlighted the contextualising of protest action as a constitutive practice in everyday life, and recognised the prevalence of land within protest movements and its importance as a constituent of community. The significance of communication to protest movements has also been established. It is also necessary to consider the impact of the reflexive campaigning of the aggrieved to the outside world, on the constitution of community. This consideration acknowledges the implications of communicating to an unknown and unseen public or audience.

Protest is the communication of a grievance to an audience in which it is believed there may be support for the required change.

When institutions bring people together in similarly structured situations, individuals are likely to feel that their private grievances are collectively shared and collectively soluble. Collective defiance is a particularly likely response to shared grievances if rituals and "popular" beliefs reinforce a culture of resistance. Under such circumstances, disgruntled persons are likely to turn to collective, rather than individual, adaptive strategies; this is particularly so when – as detailed below – macro political conditions are also conducive.²⁹

Organised protest movements are necessarily reflexive in nature. This impact upon the community is significant to the overall thesis in this dissertation. The organisation and campaigning involved in acts of protest, in which the communication aspect is critical, has an indisputable impact upon the way in which the community presents itself. The reflexive act of protest is therefore a significant impetus to the constitution of the community formation. It should be recalled from Chapter Three, however, that there are levels of intensity within reflexive practice.

The reflexivity of protest action goes beyond the planning, strategies and campaigns. While the discussion and theorising may incorporate the consideration of the current situation, what the aggrieved groups may be demanding, and a vision of what such

²⁹ Susan Eckstein, 'Power and Popular Protest in Latin America', in Eckstein (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 33.

demands may mean to them, there is another dimension of reflexivity that is important. This is the reflexive nature of how the community wishes to present itself to best achieve their desired outcomes. While the protesting communities may undertake certain constitutive practices there can be conscious reflexivity in the invention and representation of the community in order to situate themselves appropriately to best achieve their goals.

Resistance may take many forms, but it is always strengthened by the self-determination of a people who have not yet lost their self-identity. Rituals and belief combine to reinforce the myths that encompass their history, and the celebrations of Carnival, the *ch'alla*, and the earth-warming ceremonials prepare the people for a time when they can shape their own destiny. Sectarian political leaders and orthodox religious leaders usually reject ritual protest as deviance. However, if one thinks of it as a rehearsal that keeps alive the sentiment of rebellion until a historically appropriate moment, it may reinforce political movements.³⁰

The reflexive nature of protest can therefore provide an avenue of understanding of how the representation of community enables the possibility of the layering of integrative modes. Melucci discusses the identity formation of collective actors.

Contemporary movements maintain a degree of separation from the dominant cultural codes through the constitution and operation of organizational forms which prefigure the goals they pursue, and through their activity of visibly signalling the societal problems addressed by it. Hence derives the prophetic character of these forms of collective action, and hence arises their character as a challenge. The greater the emphasis on challenge and the more prominent such refiguration, the lesser the risk that organizational forms will be assimilated or co-opted.³¹

This is not to suggest that such reflexivity is an invention that does not hold true to the community. I argue that, rather than it being an invention that does not translate to the community that is protesting, it is quite possibly the opposite. Eyerman and Jamison's approach emphasises the dimension of consciousness in the practice of protest action.

On the one hand, we view social movements as processes in formation. We study them as forms of activity by which individuals create new kinds of social identities. All social life can be seen as a combination of action and construction, forms of practical activity that are informed by some underlying project. Most often implicitly and even unconsciously, social action is conditioned by the actors' own "frames of reference" in constant interaction with the social environment or context. Action is neither predetermined nor completely self-willed; its meaning is derived from the context in which it is carried out and the understanding that actors bring to it and/or derive from it. By using the term cognitive praxis, we want to emphasize the creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action, individual and collective.³²

³⁰ Nash, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202.

³¹ Melucci, *op. cit.*, pp. 328-329.

³² Eyerman and Jamison, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

It is my contention that this reflexivity is a central tenet of the constitution of community. By consciously assessing the nature of the community in which its members live, it is possible to establish a richness and depth that may escape a community that does not act in a reflexive manner.

In both the Australian and Mexican examples it is possible to see the positioning of community as a central component of the protest struggles. In Mexico, the community is presented in opposition to the neo-liberal practices and programs of globalisation, such as the austerity programs undertaken by the Mexican Government. In Australia, Indigenous communities have been represented in their difference to the white settler communities to emphasise the importance of collectivism and attachment to the land. This representation has been made in order to achieve self-determination rather than be assimilated into the dominant community structures.

Conclusion

Protest action can be practiced at differing integrative levels. It is possible to undertake protest at the level of the face-to-face, the agency-extended and at the level of the disembodied. These levels will, at differing times, be subordinate and at other times they may dominate. There will be times when action will be abstracted far from the groundedness of the face-to-face, as in the case of computer-mediated cyber-solidarity networks. But it is possible under certain conditions for this practice to be undertaken within the framework of the face-to-face. This is an alternative to the collapsing of such modes of practice into each other to assume the primacy of the most advanced modes through the absorption of the previous modes of practice. The use of disembodied or agency-extended modes of interaction without the possible framing of the face-to-face undermines the constitution of integrative community. It has the potential to lead to communities without substance and without the kinds of engaged social relations which include necessary components of long-term loyalty, obligation and trust. Modes of practice such as reciprocity, knowledge and production could all occur without any basis of social obligations. Ideas of reciprocity could be assumed to be enacted through abstracted monetary exchanges, knowledge through empiricism will be devoured by techno-science,

and production may no longer be concerned with labour-use but rather with technology that does not require people.

Practicing protest action within a framework of layered levels of integration requires reflexivity. The examples following in Chapters Five and Six will illustrate reflexive framing at differing levels of intensity. The case-studies will demonstrate the coexistence of tribal, traditional and modern practices within community formations, achieved through the reflexive framing of levels of integration. It is this rethinking of community constitution which will allow for integrative community to exist in a society where abstracted practices are increasingly dominating. The framework of this assertion was argued in Part One through an exploration of the constitutive and integrative character of practice and the capacity for constitutive practices to be reflexively undertaken. The intention of Parts Two and Three is to now take this theoretical abstraction and demonstrate and verify the thesis through empirical examples.

CHAPTER FIVE

Australia: Letters to the King

This ability to cross cultures, to use what is valuable in the new technologies, is consistent with the adaptability that Aboriginal people have demonstrated since colonisation. In this context, it is important to note that the issue of cultural survival is not perhaps about choosing between staying with one's own past or embracing someone else's future. It is rather about having the opportunity to both retain a cultural heritage and seek new modes and forms for its communication and expression.

Greg Gardiner, *Orality, Myth and Performance in Traditional Indigenous Cultures*, 1996

The cultural practices of the Indigenous peoples of Australia have been threatened since the arrival of the colonisers more than 200 years ago. There has been a continuous struggle, manifested in numerous political protests which have been played out in varying degrees and through as many methods. Indigenous communities of Australia have historically fought for recognition of their distinctive cultural practices and continue to struggle for such recognition today. This is carried out in the face of a dominating world view that has perceived traditional Indigenous cultural practices as belonging to a bygone era. The modern emphasis on progress and modernisation relegates traditional practices, which are often dependent upon a communal social form, as primitive. This modern emphasis identifies these traditional forms of social order as primordial and in wait of the hand of progress. However, rather than be dominated by modern practices, Indigenous peoples of Australia have displayed a capacity to adapt their traditional cultural practices to changed circumstances. This adoption of technologies has occurred while still retaining the practices and significance of meaning of traditional ways of being. The political protest that has been evidenced throughout the past 200 years will be used to demonstrate the continuation of traditional ways of being, while adapting to and negotiating changing circumstances and modern change, including enforced policies of modernisation.

The process of colonising Australia embodied much of the modernisation 'project'. This project, emerging out of the Enlightenment period, was fundamental to the way in which the Australian government enacted its colonising policies. Orthodox modernism was premised on the belief that the world should embrace change and proceed by way of a linear path of progression. This reconstruction of the world view could be achieved through rational, scientific thought, and with particular emphasis on technology but most importantly through the individualisation of society. This had major implications for changes in dominant ontologies and modes of practice and, by implication, upon the tribal and traditional social forms connecting Indigenous peoples of Australia. The major doctrine of the modernisation project in relation to Indigenous peoples was to *civilise the natives* in order to enlist them into the broader, white community. This project focused particularly on enlightening them with religion and on educating them in speaking and writing the English language.¹

The outcome of the attempt to enforce a written mode of communication in the language of the coloniser upon an oral culture will be taken up in this chapter. The exploration will be undertaken through an analysis of a number of the political protest campaigns that were conducted by Indigenous peoples throughout Australia over many years. The campaigns that will be addressed in this chapter consist of the writing of letters, petitions and newspapers. I will argue that Indigenous peoples of Australia adopted the written form of communication in such a way as to retain the primacy of their oral traditions. Writing was not adopted as a dominant communicative technology but rather as a tool to achieve their political goals. The written form of communication was framed in such a way as to strengthen the face-to-face nature of the Indigenous community rather than to accept the 'progressive' intention of modernism. In the contradictory intersection of the oral and written modes there was a containment of the written mode to particular forms of activity, in this case that of the political. More abstract layers of interchange momentarily came to overlay face-to-face relations, but the preservation of the more concrete mode, the face-to-face, exemplifies the reflexivity of the practice undertaken. In addition, it is my intention to analyse these claims for land in relation to the argument regarding an attachment to *place* that has been made throughout this thesis. That is, I will continue to

¹ For a detailed analysis of the project of 'civilising the natives' see the work of Bain Attwood in *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1989, pp. 1-31.

work through the assumption that land can remain significant beyond a continual physical attachment through the carrying of meanings and practices derived from that attachment.

The following discussion explores three letter-writing campaigns by Indigenous activists: Walter George Arthur of the Ben Lomond tribe, William Cooper of the Yorta-Yorta peoples, and Dexter Daniels of Roper River and Vincent Lingiari of the Gurindji peoples. These examples are intended to illustrate the capacity of people, whose primary way of knowing and living is based on an oral tradition, to momentarily step outside of this to extend their mode of communication to include the written form. It is a capacity based upon layering different kinds of practices upon each other – both reflexively to achieve recognition, rights and resources, and paradoxically in order to retain the integrative depth of the oral-based practices and ways of living. These examples have deliberately been chosen to show the Indigenous use of an agent, often a white agent. They were used as mediators, agents able to adopt the formalised and systematised practices helpful to achieving the goals for which the Indigenous peoples were striving. The letters, newsletters, chronicles, or petitions all self-consciously document the dispossession and mistreatment that the Indigenous peoples had suffered. The written form, often through the extension of an agent, was adopted with the intention of rightfully reclaiming and retaining what had been taken from them. Writing was not simply adopted, as was the intention of projects of assimilation, with the intention of becoming 'civilised'.

Walter George Arthur and the *Flinders Island Chronicle*

The history of Van Dieman's Land is one that has been recently reinterpreted to address the inaccuracies that have persisted for many years. Such reinterpretations address the violence and massacres that saw the devastation of Indigenous nations in Tasmania. However, it has also highlighted the protest that was undertaken by Indigenous peoples in the face of such violent destruction, protest which defies so much of the historical writing which documents the supposed passivity of the Indigenous peoples of the area. This agency shown by Indigenous peoples includes the activities of a number of Indigenous men and women located on Flinders Island. One of the prominent figures in the history of Flinders Island is Walter George Arthur. He was an active campaigner for the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Van Dieman's Land and expressed this through the writing of letters,

newspapers and an important petition to the Queen in 1847. The questions of the level of influence by non-Indigenous people in the creation of these documents is contentious, but it allows us to explore the adaptation of communicative technologies by Indigenous peoples.

Walter George Arthur was taken from his tribe when he was very young. He was sent to an orphan school until 1835 where he learnt to read and write with relative proficiency. He then went with Thomas Bruny to the settlement on Flinders Island until 1838.² *The Aboriginal or Flinders Island Chronicle* was produced between September 1836 and December 1837 by both Arthur and Bruny.

This extraordinarily interesting publication – handwritten and handcopied in English – was the work of three English-speaking Aboriginal clerks in the employ of G.A. Robinson, the controversial figure who served as Commandant of the Aboriginal settlement on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait. It is of such historical significance and contains such important elements of reportage that it must be considered the first Aboriginal publication, even though it was clearly controlled by the White camp commandant.³

The level of influence of non-Indigenous people in the production of the *Chronicle* has been widely debated. Michael Rose, in his work in which he documents Indigenous print journalism of Australia, argues that there is evidence of the thoughts and words of the Indigenous editors even though the paper was controlled by the white camp command. For example, he writes that the final line of *The Flinders Island Chronicle* of 17 November 1837 had been omitted from other copied versions of this issue and from G.A. Robinson's papers. The line, "Why don't the black fellows pray to the king to get us away from this place" is one which can only be attributed to the Indigenous editors.⁴ Cassandra Pybus also notes that, "left more and more to their own editorial devices, Walter and Thomas were able to turn the paper into their own form of protest."⁵ The exchange of news and opinions conducted by Arthur by way of the newspaper displays his ability to use the technological communicative technique of writing to continue his relationship with other members of the community when faced with the 'progressive' practices of the settlers. The practices of the settlers, while introduced with the intention of affirming the policies of Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations, can be seen to contradict the intention and reinforce the social formations that were known to the Indigenous peoples.

² Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1995, pp. 16-17.

³ Michael Rose (ed.), *For The Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p. xxix-xxx.

⁴ *Ibid.*, fn. 2, p. 208.

The white colonisers' actions were a powerful force in the lives of the Indigenous peoples. The influence of Robert Clark on the affairs of the settlement and his association with Walter George Arthur are evidenced in documents associated with the running of the settlement.⁶ Neil Plomley writes of the political letter campaign by Walter George Arthur and also writes of Clark's agency in the petition to the Queen in 1846.

News of Jeanneret's impending return to "Wybalenna" produced a considerable reaction against him from the Aborigines. While there is no doubt that his dragooning methods had made them dislike, even hate him, it is more than likely that this reaction was supported and encouraged by Milligan and Clark, and that the protests were put into the mouths of the Aborigines by Walter George Arthur. To say the least, the natives could not have known how to proceed except by instruction. The first evidence of the unrest generated by the news is a letter written by W.G. Arthur to George Washington Walker 30 December 1845, saying that the blacks wanted to support themselves as far as they were able, and asking for land so that they could earn for themselves instead of having to take employment. Six weeks later, on 17 February 1846, the Aborigines had so organised themselves – or had been so organised – that they petitioned the Queen, an unprecedented step in colonial history. This petition, which was drawn up with the help of Robert Clark ... was signed by Walter G. Arthur (chief of Ben Lomond tribe) [and others].⁷

Plomley writes that as the original of the petition is not able to be located it is not possible to ascertain whose handwriting it is in. He asserts that some of the speech forms used in the petition are that of the Indigenous peoples involved. However, he continues: "other parts could only have been prepared for them, so that doubt arises as to how much petition is a spontaneous expression of the complaints of the Indigenous peoples and how much it is a product of Clark's influence."⁸

This kind of statement assumes that the agency of Robert Clark is one of power and control. When considering the historical evidence of Walter George Arthur's continual struggle, before and after the petition, and his leadership of the Indigenous peoples, such an assumption is not necessarily correct. Plomley comments that a large number of letters that were written during June-July of 1846 were composed by the same person, of which he attributes to Clark, not only the writing but also the instigation.⁹ Plomley argues, however, that the actions of Clark and Milligan were agitators who used the Indigenous peoples for

⁵ Cassandra Pybus, *Community of Thieves*, William Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, 1991, p. 143.

⁶ Neil J.B. Plomley (ed.), *Weep In Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Settlement*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart, 1987, pp. 141-142.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

their own benefit. He also states that Clark's "whole record of association with the Indigenous peoples is one of a mindless interference in their affairs, an interference in which he always maintained it was their interests which he had in heart."¹⁰ A report made by an investigator to an associated enquiry in October at Flinders Island concluded that the Indigenous peoples were certainly acquainted with the purpose of their petition to the Queen and that Walter George Arthur was intelligent and capable of writing the letters bearing his name and signature.¹¹ Plomley's statements hint at a bias, resembling the bias of the linear-progressive model, particularly in statements regarding Walter George Arthur. Plomley asks: "Did he become their leader because he was the son of a chief, or because he was a natural leader, or because he had successfully adopted European ways?"¹² "Walter was well educated even by the European standard of the time ... Even though the imitation of European ways had some part in his behaviour, he had natural talents; and he was sufficiently interested in music to take some lessons in it, and could play the violin and accordion."¹³

Plomely argues that the Indigenous peoples, and particularly Walter George Arthur, were *used* by the white men of the settlement. It must be recognised that Plomley is writing from the perspective of the white settlers – using their diaries and documents to piece together history. If taken from a different standpoint it is possible to argue that the Indigenous peoples also *used* the white settlers as agents in *their* struggles. Henry Reynolds comments that the assumption that Indigenous peoples were not capable of taking political action was overlooked.

By definition politics is assumed to be a European prerogative. If Aborigines engaged in politics they must have been acting on someone else's behalf and at their direction. The reverse is never considered – that they were able to make use of white men and exploit their differences and divisions or that they could be running a political agenda of their own. Pity for the 'poor black' completely crowded out respect or balanced assessment.¹⁴

While writers such as Plomely have emphasised the non-Indigenous activists' role in the political struggles, the intent and the resulting effect of the actions of the Indigenous activists should not be ignored. Reynolds provides compelling evidence in opposition to Plomely that argues even though the petition was drafted by Clark, it was instigated by the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁴ Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Indigenous peoples of Flinders Island, and its content was directed by those who signed the petition.¹⁵ Walter George Arthur, according to Reynolds, had likely been removed from his people before being subsumed by his tribal culture, traditions and language. This, he suggests, made him a man of the new political order. He and his allies' cause overrode cultural and linguistic divisions of the past, and Arthur was able to claim those tribal and traditional practices and allegiances as he required and leave others, such as tribal rivalries.¹⁶ It is possible to see evidence of those tribal and traditional practices in Arthur's writings. The maintenance of tribal face-to-face practices can be exemplified through his writings to the governor and the Queen.

The constant references to the governor as Father and the Queen as Mother indicated claims to kinship and thus a demand for recognition of mutual obligation. The governor and the monarch had entered into a relationship with the Tasmanians. They had therefore become kin who could be applied to for help and who had obligations which the Aborigines expected them to meet. Consequently Arthur and his friends assumed they could write to the governor when they pleased, exercising rights which few of the poorer colonists would have claimed. Their social thinking was premised on kinship, not on the status of property ownership or on a class-based hierarchy.¹⁷

The practices which constituted the face-to-face, social integrative character of the Indigenous communities were framed within the abstract, mediated form of letter and petition writing.

Lyndall Ryan's research on the Indigenous peoples of Tasmania, documented in *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, also notes the resistance by Indigenous peoples to the 'civilising' programmes which included the teachings of Christianity and other lessons and the introduction of weekly markets where native crafts and European produce were exchanged. The markets and the production of *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle*, where the Christian messages were declared, were seen to be innovative forms of the 'civilising' process by Commandant Robinson.

Despite these innovations, the Aborigines still resisted Robinson's programme. In these circumstances they reacted like any group under restraint in an artificial environment. They reverted to their "secret" life by maintaining tribal relationships, adjusting their kinship structure, raiding each other for women, and performing ceremonial dancing which represented their conflict with Europeans on the mainland.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁸ Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, (2nd edn.), Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p. 189.

The Indigenous peoples persisted in maintaining social integrative practices constituted at the level of the face-to-face when these practices were officially discouraged or denied. The *Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle* illustrates such maintenance even through the use of the written medium of communication. Walter George Arthur was successful in communicating a message to other Indigenous peoples when face-to-face political agitation was denied. While the content of the paper was intended to urge the adoption of a European way of life, even Plomley admits "a little of the Aboriginal peeps through occasionally."¹⁹ Even though many of the Indigenous peoples were not able to read, they were able to learn the contents of the chronicle by the few who were able to read.²⁰ Through written communication, regardless of its mediation, Arthur was able to retain a sense of the presence of his community in the face of its absence. The use of the technology of writing was not adopted so as to become civilised like the white settlers, but rather to hold together an integrative social formation in the face of confronting acts of colonisation.

William Cooper and the Petition to King George V

William Cooper was born in Yorra-Yorta country about 1861 and spent most of his life at Cummeragunja. In 1933 he settled in Melbourne where he undertook a political campaign to improve the conditions of Indigenous peoples' lives throughout the country.²¹ During this period he established the Australian Aborigines League and in 1937 proposed that the 150-year anniversary of the invasion in 1788 be commemorated by Indigenous peoples as a 'Day of Mourning and Protest'. The earliest documented petitions and letters of William Cooper were written in 1887. As discussed later in this chapter, Goodall argues that a letter written by Cooper of 1887 makes a claim for an expanse of land signifying a vast territory over which the Indigenous peoples believed they had a right and for which they had a responsibility.²² During the political campaign in his later years in Melbourne he was extremely active although hampered by dashed hopes and despair at the unanswered promises of politicians. It was in this mood of despair and dwindling hope that in 1937 the

¹⁹ Plomley, *op. cit.*, p. 991.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Andrew Markus (ed.), *Blood from a Stone: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1988, pp. 7-9.

²² Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*, Allen & Unwin in assoc. with Black Books, St Leonards, 1996, p. 77.

decision was made to send the petition to the King that had received nearly 2,000 signatures by early 1935.²³

It was the period from 1933 when Cooper's activities were determined and dedicated and the Australian Aborigines League (AAL) became one of the avenues through which Cooper formulated his struggle. Andrew Markus states "that there was considerably expanded activity in 1936, possibly as a result of the support and encouragement of Arthur Burdeu, an employee of the Victorian Railways and president of the Victorian division of the Federation of Salaried Officers of Railway Commissioners."²⁴ From 1936, Cooper's activities expanded and the AAL adopted a formal structure with a constitution and letters showed such formalities as being typed on League paper.

There is further evidence of change which can be dated from early 1936: letters which until this time were normally handwritten on plain paper now appeared typed on league stationary, and differed markedly in style and length, although not in content. This change points to the likelihood that from 1936 onwards letters were written by Burdeu in consultation with Cooper and other members of the league. This is not, however to suggest that Burdeu played a significant part in shaping the contents of the letters; such a view is negated by the consistency of the correspondence, one which predates Burdeu and has clear links with the views of Cooper's close relatives Thomas and Shadrach James.²⁵

Cooper also received assistance in relation to the formalities of political struggle, besides Thomas and Shadrach James and Arthur Burdeu, from Helen Baille who was involved with a number of humanitarian organisations. Baille was able to use her relative freedom of movement and the contacts she had previously made in order to facilitate correspondence between Cooper and others. She also most likely helped in advising Cooper and arranging contacts with government agencies and officials, and also would have had considerable knowledge and resources of Indigenous peoples' matters elsewhere in the country.²⁶

Of those assisting Cooper, Arthur Burdeu was likely the most influential in the political struggle that Cooper was undertaking. It would be wrong to suggest, I would argue, that Burdeu be attributed with an appropriating or autocratic position over Cooper. According to research by Bain Attwood into a series of letters that Burdeu wrote to the

²³ Markus, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10, 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁶ Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines: Race, History and Aboriginality in Australia*, Allen & Unwin (forthcoming).

anthropologist A.P. Elkin, it is possible to interpret his vision as an agent working co-operatively with Cooper.²⁷ On Burdeu's activities with Cooper, Attwood states:

In his work Burdeu was not free of paternalism – probably no white person was at this time – but he respected Cooper's leadership of the league, and strived to help the Aboriginal people in Melbourne articulate their own aspirations; he realised they were 'not properly vocal' and, as Baillie recalled, 'he patiently assisted the native people to express their needs'. In writing letters in Cooper's name, the League's principal means of lobbying, it seems Burdeu usually worked very closely with him, listening to what he said and trying to capture the essence of his ideals and goals.²⁸

It is useful in order to establish the level of agency-mediation proffered by non-Indigenous activists such as Burdeu in the activism of Cooper, to refer to an interview which was conducted with Cooper by the journalist Clive Turnbull of the Melbourne *Herald*.²⁹ The style and format of the conversation, which was quoted by Turnbull in the article *Aborigines Petition the King* on 7 August 1937, bears no variance from the written material that has been attributed to Burdeu.

The petition to the King was one of the activities for which Cooper and the AAL is most recognised. The petition had three demands: to prevent the extinction of the Aboriginal race of Indigenous peoples; to give better conditions for all; and to grant the power to be represented in Federal parliament.³⁰ Attwood suggests that the demand for Indigenous political representation was the key demand, particularly in its difference and its implicit call for an Indigenous voice with its distinctive perspectives to be chosen by Indigenous peoples.³¹ It was a demand that calls to the nation of Australia to recognise a different people and therefore a different nation, and in this way was a challenge to the Australian sovereignty.³² Therefore, while it might be argued that Cooper received non-Indigenous assistance in drafting the petition, it was very decidedly a claim for Indigenous rights and the recognition of Indigenous difference throughout Australia. I argue that it is incorrect to consider non-Indigenous assistance given in this campaign an appropriation of Indigenous peoples and a civilising of their cultures and traditions. Rather, it is an example

²⁷ Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, loc. cit.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Clive Turnbull, 'Aborigines Petition the King', *Herald*, 7 August 1937, reprinted in Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, NSW, 1999, pp. 152-154.

³⁰ Petition to King George VI as reprinted in Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, loc. cit.

³¹ Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, loc. cit.

³² Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, loc. cit.

of an extension through agency, called upon reflexively by Indigenous activists in their desire to retain the distinctive practices and traditions of Indigenous peoples.

It is necessary to expand on the reflexive project in these circumstances to qualify its level of intensity. The reflexive act undertaken within the acts of political protest by Indigenous peoples of Australia is reflexive only in the capacity of Indigenous peoples to determinedly resist the processes of assimilation and civilisation. Reflexivity, as discussed in Chapter Three, is the conscious monitoring of our practices and their adaptation to overlay differing levels of integration, however, it may occur at a subtle level or at a fiercely self-conscious level. The level of reflexivity evidenced in the written protest action of Indigenous peoples explored here is of a lesser intensity than that of the Zapatistas of Mexico, which is analysed in the following chapter. The activities of William Cooper illustrate this subtle level of reflexivity. While he steps out of the way of life in which the face-to-face is the dominant mode of integration and uses the abstracted written mode of communication, he does so momentarily in order to achieve his political ends. While he continues to recognise the importance of retaining Indigenous cultural practices, he also recognises the need to address the impoverishment and discrimination faced by Indigenous peoples. This contradiction exemplifies the tensions resulting from the coexistence of traditional and modern practices, and can be illustrated through his correspondence and through his work with the AAL. One of the objectives outlined in the Constitution of the Australian Aborigines' League states,

The ultimate object of the League shall be the conservation of special features of Aboriginal culture and the removal of all disabilities, political, social or economic, now or in future borne by aboriginals and to secure their uplift to the full culture of the British race.³³

Such ambiguous statements, while confusing for the evidencing of reflexivity, prove the contradictions that are apparent in the maintenance of the traditional and the modern. The difficult position of the Indigenous peoples in retaining traditional practices can be further exemplified by Cooper's plea to have the ceremonial dances respected as tribal practices rather than exploited as an exotic performance for the amusement of tourists. He wrote in the AAL Annual report in 1936 the following:

Attention being drawn to undesirable features in connection with a corroboree at Darwin, which was organised for the amusement of American tourists, I wrote in protest. It was represented that the Darwin natives were not considered suitable to secure realistic

³³ Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

enactment and so uncivilised natives were brought in ... The Minister for the Interior replied that the report was inaccurate and exaggerated; that the Administration would not countenance any commercialisation of the aboriginal corroborees; that it is in accord with our sentiments for the preservation of the native culture and ceremonial, only with the elimination of undesirable features.³⁴

The resistance of Indigenous peoples to the assimilation policies and civilising programmes illustrates their persistence in maintaining tribal and traditional practices. The undertaking of political protest through the agency of non-Indigenous peoples equally demonstrates the overlaying of modern practices and the continued retention of practices constituted at the level of the face-to-face.

The Gurindji at Wave Hill

In 1966 the Gurindji people of the north-west of Central Australia walked off Wave Hill Station, which was then owned by Lord Vestey, in protest of the appalling conditions under which they were working and expected to live. The struggle lasted for over ten years and became one of the most celebrated battles undertaken by Indigenous peoples of Australia. Vincent Lingiari was one of the prominent leaders of the struggle and is famous for the symbolic pouring of dirt from the traditional land at Daguragu into his hand by the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam in recognition of the land being 'handed' to the Gurindji in 1975. The Gurindji in fact purchased the land from Wave Hill Station with money provided by the Aboriginal Land Fund. This, however, was not the end of the struggle. The Northern Territory in 1979 attempted to resume the land because they claimed the land-owners had not kept to the pastoral lease conditions. It was not until 1986 that the Gurindji were given inalienable freehold title under the Land Rights Act.³⁵ It is interesting to note that the Gurindji, like many Indigenous communities and activists before them, also petitioned the Governor General as representative of the British monarch. They believed the governor to be their protector and following the practices of face-to-face integration, like kin, they believed they had developed a relationship.³⁶

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 58.

³⁵ Alexis Wright for the Central Land Council (ed.), *Take Power Like This Old Man Here, An Anthology of writings celebrating twenty years of land rights in Central Australia, 1977-1997*, Jukurrpa books, Alice Springs, 1998, p. 1.

³⁶ Gurindji petition to Lord Casey, Governor General, 19 April 1967, reprinted in Attwood and Markus, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-225.

The main proponents involved in the struggle at Wave Hill certainly included Vincent Lingiari, however, there were a number of others who were involved.

In 1966 Vincent Lingiari went to the management of Wave Hill Station and said, 'I am sick of being treated like a dog.' He said, 'We want to be treated like human beings. We want better wages and better conditions'. The station wouldn't listen to him so he organised the walk-off. It is not widely acknowledged that he was helped by Dexter Daniels who was a union organiser (North Australian Workers Union, NAWU) at the time, and also Phillip Roberts, a wonderful man from the Roper River. Anyway, Vincent Lingiari led the walk-off from the old Wave Hill Station right up to Daguragu. It is a long walk and men, women and kids and puppy dogs walked.³⁷

Dexter Daniels was an important player in the walk-off and had been involved with previous smaller strikes by Indigenous peoples through his work at the NAWU. Frank Hardy was also involved in the struggles. Daniels had previously been associated with Hardy in his role as union activist. The Gurindji had allies to protect and assist them in their strike and consequently they grew more confident in their claim.³⁸ Hardy was able to use his skills in formalised, written communication to mediate with the bureaucracies and other relevant people.

It can be argued that the Aboriginal leaders sought Hardy's support because they had a keen appreciation of the importance of having their story told to 'government' and whites; as one stockman apparently remarked when an ABC television crew (whom Hardy had persuaded to do a story) recorded interviews with Lingiari and others at Wave Hill in September 1966, "That picture of Bincent bin movie like cowboys on ranch night. That picture bin move and the mob down South see Bincent and hear him words". Dexter Daniels, who had himself sought Hardy's acquaintance because he knew he was a writer, would have alerted Lingiari to Hardy's usefulness in presenting their demands elsewhere, and Hardy both understood that they saw him in this light and gladly assumed this role - "I'll tell a lotta people in the South, write in newspaper, write in book".³⁹

Hardy has described himself as merely publicist in his role in Indigenous peoples' affairs. He states in reference to drawing up the programme for the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights (NTCAR) in July 1966, "So it involves their ideas, but, just as [political leaders] get their speeches written for them by some one who puts down what they think, I helped, as a writer, as I often done for white workers, to write this, but it was their view[s]".⁴⁰ There are also records of three-day long conversations, community meetings and other discussions where the Indigenous activists explained in detail their desires and

³⁷ Ted Egan, 'Treated Like A Dog', in Wright for the Central Land Council, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁸ Bain Attwood, 'The Articulation of "Land Rights" in Australia: The Case of Wave Hill', *Social Analysis*, No. 44, 2000, p. 5.

³⁹ Attwood, 'The Articulation of "Land Rights:" in Australia', *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ Frank Hardy, 'Frank Hardy Tells of [...] of a Strike With a Difference', *Target*, November-January, 1967, p. 11, Attwood, 'The Articulation of "Land Rights:" in Australia', *op. cit.*, p. 12.

claims.⁴¹ The role that Hardy actually played is one that is the source of considerable debate.

Historical research conducted by Attwood has argued that Hardy's role did influence the events that played out at Wave Hill. He argues Hardy, "not only represented their word inasmuch as he was speaking for 'the Gurindji' but he also re-presented their 'words' in the sense that he was *making* a story with them."⁴² Others have simply attributed Hardy with the 'Communist agitator' role and suggest that he was in fact responsible for the Wave Hill dispute. Others, such as Diane Barwick, suggest that the intervention by white activists was 'unnecessary and ineffectual'.

The curious paternalism of Australian administrators, stemming from the old belief that this was a 'childlike' race in need of authoritarian management, has always included an inability to recognise (or at least a refusal to acknowledge) that protest action could be self-inspired and capably organised by Aboriginal communities. 'Outside influence' was the euphemism of the 1870s; 'stirrers' or 'Communist agitators' are blamed today. Sympathetic whites have indeed often helped by penning letters, arranging interviews, and soliciting press attention for existing grievances, but any 'incitement' by outsiders must always have been both unnecessary and ineffectual.⁴³

As indicated earlier, to recognise the actions of non-Indigenous players in political struggles is often seen as an inability to recognise the influence of Indigenous players. The involvement of the white sympathiser has implications for the way in which the 'strike' was played out.

Questions have arisen surrounding the possibility that this struggle was appropriated by non-Indigenous activists to become something that the community on Wave Hill did not intend. It is possible to see from the language that was used by Lingiari, for example, "... we want better wages and conditions"⁴⁴ and the term 'strike' being used rather than walk-off, that the struggle took on a modernist perspective. It is his contention that the emphasis upon the reclaiming of Gurindji land was not the original and principal concern of the Gurindji. Such an argument plays an intriguing role in the debate over the 'land rights' campaign. The desires of the Indigenous peoples involved in the Wave Hill struggle were arguably more inclined to support sovereignty and social issues and practices

⁴¹ Attwood, 'The Articulation of "Land Rights:" in Australia', *op. cit.*, pp 19-26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴³ Diane Barwick, 'Aborigines of Victoria', in I. Keen (ed.) *Being Black: Aboriginal Cultures In 'Settled' Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Egan, *loc. cit.*

that were constitutive of their community formations, rather than simply a claim for wages. Hardy's comments on the drawing up of the program for the NTCAR and negotiations which took place over strikes by Indigenous peoples and white sympathisers, indicate the differences in emphasis of the claims being made.

Their preoccupation with racial identity, land and the moral issues was to be duplicated later by Aborigines down the track. But we whites were still thinking primarily of wages ... I talked wages and conditions to them but I thought afterwards that basically wages was a secondary issue: the primary concern was the contempt in which they had always been held.⁴⁵

In addition to the general desire for respect, including the desire for the black women to be left alone by the white men, the claims of the Gurindji included their land. Hardy writes of a conversation with Pincher, a Gurindji man:

'This is our country, all this country bin Gurindji country. Wave Hill bin our country'. I had not really expected that after three generations of white domination the Aborigines would still have a sense of owning the land - but, as Pincher continues, I remember Vincent's remark on the way to Mount Sanford. 'That Bestey mob neber bin teach Gurindji people to read, but now our childrens bin go to school house. Later on they bin learn ebrything and know what to do. Then we bin want this ground, all belonga we Gurindji. Childrens grow up proper book work. We wait for that, then no white man hers.'⁴⁶

The claim for 'land rights' as a claim to ownership could be argued to have arisen as a result of the influence of the white sympathisers. The claims to land by the Indigenous peoples, as opposed to a modernist claim, were expressed in a way which emphasised the tribal association to their attachment, rather than a material claim for a title to place. That is, attachment to land was so fundamentally taken-for-granted in its necessity for carrying ways of being that constituted the tribal and traditional social forms, that to make a 'modernist' claim for such land was assumed unnecessary.

It is assumed by the majority of non-Indigenous people that the involvement of white people in Indigenous struggles would be dominating and appropriating. It is my argument that the use of white activists was necessary as agents in acquiring resources and the skills of writing and the formality required to negotiate with the dominant oppressor. This use of the white activists' skills was a deliberate and conscious act on the part of the Indigenous activists as the formalisation and bureaucratic style was not their preferred communicative mode. Rather than the activities being viewed as white activists

⁴⁵ Frank Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1968, pp. 47, 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

appropriating the struggles of the Indigenous peoples, it is possible to argue that it was the Indigenous activists who acted strategically. The agency of the white sympathisers allowed the Indigenous activists to momentarily step-out of their way of life in which face-to-face practices were dominant. This momentary use of abstract practices was undertaken without systematising the abstract practices into their way of being. Indigenous activists used the written communicative skills of others in order to better achieve their desired goals while still retaining the practices and traditions of orality. This chapter will further analyse this subtle reflexive framing of face-to-face practices within the abstract by Indigenous peoples through an exploration of the ways in which modern practices carried with them traditional practices and meanings.

Subverting the Intention

Indigenous peoples of Australia have historically faced a dominating culture of modern modes of practice. The government, other institutions, and the wider society have all dictated various programs of change through policy, education, and societal participation, in order to alter the Indigenous peoples ways of being. It has, however, become evident that in many cases the intended consequences of enforced doctrination have not come about. Those being forced to undertake change in the form of modernising ways of being, have taken these cultural tools and paradoxically subverted the intention to enhance their preferred cultural practices. While the adoption of modern tools and practices by Indigenous peoples may have displayed some dependence on non-Indigenous people, there was similarly a display of resistance through the subversion of the intended consequences of these tools and practices. Barry Morris in *Domesticating Resistance* has written that both the Indigenous peoples perpetuation of their own ways and the accommodation of the domination of Europeanisation displays an act of resistance.⁴⁷ Morris evidences this with various examples, such as, the continuation of communal cooking and eating practices. These practices were continued outside of the purpose-built housing, even though they contained the kitchen areas inside in order to privatise these practices on an individual family basis.⁴⁸ In similar ways such subversion of enforced cultural practices through the undertaking of contradictory practices can be seen in the mode of communication.

⁴⁷ Barry Morris, *Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Berg, Oxford, 1989, pp. 80-83.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The mode of communication, while thought to be the agent of conformity to more civilised ways, through a process of a low-level reflexive undertaking of practices, was subverted by the Indigenous peoples. Rather than the action of writing providing a path of absorption into the community it was used by Indigenous peoples in political and personal campaigns against the government and its agents throughout the 1800s and the 1900s. Their use of the abstract mode was momentary and was framed by face-to-face ways of being. There are numerous examples, as evidenced in the previous cases, of correspondence to governments, petitions, letters to newspapers, and newspapers themselves that illustrate the political struggles and campaigns undertaken by Indigenous peoples of Australia. Michael Christie states:

On the stations the Aborigines used the power their solidarity gave them to resist unjust conditions; sometimes this took the form of a strike, at other times a protest by letter or deputation to a higher government authority ... the most successful tactic was playing off the various agencies ... And the younger, literate blacks, soon learnt that a letter of their own to an influential person (the Chief Secretary for instance) could be extremely effective.⁴⁹

The petitioning of the King and Queen of England was a practice that was used by activists such as Walter George Arthur, William Cooper and many others throughout the history of dispossession. These written examples include the documentation of abuse and they denounce the practices of removing children, destroying temporarily vacated homes, the payment of below-award wage payments, the refusal to grant rations and the possessing of localised pieces of land. The practice of writing became very useful for the colonised Indigenous peoples to protest against the less-than-human conditions under which they were forced to live.

The enforced mode of writing was one which, given the oral traditions of the Indigenous peoples, did not prove popular and did not serve the purpose of civilisation as originally planned by the missionaries and 'protectors'. Paradoxically, the mode of written communication was one that was significant in the political struggles throughout Indigenous history. I have established through the above research that there is evidence of non-Indigenous assistance in letter writing and particularly in the formalising of claims and petitions. These scribes or publicists also often helped in the spreading of information as the activities of Indigenous peoples were often limited, and in making connections and

networks for interviews and correspondence. Instead of the mode of writing civilising the Indigenous peoples as intended, throughout the 200 years of dispossession Indigenous peoples have used the technology of the mode of writing themselves or through non-Indigenous agents to claim their sovereignty. The missionary of the Lake Tyers Station from 1862 until 1925, John Bulmer, complained that the power of writing was being used by the young people 'to write most mischievous letters.'⁵⁰ The consequences for those involved in the writing of letters of complaint, which was considered rebellion, was often severe punishments. These punishments included banishment from reserves, which meant the denial of seeing kin and also the refusal of rations.

The communicative technology was used in the missions in order to civilise, to modernise, with the aim of securing assimilation. Campaigns were undertaken by Indigenous peoples for social justice, rights and sovereignty. In these campaigns the skills that were taught were used against their intention. Indigenous peoples were not writing and petitioning to become civilised but to fight to be accepted as equal human beings and to achieve some autonomy. Billy Marshall-Stoneking states that Indigenous peoples are using 'whitefella' technology whenever and wherever it is appropriate in their goal of controlling their own lives under the demands of the contemporary world.⁵¹ Some of these struggles for basic rights subsequently resulted in a recognition of the cultural and societal forms of the Indigenous communities.

While the adoption of written communication was encouraged through the missions and for assimilationist ideas it proved advantageous for those claiming land rights and social justice.

Whatever the political language these local protesters spoke, though, it was clear that they were very familiar with the political discourses of the day. This suggests that such protests often rested on the literacy that some Aborigines had acquired through their intensive contact with missionaries and other teachers. Aborigines involved in protest in the nineteenth century were avid readers of newspapers and so were well informed about colonial politics and, in time, of the protests of Aborigines in other places, thus learning something of how to articulate their demands. More especially, though, the leaders of these local protests tended to be young men and women who often owed their training in politics to Christian missions

⁴⁹ Michael Christie, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1979, p. 181.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵¹ Billy Marshall-Stoneking, 'Eyes for Ears: An Oral Tradition Goes to Print', *Media Information Australia*, Vol. 27, 1983, p. 49.

and/or the protectors who had schooled them in the tenets of humanitarianism and liberalism.⁵²

The adoption of writing was undertaken in a manner that, while producing tensions and constant negotiating, reinforced the social practices and formations of Indigenous communities. Cliff Goddard has argued that the institutions of the dominant society such as the missions, and more recently the education departments, have channelled material resources into "encouraging passive, individualised uses of reading, rather than active social uses of writing."⁵³ It is the interpersonal and social uses of writing, he suggests, in which the Indigenous communities have shown particular interest. He goes on to state the "aesthetic and moral functions of Western written literature are still being discharged through traditional oral practices."⁵⁴ The oral tradition has significant association with communal social practices.

Communicative technology was adopted reflexively and, I argue, although contradictory it did not dominate and systematise the practices for the community. It was used as part of a campaign and struggle for sovereignty and social justice. In this area there is an abundance of written material by Indigenous activists. But this written material is not evidence of a transition from an oral mode of communication to a written one, but rather the momentary adoption of a communicative technology in order to achieve a political outcome.

Aboriginal writers have a sense of purpose, an urgent task on behalf of their community, and a wealth of material and themes. They are also heirs to a tradition that goes back millennia before the English literary culture was born. Many whites believe that that tradition has been broken, and that in any case it is incompatible with 'Aboriginal writing'. In such a view, to be Aboriginal is to be primitive, unable to use anything from white culture, including writing ... Aboriginal writers know that they do not necessarily betray their Aboriginality by adapting to and taking over aspects of white cultural forms. They know, as white critics do not, the complex reality of their Aboriginal origins, and they see continuities in what they do with those origins which whites do not see, and often are not meant to see.⁵⁵

This exemplifies the capacity of Indigenous communities to undertake abstract technological practices without these modes dominating the prior modes of practice. This

⁵² Attwood and Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵³ Cliff Goddard, 'Emergent Genres of Reportage and Advocacy in the Pitjantjatjara Print Media', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, No. 2, 1990, p. 31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Jack Davis and Bob Hodge (eds), *Aboriginal Writing Today*, Papers from the First National Conference of Aboriginal Writers Held in Perth, Western Australia, 1983, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1985, p. 2.

chapter will now proceed to demonstrate some ways in which modern practices were framed by tribal and traditional practices.

Maintaining the Face-to-face

There are a number of examples that illustrate the use of abstract communicative technology framed within the level of the face-to-face by Indigenous communities. The use of technology has not been used to progress to a 'civilised' way of being as assumed by the linear theoretical approach commonly applied. Although complex and contradictory, their low-level reflexive practice can be seen to reinforce the foundational face-to-face integrative social practices and formations of the community. The examples explored above – the letters, petition and chronicle written and edited by Walter George Arthur, the letters and petition of William Cooper, and the claims of the Gurindji in the Wave Hill walk-off – are indicative of this reflexive framing. These examples span across numerous years throughout the country and exemplify the diversity of communication techniques used in these campaigns to achieve the recognition of the durability and persistence of the primarily oral cultures. A number of these face-to-face constitutive practices are outlined below, including the style and personalised form of address, the non-use of hierarchical lists, the reproduction of kinship relations, and the presentation of land claims.

The way in which correspondence was undertaken by Indigenous activists displays an emphasis upon the preference for communication on an orally based, personal level rather than of a formalised, bureaucratic style. Morris comments on the personal nature of a letter written by John Moseley of Burnt Bridge to the local newspaper in response to losing entitlement to the land he had occupied for forty-five years.

Moseley's response was to appeal against his eviction in a manner which assumed the perpetuation of personal forms of power and individual forms of mediation ... Such a personal appeal for moral justice stood in contrast to the impersonal legalistic and bureaucratic forms of control that characterised the new administration. In the absence of recognised legal title, Moseley and the other residents of 'old' Burnt Bridge were denied any entitlement to what they considered their land. This consolidation of bureaucratic forms of control was synonymous with pre-coded responses based on rules rather than personal mediations.⁵⁶

This use of a written form of communication is one which illustrates the continuous, contradictory framing of new forms of technology within the patterning and ordering of

social forms premised on a face-to-face mode of communication and practicing. It is only through a Western-centric notion that the agency practiced by white settlers can be argued as overcoming the deficient intelligence and technological capacities of Indigenous peoples. If, on the other hand, we view it as a contradictory, reflexive practice resulting from a reluctance to adopt white practices, it can be an argument for empowerment.

It is possible to analyse in the style and form of address in the campaign documents the use of a formalised, written, communicative technique which was not indicative of an Indigenous oral style. It has been argued by Attwood that "[t]o seek unmediated Aboriginal voices is to search for something that does not exist, since any political expression is always influenced by the prevailing beliefs and attitudes."⁵⁷ The use of non-Indigenous players to write the letters and employ their 'accepted' strategies may say something about the preference for a conversation that instigated the writing of letters and petitions. Heather Goodall states:

While the Coranderrk and the Cumeragunja people have left us the greatest evidence of their own statements, there was not necessarily any less Aboriginal agency in the second strategy, in which white officials were recruited to articulate and convey Aboriginal demands.⁵⁸

This does not necessarily mean that the struggles were appropriated because the messages were arguably derived from long conversations and were most likely approved by the 'writer'. Rather than appropriation, it was a strategic choice on behalf of the Indigenous activists that the cultural formalisation of the communicative technology was to be directed through agents. This was because it was the formal and bureaucratic aspect of the written technology that was furthest from their preference to oral communicative techniques. Rose states that "researchers have noted that many Aboriginal people now accept the usefulness of English language literacy skills after realising that they are needed for negotiating with non-Aboriginal Australia ..."⁵⁹

It is also possible to recognise the maintenance of the face-to-face within stylistic attributes that appear to be particularly of Indigenous peoples' hand. One of these was for

⁵⁶ Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

⁵⁷ Attwood and Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Goodall, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Rose (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. xxii.

petitions that were signed by a group to be signed in a circular pattern.⁶⁰ The use of a non-hierarchical style, one which does not use the categorisation style of listing can be particularly attributed to those coming from a primarily oral tradition. Goody has written extensively on the meanings that a list may carry. In the following piece he analyses a dining list and its characteristics.

Firstly it insists upon an explicit hierarchy; the list has to be arranged so that the items, names of persons in this case, are one above another, from top to bottom. It is true that horizontal 'strings' of names, found in the plurality of authors of some academic papers, place one item *before* another, thus implying priority, or seniority, running from left to right. But left to right is a more 'conventional' movement than from top to bottom ... Indeed, so compelling is the idea of hierarchy in a written list that extraordinary steps have to be taken to avoid the implications of higher and lower, first and last, with their associations of differential power or responsibility. To get over the problem, the signatories of a letter have to place their names in a circle ...⁶¹

While it may seem obvious that such signing is to avoid forming a hierarchy it is necessary to consider also the implications of a written system on the making of lists. In an orally based culture, Goody argues the use of lists are few and far between. He argues that while the recital of genealogies may be an example they have often been constructed through investigative studies.⁶² He continues by arguing that it would also be unlikely that verbal lists would be kept for animals and trees because of the spatial assumption of a list.

Since these lists are not tied to social groups on the ground such as the division of a kingdom (though individual species may be linked to social groups, as in 'totemic systems'), the series are rarely if ever grouped together to form a genus or a 'kingdom' of their own. And even if they are so clustered, they would not represent a finite, exhaustive group of the kind we find in a written list because the items would have no definite spatial location, hence no precise beginning (middle) and end. And even if such a list is established orally, it has no permanent location (unless perhaps in the course of a narrative or fixed in some other standardised oral form). Hence, it is unlikely to serve as a point of departure for an elaboration of the system, nor yet as an explicit model for other types of categorisation and classification.⁶³

⁶⁰ Two examples of petitions signed in a circular pattern are stored in the National Archives of Australia. These petitions come from the indigenous peoples of Lake Tyers in Victoria. One petition is a statement of 'complaints' made on 24 August 1961, which makes numerous requests relating to the management of Lake Tyers Reserve including a request for a missionary rather than a manager, and issues relating to payment, clothing, access to visitors, homes, sporting activities and the treatment of the youths living on the Reserve. This petition was presented to a meeting of the Aborigines Welfare Board at Lake Tyers 'Station' on 29 August 1961. The second petition recorded the request for a Governor to be removed and another of the white men in charge to remain at Lake Tyers. The petition was handed to Mr. Meagher (MLA), Chairman of the Aborigines Welfare Board by Charles Carter on 7 June 1962. Both petitions are located at National Archives of Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission; Series B356, *Lake Tyers Correspondence Files, 1865-1968; Item 42, Lake Tyers - Policy, 1957-1962.*

⁶¹ Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 131-132.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Walter Ong also writes of the oral culture having 'no vehicle so neutral as the list'.

In the absence of elaborate analytic categories that depend on writing to structure knowledge at a distance from lived experience, oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings. A chirographic (writing) culture and even more a typographic (print) culture can distance and in a way denature even the human, itemizing such things as the names of leaders and political divisions in an abstract, neutral list entirely devoid of a human action context. An oral culture has no vehicle so neutral as a list.⁶⁴

The circular signing of the petition is indicative of a continuation of the characteristics of an orally based culture by the Lake Tyers community, contradicting an adoption of formalised practices of written systems. Another of the attributes that exists in the petition that is signed in a circular style is that it includes the names of women. In comparison, the petition of 1847 from the Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island to Queen Victoria included only signatures of men even though it was known that at least one woman, Mary Anne Arthur, was politically active.⁶⁵ This may suggest that the signing of the Flinders Island petition was influenced by a patriarchal white society, while the Lake Tyers petition was less so.

The reclaiming of land for Indigenous peoples has been, and continues to be, asserted through an association for original lands prior to invasion. This association can be illustrated through a relationship continually pursued by Indigenous peoples with the monarch of the day. The association that Indigenous peoples of Australia have made between land claims and other social justice cases, and the monarch is historically evident through numerous letters and petitions being directed towards the monarch. These include the petition of Jane Duren in 1926, the petition from Flinders Island in 1846 as previously discussed (the nineteenth century seeing many more petitions than the next) and the petition to King George VI by William Cooper in 1937. Cooper initiated this petition because he believed that the Indigenous peoples had a special right of appeal to the King and the Monarch had the power to intervene.⁶⁶

Yet there is a further reading possible, suggested by William Cooper's use of the boundaries of the 'small portion' to signify 'that vast territory which is ours by Divine Right', as well as by the way Aboriginal people have used the concept of royalty to assert the equivalent dignity of their own authorities and power structures. The determination with which

⁶⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Methuen, London, 1982, p. 42.

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, *loc. cit.*

Aboriginal people have insisted that these grants were made by Queen Victoria reflects their conviction that Aboriginal rights to land had been recognised by at the highest levels of the British state. So rather than a remnant of misplaced loyalty to a colonising Queen, these accounts demonstrate a further assertion of the dignity and solemnity of Aboriginal traditional rights to land, which Aboriginal people indicate were taken so seriously that they were acknowledged by the British Queen. It is not the British monarchy which is celebrated in these stories, but the permanence and dignity of Aboriginal land and its owners.⁶⁷

The relationship between the monarch and the Indigenous peoples was not restricted to the case of Australia. The Maori of New Zealand also developed a relationship with the Queen. Tuhiwai Smith states that there are several examples throughout the past 200 years of petitions and delegations to redress grievances being sent directly to the Queen of England. This relationship ensued because the sovereigns or heads of state had been represented as protectors and 'great fathers and mothers of the natives' and she states that the ways of conducting encounters were quite sophisticated. Tuhiwai Smith suggests, however, that these encounters were always disappointing.⁶⁸

The relationship that the Indigenous peoples felt existed between the Queen and themselves is one that continues to the present day. In 1999 a delegation of Indigenous elders from across Australia visited the Queen in London.⁶⁹ It was reported that although the conversation that ensued was confidential and could therefore not be revealed, the Queen had received them favourably and the general response of the delegation was one of pleasure and satisfaction from the visit. It was also apparent during the Royal Tour to Australia by the Queen and Prince Phillip during March 2000 that there was a warm and friendly position held by many Indigenous peoples toward the Queen. The Indigenous peoples of Central Australia had anticipated the Queen's visit to their region. They had wanted to express their concerns about the situation of their peoples to the Queen, who they saw as their friend and someone who they believed would be concerned. This was even more significant due to the recent republic debate in Australia that has secured a great deal of support resulting in many Australians disregarding the visit. Taking into account the brevity and the limitations of the visit the elders of the local communities made a video-recording of themselves voicing their concerns which was passed to the Queen by

⁶⁷ Goodall, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

⁶⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books, London, 1999, pp. 112-113.

⁶⁹ Trudy Harris, 'From the Campfire to the Queen', *The Weekend Australian*, 16-17 October 1999, p. 8.

Margaret-Mary Turner, one of the elders involved.⁷⁰ The use of a video-recording rather than a written document was a significant choice. The use of the video and film technology is one that is an abstract technique but which captures the oral traditions and cultures of the Indigenous peoples more closely than that of the written form. The written form has been used throughout history by Indigenous peoples, but it is one which continually appears to be used for particular purposes, such as social correspondence, but not as a preferred mode of communication. The examples that have been used within this thesis, therefore, demonstrate the deliberate use of the written form to formalise political protest actions.

Claims for land have produced contradictions throughout white invasion. The contradictions lie in the claim for land as a modernist claim to the legal title against a desire to retain a connection to land as *place*. While Indigenous peoples have claimed individual parcels of land as far back as at least the mid-1800s, 'land rights' as an all-encompassing claim has been influenced by a Western notion of the importance of an unmovable attachment to land. Early requests made for land were primarily for the return of local pieces of land that had been possessed by the settlers. The earliest example of this was in Victoria in 1859 when Indigenous peoples from the Kulin nation petitioned for farming land and eventually secured a site reserved for them as Coranderrk.⁷¹ It was not until around the 1960s that land claims became a symbolic call and justice for Indigenous peoples was equated with 'land rights'. The right to land has arguably become symbolic of a whole raft of human and cultural rights that have been denied to Indigenous peoples in the process of dispossession.

It must be acknowledged that some writers, including Heather Goodall, would disagree that the claim for land rights, as a primary and fundamental claim representing so much more, is a recent development. An example of this, as mentioned previously, appears in Goodall's account of a letter of 1887 that was written by William Cooper and his brother John Atkinson.

Cooper's letter, while repeating his brother's plea for secure, inalienable land as a source of economic independence, called on the government to secure 'this small portion of a vast territory which is ours by divine Right.' Cooper was using the language of the Christianity to

⁷⁰ Peter Wilmoth, 'Queen Gets Gentle Message from Aborigines of Alice', *The Age*, 31 March 2000, p. 2, Jane Fraser, 'Queen of Desert Barnstorms Better Than Jimmy', *The Australian*, 31 March 2000, p. 4, and 'The 7.30 Report', *ABC Television*, 30 March 2000.

⁷¹ Goodall, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

which he had been recently converted, but the concept was not Christian: he was insisting on recognition of Aboriginal rights of prior ownership ... He was suggesting that the 'small portion', while limited in area, nevertheless signified the whole of his people's 'vast territory'. The boundaries of his selection would certainly remind him of what he had been excluded from, but the very existence of the 'small portion' would be an acknowledgement of the existence of that 'vast territory' and a testimony to the continued responsibility its Aboriginal owners felt towards the largest expanse of their lands.⁷²

Other writers such as Attwood and Markus in *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights* argue that evidence such as that of Goodall and other historians shows there was a dominant language of citizenship rights rather than land rights.⁷³ While land was certainly an important and sometimes paramount demand, these historians remain reluctant to agree that the use of 'land rights' and what it symbolically represents is evident in historical documents. Qualifying both these positions, I suggest that the claim for 'land rights' is a modern claim, while the claims of Indigenous activists throughout history have largely been over places. If land claims did not arise it was because land was not viewed as abstract space that required claims of 'ownership'. Rather, it was, assumed to be a rooted part of their way of living. Land claims, while symbolically representing many other aspects of political and national empowerment has at a deeper level a significant meaning for Indigenous peoples as *place*. However, as discussed in Chapter One the significance of *place* as determining of constitutive practices is one that means the physical shifting away from a specific place is possible if these determining practices are reflexively continued. A linear-progressive model that assumes a physical disruption from one's traditional land is a move on the path to modernism that contradicts the meanings of land claims held by many Indigenous peoples.

It is argued throughout this thesis that while practices may at one level be modernised they can still be framed within traditional ways of being. Indigenous cultures that maintain an emphasis on oral communicative practices have the capacity, although contradictory, to adapt reflexively to more abstract modes of communication. The adoption of modern technological practices within primarily traditional social formations has been used, in opposition to my argument, as evidence that such communities have progressed, or have the ability to progress, and are no longer traditional. This argument has created a discourse that determines an Indigenous community or an individual Indigenous person as authentic only when the practices undertaken are of an observable traditional character.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

This has had implications for Indigenous political issues such as native-title claims. When a practice involves a technological benefit, those involved, or the culture to which they belong, are considered progressive. Claiming traditional authenticity from this position is argued to be deceptive. This contention fails to recognise the capacity of a community to adapt to new technologies in a reflexive way. A reflexive undertaking allows for the retention of the face-to-face level of communication that carries with it an integrative depth. The capacity to maintain or reconstitute a deep mode of integration determines an integrative community and shapes the way of being. The discourse, which has created the myth of the authentic Indigenous person and the authentic Indigenous community, is derived from the changing meaning of ontological categories such as place and time as discussed in Chapter Three. A preoccupation with place in contemporary discourse has been to emphasise a particular kind of attachment and rootedness. This sense of attachment carries with it stability and inertia, and results in the motionless, unchanging frameworks that underlie cultural containment. This containment is what instructs the consideration of the lack of authenticity when a traditional culture adopts modern technologies.

Conclusion

The struggles of Indigenous peoples over time have included a general desire for sovereignty and a recognition of community, social structures and cultures. These cultures and practices are crucial to the way in which Indigenous peoples live their modern lives. While Indigenous communities are changing and adapting to advancing technologies this does not necessarily mean that the integrative foundations and principles of their social formations are superseded. The examples of some of the campaigns that have been undertaken illustrate that while modern technologies are often used, the emphasis for those adopting these methods remains upon the maintenance of integrative depth within their communities. The campaigns are illustrative of the Indigenous communities adopting modern technologies to communicate to the outside world while within their communities they continued to maintain the dominance of face-to-face practices.

The Indigenous activists who have been discussed have lived within community formations which have been constituted primarily at the level of the face-to-face. Their

⁷³ Attwood and Markus, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

actions, undertaken in many cases by way of a white sympathiser's agency, were conducted at more abstract levels of integration. These abstract communicative practices were undertaken by activists through momentarily stepping outside of the dominant, socially integrative constitutive practices to achieve their political ends. The use of abstract communications was not practiced with the intention of becoming assimilated and 'civilised'. The desire was not to systematise the modern practices into their way of being but rather to maintain the dominance of their traditional way of being. This was carried out through the adapting of modern practices by framing them within face-to-face practices.

The chapter has illustrated characteristics and qualities of integrative community evident in some Indigenous communities. This has been achieved through empirical examples of the levels of agency and disembodied extension being reflexively practiced through framing them within the dominance of face-to-face relations. Discussion of the reflexive framing of practices has demonstrated the capacity for the practices of differing levels of abstraction to coexist and interpenetrate without the more abstract mode dominating the prior mode of communication. Chapter Six will provide further illustration of the characteristics of integrative community within the Indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. The chapter will address the abstract method of communication conducted at the disembodied level. This mode of communication has become strategically popular in the field of protest movements through its potential to mobilise significant solidarity networks. The potential of disembodied communicative techniques will be analysed in order to assess its implications for the constitution of community formations attempting to maintain integrative depth.

CHAPTER SIX

Mexico: Emailing the World

When the bombs were falling on the mountains south of San Cristóbal de las Casas, when our combatants resisted the attacks of the federal troops in Ocosingo, when our troops regrouped after the attack on the Rancho Nuevo barracks, when we were fortifying ourselves in Altamirano and Las Margaritas, when the air smelled of powder and blood, the CCRI-CG of the EZLN called me and told me, more or less: "We must speak our words so that others will hear. If we don't do it now, others will take our voice and lies will come from our mouth without our wanting them to. Look for ways to give our truth to others who want to listen to it."

Subcommander Marcos, *¡Zapatistas!*, 1994

The Zapatistas, a predominantly Indigenous revolutionary group from Chiapas, Mexico, have gained international prominence since their uprising on 1 January 1994. The rebellion has been presented through the eyes of journalists and others as the first postmodern revolution.¹ It is a romanticised rebellion, described as projected by a balaclava-clad army, fronted by a witty, articulate, media-savvy intellectual, and advanced through the use of modern communication technology such as the internet. The uprising was a response to continued state oppression and resulting poverty, the intensifying effects of globalised austerity programs, and the consequential loss of communal land rights. It has not been, however, a revolution that has attempted to take control of the state. The Zapatista's struggle insisted on the recognition and respect for the people of Chiapas to live their lives autonomously from the state. The struggle has captured the imagination of many activists, academics and others from the broad political left. The way in which this rebellion was, and is, being played out, taking the local struggle to the international arena through extended modes of communication, is what has seized many people's attention, and has particular relevance to this thesis.

¹ Roger Burbach, 'Roots of the Postmodern Rebellion in Chiapas', *New Left Review*, May-June, 1994, pp. 113-124 and Keith Harvey, 'The "First Post-modernist Guerilla Group"?', *Trotskyist International*, Issue 18, October-December 1995, p. 12.

The internet and other forms of new communication technology play an integral part in the Zapatista's struggle. The initial announcement of their uprising was made using fax machines, modems and the internet. The message reached the international stage through journalists and media outlets, but it also reached individuals throughout the world by way of the electronic network of the internet. Frequent and detailed news and information from Chiapas has followed this initial message. The internet has played a significant role in this and other political struggles.² It is such roles that have contributed to the debate surrounding the impact of new technology on society. There appears to be two prevalent and competing arguments.³ The first argues that the internet is a neutral tool which simply extends the reach of communication, and the other is a utopian belief that the internet will eradicate identity barriers to freedom and the abolishment of oppression. The emphasis on the Zapatistas as a postmodern guerilla group has inflamed the thinking that new communicative technology is potentially limitless as a conduit to utopia. The results of an analysis of the role of the internet, specifically in the case of the Zapatista rebellion, demonstrate that it is a much more complex debate. This debate illuminates tensions and contradictions between the use of late-modern technology and the modes of connection between subjects and places at a local level to an extension at the global level.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the use of written forms of communication mediated through relations of agency extension was an example of a limited reflexive practice. This chapter similarly demonstrates the reflexive practice of maintaining face-to-face relations by the Zapatistas of Mexico. However, the reflexivity exhibited in this example is of a higher level due to the conscious recognition of the contradictions apparent in the undertaking of the communicative practice. While much of the protest action is being conducted at the level of the disembodied by way of abstract communication techniques, the Zapatistas are self-conscious in maintaining the integrative depth of their communities. Through contradictions and tensions the Zapatistas are reflexively framing their political protest movement through communal, orally based everyday practices and rituals, such as communal decision-making structures. These are discussed further later in this chapter. This

² Pete Engardio; with Richard Dunham, Heidi Dawley, Irene Kunii and Elisabeth Malkin, 'Activists Without Borders', *Business Week*, 4 October 1999, pp. 144-150.

³ For an overview of the debate over the implications of the internet and the associated arguments please see Steven Jones, 'Information, Internet, and Community: Notes Toward an understanding of Community in the Information Age' in Steven Jones (ed.), *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-*

chapter will outline the situation in Chiapas and analyse the movement in relation to the capacity for the Indigenous community to adopt technological practices while maintaining qualities of integrative community. Then it will proceed with an analysis of the contradictions and tensions resulting from the way in which these events were communicated to the outside world and contributed to by 'northern' sympathisers. This chapter will argue that the disembodied communicative practice undertaken by the Zapatistas, through a reflexive practice, have succeeded in maintaining face-to-face relations.

The Zapatista Rebellion

Chiapas is rich in oil, coffee and beef cattle, but the peasant producers continue to be exploited receiving sometimes only 10 per cent of what the consumer pays.⁴ The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) estimated that in 1989, 1.2 trillion pesos of resources left the state by way of the Mexican government and a few businesses, while only 600 billion in credit and public spending was left behind.⁵ From a state that produces 20 per cent of Mexico's total electricity and 55 per cent of the hydro-electricity, only one-third of homes has electricity. Half of the population does not have drinkable water, two-thirds do not have sewage systems, and three-quarters of all children fail to finish first grade.⁶ In many communities there are schools with teachers, and health care centres, and handouts of food which is distributed by the government, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), under 'solidarity' programs. However, these are only accepted by those who support the government as there are conditional requirements for names and details of previous affiliations and personal histories and the enforcement of continued overt support of the PRI. This has resulted in very definite segregation, in many cases resulting in violent confrontations, within communities between the Priistas (those who support the PRI) and the sympathisers of the Zapatistas.⁷

mediated Communication and Community, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1998, pp. 1-34. Other chapters in this volume also provide useful material on power and protest in cyberspace.

⁴ Subcommander Marcos, 'Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds', in *¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, Autonomedia, 1994, pp. 26-32.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-32. Refer also to analysis of the effects of capitalist exploitation and the conditions of poverty in the state of Chiapas in Burbach, *loc. cit.*, and John Ross, *Rebellion From the Roots: Indian Uprising in Chiapas*, Common Courage Press, Monroe, 1995.

⁷ Information obtained through personal experience within communities in the state of Chiapas and through research at the Centre for Human Rights in San Cristóbal de las Casas.

The Zapatistas are directed by the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command (CCRI-CG) and supported by an army of men, women and children, with faces hidden by balaclavas or bandannas. The army is led by Subcommander Marcos. Marcos has become famed for his articulate communiques and interviews, and his charm. The masks that they wear are both functional and symbolic. They are necessary for the protection of the people's identities, and therefore, their safety. The masks also indicate the equally important roles of all members of the army, limiting a position of figure-head, so that in the event of death he or she may be replaced without affecting the movement. The downplaying of the individual leader is accentuated by the adoption of the rank 'Subcommander'.⁸ Marcos expresses the symbolism of the wearing of the masks in the claim that Mexico as a nation is wearing a mask, hiding its truths, and until it takes off its mask, the Zapatistas will wear theirs as a reminder.⁹ In addition to the army, many of the thousands of people living in the surrounding communities are Zapatista sympathisers, but are not involved in combat roles.

One of the important motives for the political rebellion by the Zapatistas, as with the Indigenous peoples of Australia as explored in Chapter Five, was the issue of land. The peasants and Indigenous peoples in Chiapas feared they would not be able to continue farming their lands for a number of reasons, particularly the revoking of the communal land ownership (*ejido*) law in 1992.

These fears were entirely reasonable, due to the volume of immigration into the rain forest area, competition from relatively rich landowners who wanted land for ranches and plantations and had political clout at the state level, the determination of the federal government to keep a large portion of the area as an ecological preserve, and most recently the essential abrogation of the *ejido* law in 1992.¹⁰

The revocation of the *ejido* law system was indicative of the precipitation of the government undertaking of austerity programs and symbolised the adoption of a neoliberal project. Further to this, on the first of January 1994 the Mexican Government signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Zapatista army significantly chose this same day, 1 January 1994, to take up arms and they converged on six towns in the state

⁸ Burbach, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁹ Subcommander Marcos, 'Testimonies of the First Day', in *Zapatistas!*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁰ Joseph Whitmeyer and Rosemary Hopcroft, 'Community, Capitalism and Rebellion in Chiapas', *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 1996, p. 534.

of Chiapas, including San Cristóbal de las Casas. Their call went out to the Mexican Government, Mexican society, and the world: "¡Ya Basta!", an expression in Spanish which means 'enough!'. The Zapatistas took with them on this day a written declaration that set out their demands in point-form. This declaration of war was faxed to newsrooms in other parts of Mexico.¹¹ They knew what they wanted: they had idealised, discussed, dreamt, and combined all their desires for 'peace with justice and dignity'. They were prepared not only in military warfare but also in dialogue.

The first communications were written on a manual typewriter, a battered Olivetti portable. They were slow in arriving and their tardiness in transit sometimes impeded the delicate dialogue between the General Command and government peace negotiator Manuel Comacho Solís. Now the technology is state-of-the-art, a laptop and a printer.¹²

A chain of agents deliver the communiques by way of the San Cristóbal diocese, which under its ideology of liberation theology has supported the Indigenous people for many years. In the beginning, they were delivered to various selected newspapers, and now, they are addressed to all national and international press. They are then translated and on the internet often by the next morning.

The use of the internet was developed, with the assistance of grass-roots activists in the region, because one of the first problems the Zapatistas encountered was the distortions and the omissions which were appearing in the mainstream press. The opportunities outside of the usual Mexican media outlets had considerable advantages due to these being significantly influenced by commercial and state control.¹³ In order to achieve their own voices being heard they began to have their communiques and documents released on the internet through a number of sympathetic, receptive gate-ways which included:

[Firstly] UseNet newsgroups, PeaceNet conferences, and Internet lists whose members were already concerned with Mexico's social and political life, secondly, humanitarian groupings concerned with human rights generally, thirdly, networks of indigenous peoples and those sympathetic to them, fourthly, those political regions of cyberspace which seemed likely to have members sympathetic to grassroots revolt in general and fifthly, networks of feminists who would respond with solidarity to the rape of indigenous women by Mexican soldiers or

¹¹ Victor Mejia, 'The War of Words', *The Pacific*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Summer, 1996, p. 11.

¹² John Ross, 'Introduction - The EZLN, A History: Miracles, Coyunturas, Communiqués', in *Zapatistas, Shadows of Tender Fury: The Letters and Communiqués of Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1995, p. 13.

¹³ Robert De Villar and Victor Franco, 'The Role of Media in Struggles for Identity', in Y. Zou and E. Trueba, (eds) *Ethnic Identity and Power: Cultural Contexts of Political Action in School and Society*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. 228.

to the EZLN 'Women's Revolutionary Law' drafted by women, for women, within and against a traditionally patriarchal society.¹⁴

This dissemination of information began through these avenues and continued to gain wider and wider distribution. The distribution of information, rather than relying on a newsworthiness status assessment by newspapers and television coverage, continues to be disseminated through the avenues of the new media forms today.

Media coverage in various forms, including fax and video, together with reports in highly diverse and prestigious newspapers, magazines, and professional journals, have combined to keep the Chiapas conflict, and the related general plight of today's Mexico, in the forefront of international discourse.¹⁵

This international prominence has had implications for the way in which the Mexican Government and the world audience have responded to the Zapatista struggle. In the case of the Zapatistas it has been convincingly argued that the 'explosive movement of solidarity' which followed the reports that had been released on the internet, downloaded, mass-produced and promulgated, forced the Mexican Government to back-down from its violent campaign against the Zapatistas, and negotiate with the group.¹⁶

The electronic dissemination of information has demanded a response from the Mexican Government, increased global awareness of the struggle, and consequently inspired a global realisation that the struggle of the Zapatistas is not theirs alone. Firstly, the use of the internet has been referred to as a war, or a 'netwar' – "societal-level ideational conflicts waged in part through internetted modes of communication"¹⁷ – due to the response that this type of activism has generated. This reference has been both taken as a serious phenomenon, but more often one that is seen to be harmless and even amusing. An article in *Newsweek/The Bulletin*, 'When Words Are the Best Weapon' refers to the Zapatista revolutionaries as 'high-intensity lobbyists', and states that the 'guerillas' escaped into the jungle with their most important equipment being fax machines and laptop computers. This article includes an enchanting photograph of a traditionally clothed African tribesman, standing stoically with spear in one hand and a mobile phone held to his ear with

¹⁴ Harry Cleaver, *Electronic Fabric of Struggle*, (<http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/zaps.html>).

¹⁵ De Villar and Franco, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶ Cleaver, *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Cyberwar is Coming!*, International Policy Department, RAND, Taylor & Francis, 1993, (<http://gopher.well.sf.ca.us:70/0/Military/cyberwar>).

the other.¹⁸ A more serious study by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt from the Rand Corporation on the war that is occurring between resistance groups and governments and corporations have referred to the response that it demands as 'counter-information'.¹⁹ Those opposing the state and other institutions are receiving international attention that is demanding equally public responses. To date, however, there appears to be relative little use of countering information with information. Rather, there are a number of examples of the governments of countries taking action to impede the use of interactive technologies. The Saudi government has made it difficult and expensive for Saudis to have access to the internet.²⁰ Similarly in China, internet users are required to register with the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and with the police, and "to sign a statement saying they will respect China's laws and do nothing to harm the state."²¹ Also in Burma the threat of new technology has resulted in laws under which anyone within Burma who operates computers installed with fax-modem cards (which facilitates the connection to the internet or other networking operations) risks punishment of a jail term of 7-15 years.²²

Many journalists and writers have targeted the propaganda aspect of the Zapatistas struggle, and referred to them as the "first post-modernist guerrilla group",²³ or to their actions as "staging the world's first post-modern rebellion."²⁴ While the use of advanced technology is a major component of the propaganda machine of the Zapatistas in Chiapas the technology is far from penetrating the community lives of the Indigenous communities in Chiapas and other Latin American *pueblos*. For example, the people of communities such as San Isidro el Ocotel, a community of approximately 200 people, four hours walk from the main highway to San Cristóbal de las Casas, do not use computers and cable-based interactivity in their everyday lives. The desire of those in Chiapas is for a liberation which is more likely to take the shape of peace from the Federal Army, freedom from starvation, survival from disease and a dignified existence. Forms of association that are achieved

¹⁸ Russell Watson, John Barry, Christopher Dickey and Tim Padgett, 'When Words Are the Best Weapon', *Newsweek/The Bulletin*, 28 February 1995, pp. 64-67.

¹⁹ Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Mamoun Fandy, 'CyberResistance: Saudi Opposition Between Globalization and Localization', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 1, January 1999, p. 141.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² State Law and Order Restoration Council, *The Computer Science Department Law*, No. 10/96, The 8th Waxing of Tawthalin, 1358 M.E., 20 September 1996.

²³ The EZLN was quickly dubbed the first "post-modernist guerilla group" by the *New York Times* as indicated in Harvey, *loc. cit.*

²⁴ Mejia, *loc. cit.*

through disembodied communicative technologies are without bonds and borders and cannot of themselves provide such an existence.

The shifting balance of power from a broadcast model of communication to a narrowcast one is the basis for a postmodern notion of the utopian potential of abstract technologies as discussed in Chapter Two. The issues of government control and coercion over media bodies, and commercial control through big business operations have been a significant problem for news gathering and dissemination. The advent of new media technologies has presented itself as a danger to those controlling the systemic practices that have proven to be successful mechanisms. It is this threat which has prompted a debate regarding the possibility and the potential of 'cyber-solidarity' and 'netwar'. An example of this debate transpiring in practice was during the siege of the Japanese Embassy in Lima, Peru by the Marxist group, the Tupac Amaru.²⁵ The events took place over a period of several months from December 1996 and into early 1997. During this time a group on the internet called Arm the Spirit Web, which essentially acts as an independent media source for radicals, created a web page which included full communiques of the group, background interviews and mainstream media articles. The group, however, became a target of a sustained campaign by the mainstream media, which began with a report by Reuters on 3 January 1997, implying that the internet group was associated with the Tupac Amaru.²⁶ The article also included a reference to those people who provide information about the Zapatistas on the internet stating they were "among the first to stake out revolutionary cyberspace, and became enthusiastic guerilla hackers."²⁷ Other mainstream press such as the *Wall Street Journal* followed with similar articles suggesting such activities were being undertaken by "clever terrorists exploiting loopholes in censorship laws."²⁸ Such a response to the provision of alternative information to that provided by the mainstream media indicates the threat that is being felt to the traditional control mechanisms. This has been discussed at length in the Rand Corporation report *Cyberwar Is Coming* which addresses

²⁵ Much of the information used in this example has been taken from an article by Andrew Flood, *The Peruvian Embassy Siege and What it Tells Us About the Media*, (http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2419/peru_mrt_a_seige.html).

²⁶ P. Bate, 'USA: Peruvian Guerrillas Wage Propaganda War on Internet', *Reuters News Service*, 3 January 1997. Please note, the Reuters piece has been available at (<http://bum.ucsd.edu/~ats/MRTA/reuter10.htm>) although Reuters requested that all their articles be removed from the Arm The Spirit web page a week following this article perhaps in an attempt to make the page appear less balanced.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Flood, *loc. cit.*

both 'cyberwar'; "knowledge-related conflict at the military level", and 'netwar'; "societal struggles most often associated with low intensity conflict by non-state actors ..."²⁹ It is that which they describe as 'netwar' which is providing a problem to those who have traditionally controlled the dissemination of information. Subcommander Marcos, in an interview with a *Newsweek* reporter stated, "What governments should really fear is a communications expert."³⁰

The Zapatistas exemplify the practices of political activists who are using abstract technologies as tools in political media campaigns. Their struggle is one for liberation, and this has been significant in the debate over the communicative practices being more than instrumental, that is, having utopian potential. The shift to a new interactive model of mass communication is aiding, and some would argue enabling, this struggle for liberation to occur. It is with further analysis of the changing communicative practice which impacts upon the constitution of societal formations we must, however, question such assumptions. It is the idea of interactive, identity-free, and virtual communications that have encouraged the postmodern contention that this change in communicative techniques will allow an identity-free utopian existence. There is more to the debate in relation to abstract technology than the dichotomy of, on the one hand, the internet being a neutral tool, and on the other, it potentially achieving a liberatory utopia. The new modes of communication may be significant in enabling and supporting such political struggles yet the contradictions and tensions that arise do not support the optimistic and deterministic view that the effects of interactive technology are simply positive, nor progressive.

Tensions Within the Utopian Web

As discussed in Chapter One, the internet is being proffered as a replacement means of interconnection as bounded communities are lost or nostalgically revisited in the fragmentation of modern societies.³¹ The internet is presented as an opportunity where "people connect with strangers without much of the social baggage that divides and alienates."³² It is celebrated for its liberatory openness. However, this assertion of liberation

²⁹ Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *loc. cit.*

³⁰ Watson, *et. al.*, *loc. cit.*

³¹ Howard Rheingold, 'A Slice of Life in My Virtual Community', in L. Harasim, (ed.), *Global Networks: Computers and International Communications*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 62.

³² Mark Poster, 'A Second Media Age?', *Arena Journal*, No. 3, 1994, p. 84.

is one that is constructed within the individualist thought of the Western world. It is the suggestion of a freedom that carries with it an assumption about social forms that does not hold true for all societies. In terms of the argument being presented within this thesis, social forms are constituted by practices framed under differing levels of integrative abstraction. Even in the most abstract settings, such as the virtual community, disembodied interactions of the postmodern or abstract communicative technologies can not completely nor effectively operate without the reliance on a foundation of more concrete practices. Introductions made through the internet often lead to people wanting to meet each other when their scanned embodied images leave an emptiness in the fulfillment of the interaction. Howard Rheingold, as discussed in Chapter Two, had to meet his WELL family in the same physical space, under real-time conditions.³³ In other words, postmodern communication is only one layer of varying forms of integration. More embodied forms of engagement are not eradicated by the advent of more abstract forms. Rather, the more abstract forms overlay, dominating and subordinating embodied relations under differing conditions of integration. This action of ebbing and flowing is not always a smooth one, which carries a very real propensity for contradictory relations.

The mode of communication is one that has attracted considerable debate in recent times. There is significant work on the transition from an industrial society to an informational society.³⁴ These theories tend to incorporate the evolutionary transition bias that has been emphasised in the theories surrounding the progression of social formations from tribal, traditional and modern to postmodern social forms. This framework is carried through in the field of communications. Manuel Castells has developed a sophisticated theory on the rise of the 'network society' based on the premise that changing communication has produced a fundamental shift from the power structures of old to a 'new politics'. Simply stated, the 'new politics' is based on the capacity of networks of power to undermine hierarchical structures that previously determined political power structures. The basis of his highly regarded theory lies in the networked channels of disembodied communicative technologies. I would argue that his argument carries the linear progression bias through a commonsense idea of progressing from oral to written to electronic forms of

³³ Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1993, p. 2.

³⁴ See Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Volume II*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, 1997, pp. 1-2, and Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990, pp. 6-7.

communication on a linear plane and a failure to acknowledge the (contradictory) intersections of the disembodied mode with the less abstract modes of communication. Given this, it follows that once these tools of communication belonging to more abstract techniques are surpassed, previous forms are either no longer required, or required only as a basis for the existence of the transcending form. This reliance upon a foundational form differs from the reflexive undertaking of contradictory modes of practice in order to fulfill an experience. The transcendence argued in the evolutionary theory is one that assumes that the previous mode of practice can no longer exist of its own accord, and particularly, can no longer dominate the 'more advanced' tool.

It is possible to expand on a critique of the theory of the network society developed by Castells by referring to the case of the Zapatistas, a case Castells himself uses to exemplify the 'new politics'. He argues the Zapatistas are an example of resistance movements against the global social order.³⁵ The progressive linear plane, on which Castells bases his theory, leaves no place for the contradictory complexity of the overlaying of differing modes of communication. Theorising of communicative (and other) methods in this way dangerously collapses the differing modes together, not allowing for the changing dominance and subordination of the different modes. The strength of the resistance strategies of the Zapatistas is not, as Castells argues, in the leaving behind of previous structures and practices, but rather the strength is generated through the maintenance of the 'old' in relationship to the 'new'. Rather than a succession of more technologically advanced forms of communication canceling out the previous form, we can see that in integrative community differing forms of communication are used in order to satisfy different requirements. The practices of the Zapatistas of Mexico exemplify a computer-mediated form of communication being used in a situation of predominantly oral communication. This technique has been used as a tool for a particular purpose and does not replace or reframe the previous communicative form. While in complex intersections of modes of practice such as this it may be necessary to draw upon another existing mode, this does not necessarily incur a transcendence from or a dissolving of the prior method.

The example of the political protest of the Zapatistas is one of many in which the internet as a method of connection has been highlighted. The ability for divergent groups or

³⁵ Castells, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-83.

individuals to locate each other quickly, efficiently and on a non-hierarchical basis has been popularised within the general media.³⁶ In an Australian radio interview on the 'Media Report' Mick O'Regan comments on a metaphor used regarding the versatility of the technology for protest groups.

Mick O'Regan: Can I just take you back a little, to the notion of the form that the new media allows social change activists to pursue? Because it would seem to me that the organising principles involved in the Internet, are in fact, well to quote one activist: he said that the target corporations or target governments are often like tankers steaming through the oceans, but the activists are like schools of fish that have the advantage of being able to fragment very quickly to reform very quickly and to move incredibly quickly. Is that the basis of it, that the organisational logic of the Internet allows speed, movement and manoeuvrability?³⁷

These ideas of the internet being a tool which can *network* individuals and groups quickly and effectively has applicability amongst many protest movements.

As a military threat, the Zapatista National Liberation Army has never really amounted to much ... But in cyberspace, the Zapatistas are more effective than ever ... It's an avenue that activists of all stripes are fast discovering. By mastering the weaponry of the Web, everyone from clandestine Beijing dissidents to high-powered Washington lobbyists are finding that the Internet is an extraordinary tool for mobilizing support, raising money, and exerting influence. In the Internet Age, it's possible for a handful of Web-savvy activists to exert pressure on policymakers working out of their homes. The result may be a fundamental transformation of the nature of politics.³⁸

A recent example is that of the protest action outside of the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle, United States, in November 1999, the S11 barricade outside the World Economic Forum in Melbourne, in September 2000, and the S26 protest in Prague in the same month. The coming together of diverse groups of activists was attributed to the ability to link across spatial boundaries.³⁹ I would argue, however, that the positive potential attributed to the internet is often over-inflated and does not account for continuous hard-work on the ground, through endless meetings and other forms of publicity.

The potentialities of new communicative technology are problematic and complex issues and the use of technology results in often ignored tensions and contradictions. These contradictions arise out of the conflictual intersection of the levels of abstraction and

³⁶ See for example Richard Reeves, 'Inside the Violent World of the Global Protesters', *The Observer*, 31 October 1999, pp. 16-17, John Vidal, 'Modern Warfare', *Guardian Unlimited*, 13 January 1999, (<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk>), Naomi Klein, 'No Leader, No Program, Just a Global Revolution', *The Age: News Extra*, 15 July 2000, p. 6, and Tim Watts, 'Mobilised, Globalised: Revolution by E-mail', *The Age: News Extra*, 22 April 2000, p. 7.

³⁷ Mick O'Regan interviewing Grant Hill of Jubilee 2000, 'Media Report', *Radio National*, 20 July 2000, transcript available at (<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/mediarpt/stories/s154066.htm>).

³⁸ Engardio, et. al., loc. cit.

indicate the need for new thinking as opposed to a desire to neatly reconcile tensions. The internet may offer a space in which there exists the opportunity for a unique struggle and testing of power relations, exemplified by the reaction of the mainstream media to alternative information dissemination. In the case of the Zapatistas, they have used the computer-mediated technology as a means of reaching an international stage in order to place their state's oppressive activity under scrutiny. They have maintained that this activity has been undertaken to reinforce their right to live as an autonomous community in which acts such as these are framed by communal face-to-face practices, such as the persistence of Subcommander Marcos to use personalised letter-form style in his addresses to the media, or short-story form.⁴⁰

At the same time, however, the symbolic limitations of the virtual world resulting from the use of interactive technology are presenting contradictions and dilemmas for many using the technology. It is a tension between the user at the local level interacting at a level of global extension. Contradictions arise out of the ensuing tensions between disembodied practices, communicating by way of the internet, and the framing conditions of those practices when they are undertaken within social formations such as the Zapatistas living as tribal or peasant communities primarily constituted through face-to-face integration. The use of the internet has provided the avenue for inspiring support and solidarity from the international arena, but at the same time it has allowed intellectuals and others of the first world to divest the Zapatistas of their struggle and their subjectivity. The technology of virtual exchange and interaction is also one that is contradictory to the struggle for an autonomous existence. This technology which has arguably been responsible for much of the success of the rebellion is itself part of the process of globalisation, through economic and technological colonisation, which has paradoxically been an impetus of the struggle itself.

An identity-free disembodied existence may provide a freedom from all obligation and oppression, but this does not correspond to the real-life situation of face-to-face human interaction. Cyberspace creates contradictions in the lives of those who are living in a face-to-face community. While desiring the boundedness of concrete, face-to-face interaction,

³⁹ Reeves, *loc. cit.*, Vidal, *loc. cit.*, Klein, *loc. cit.*, and Watts, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁰ For examples of these letters and short stories see numerous correspondences and articles in *¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, Autonomedia, 1994.

they simultaneously resist the boundedness of more abstract frameworks of interaction, such as the nation, this resistance being expressed in their desire for autonomy from the centralised state. The struggle for autonomy through the advanced modes of communication, through disembodied, abstracted practices, is in contradiction with the desire for more concrete societal integration. The contradictions which have emerged for the Zapatistas, through the use of late-modern technology, can be exemplified by a number of themes: globalised media attention as opposed to the isolation of their traditional communities; individualised, independent life-style rather than communal, consensus-style living; and appropriation of the struggle to an intellectualised political debate removed from the fundamental demands for peace and dignity.

Northern Contradictions

The argument with which I take issue is that by using the interactive technology people are able to free themselves of all oppressions and transport themselves to utopia.⁴¹ As discussed at some length in Chapter Two the identity and meaning of social formations is constituted through the modes of practice of its participants. Modes of practice such as the modes of production, inquiry, organisation, communication, are examples of practices that in the contemporary world are increasingly abstracted. This thesis is focusing upon the mode of communication in order to exemplify its argument. Practices are inextricably bound up with differing levels of integration: face-to-face, agency-extended, and disembodied. The use of the internet and other abstract communicative technologies are illustrative of communicative practices that have implications for the constitution of social being. The use of communicative technologies for the Zapatistas has been significant in their ability for communicating to the outside world. Connecting with the international world has proved beneficial in providing solidarity and also in recognising the similarities in experiences for many people across the global arena.

The political use of the internet, particularly that use which is contesting the predetermined commercial emphasis of the technology, presents contradictions. Those who are the most prolific, advanced and effective with technology such as the internet are

⁴¹ The works of Mark Poster have been used to enable this critique, in particular *The Second Media Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995. His work has been instrumental in this exploration, criticisms notwithstanding.

situated in the developed world. It has often been the people within the education systems, who could be described as the intellectuals within the political sphere, who are operating the systems on behalf of the people who are actually engaging in political struggle. In the case of the Zapatistas, most of the information is disseminated globally from a central node in the United States. The team – primarily academics in Austin, Texas – design web pages, monitor mailing lists, create archive files, and produce analysis. The struggle of the Zapatistas has inspired the internet activists' personal revolutionary ideals. It is with the intention of supporting the struggle, and at the same time hoping to encourage a greater knowledge and a broader understanding, that they have undertaken this work.⁴² It is this appropriation of the struggle from the oppressed in Chiapas to a central disseminating point removed from the struggle itself that sets up a contradiction. Robert DeVillar and Victor Franco have written quite critically of an idea that those receiving the information have automatic powers in the political struggles.

The world audience to whom the *Zapatistas* speak is itself complex, an amalgam of televideo voyeurs and information hunters and gatherers, whose sustenance depends upon receiving the message and integrating it immediately into their respective social circles, not taking sustained action upon it. Information is not praxis, merely an element necessary to it.⁴³

The Zapatista's struggle is occurring by way of a disembodied communicative technology in and through a predominantly face-to-face community. Those within the communities are framing abstract modes of practice within practices constituted at a more concrete integrative depth. These tensions cannot be reconciled by focusing upon the celebration of the utopian potential of new tools of communication.

The tensions which unfold deserve exploration to determine if the struggle remains true to those who are the ones on-the-ground who originated the resistance. The possibility of the struggle being utilised for others' purposes, or the fundamental aims and principles of those fighting for their freedom being distorted, is a dilemma that this provokes. Christopher Wise has raised this concern in his reference to postcolonial theorists who argue that postmodernist theory, in its rejection of subjectivity, creates a situation where Indigenous cultural forms can become "destabilized and overrun by centrifugal currents

⁴² Information obtained through personal discussions with members of the Austin-Chiapas networking team during the *First Intercontinental Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity* in Mexico, July-August 1996.

⁴³ DeVillar and Franco, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

deriving from the metropolis."⁴⁴ Daniel Nugent also writes of his concerns about the appropriation of struggles such as the Zapatistas by intellectuals of the North, particularly through attributing a postmodernist politics to the movement.

In any case, it is difficult to determine the ideological resources available to participants in such movements when their own voices are muted and their own practices obscured by the superimposed discourses of northern academics. If such movements derive their meaning only from the terms of academic discourses, how different is the conservative claim that the EZLN is led by "outside agitators" from the supposedly radical claim that the EZLN is a "postmodern political movement"?⁴⁵

His argument criticises the intellectuals for claiming such political activity for their own discursive practices. He suggests they should rather be "acting as a critical instrument, as a challenge to ruling ideologies, maybe as a guide to political action where possible, but above all as a way of enhancing or broadcasting, but not replacing, the voices of those who oppose oppression."⁴⁶ Furthermore, Mexican writers have described the situation as one that has patronising characteristics: "We all know that many North American leftist intellectuals have a tendency to romanticize the violent social processes south of the border. It seems that, for them, we will always be curious and exotic subjects in need of redemption."⁴⁷

As the intellectuals, or the sympathisers, of the developed world actively disseminate information and to a lesser extent analysis, of the Zapatista struggle against oppression, it is removed, paradoxically, into the space of their enemy: the enemy that is the developed world. The Indigenous people of Chiapas are fighting for autonomy and self-determination, trying to escape from a neo-liberal, globalising world system. However, the struggle is being appropriated into this very system. The international response has encouraged increased visitors to the area of resistance which has proven important in discouraging the Mexican Government to undertake military offensives. Yet, the effect of global interaction permeating the communities must also be considered. The dynamics of the struggle itself may be shifting with the building of alliances replacing on-the-ground

⁴⁴ Christopher Wise, '(Post) Modernity/(Post) Coloniality', *Arena Journal*, No. 5, 1995, p. 43.

⁴⁵ Daniel Nugent, 'Northern Intellectuals and the EZLN', *Monthly Review*, July-August, 1995, pp. 132-134.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ Mongo Sánchez Lira and Rogelio Villarreal, 'Mexico 1994: The ruins of the future', in E. Katzenberger (ed.), *First World, Ha! Ha! Ha! The Zapatista Challenge*, San Francisco, City Lights, 1995, p. 223.

struggle. The northern intellectuals are indirectly developing the predominantly state-based struggle, to one within an international context.

A further contradiction exists in the fundamental basis to the struggle, and in the way it is being fought. Paradoxically, the Zapatistas, or more accurately the sympathisers, are utilising late-modern technological equipment such as fax machines, modems, and electronic mail produced on the global market to promulgate a message of resistance against the loss of traditional lifestyle and community. "What distinguishes the EZLN ... is not their postmodern redefinition of temporality, space, and experience itself, but, on the contrary, their sense of palpable connection with a tradition."⁴⁸ Roger Burbach has written of the struggle of the EZLN as one that is predominantly opposing the particular form of capitalism adopted in their region.⁴⁹ Nugent summarises this as,

Outlining the ways labour migration is related to the alienation of the peasantry from the land, how commercial agriculture, especially of coffee production, is buffeted by fluctuations in international commodity prices, and how strategic relocations of squatters are engineered by the Mexican state while large landowners and ranchers continue to rely on hired gun thugs (the *guardias blancas*), Burbach gives some substantive content to the notion of "combined and uneven development".⁵⁰

This is a struggle which is striving to retain its traditional lifestyle by resisting the capitalist control over the means of production. As such, the focus on, and even celebration of, its 'postmodernist' tendencies can distort and divert attention from the actual goals, desires, and objectives of the Zapatistas. This results in shifting attention instead "toward the postmodern world of digital simultaneity".⁵¹

While the struggles of the group have been to achieve dignity and justice, in addition to the debate of the appropriation of the struggle by intellectuals of the developed world, many journalists, movie directors, and admirers have turned the struggle into a romanticised circus. Subcommander Marcos is used to play out the role of the West's counter-cultural fantasies. Newspaper articles have prioritised stories of the visits of famous people: the movie director, Oliver Stone (spicing it up with rumours of a future movie starring Oliver Stone as Subcommander Marcos); the widow of the former French President, Danielle Mitterand; and French writer, who gained notoriety due to his

⁴⁸ Nugent, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴⁹ Burbach, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁰ Nugent, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

comradeship with Che Guevara, Regis Debray.⁵² The use of the internet has attracted international attention due to its innovativeness and its originality in application. The Zapatistas who began their fight with weapons and words, are now operating with words alone. The image of the guerilla using non-violent technology has captured newsworthy status. Subcommander Marcos, voicing the desire of the EZLN to resist the individualised or *caudillo*⁵³ revolution is experiencing the status of a globalised icon.

Subcomandante Marcos, the university-educated mestizo, spokesperson for the Zapatista National Liberation Army, is a guerilla hero able to "inspire insane love" in the envoy from *Vanity Fair* – well, not only in her – and to fascinate locals and foreigners alike. A charismatic and complex personality, he's been at the center of the tornado that has lashed at Mexico since the first of January (1994). Lucid, enigmatic, serene, sensationalist, gallant, virile, romantic, sometimes almost kitschy and vain (like a hero in a gringo movie!), ... the prolific, faceless writer hidden behind the ski mask of the Subcomandante shook and divided public opinion with his brilliant handling of the media.⁵⁴

The use of new technology and the prophetic writing abilities have captured a global excitement, resulting in Marcos being attributed with a 'star' status. This status attributed to Marcos and to the Indigenous people by extension is encouraged through the internet's simultaneous intimacy and distance. It allows for the developed world to know the revolutionary group intimately through regular information and pictures, while simultaneously being secure in their distance. The romanticised status is a dilemma because such imaging allows for the struggle to be ridiculed and the tendency for the people's claims not to be taken seriously. This dilemma is also extended due to the intense global media attention that seeks out Subcommander Marcos and others within the EZLN for interviews and photographs. The guerilla movement was forced to abandon its underground identity in order to nourish the international observance that they had themselves encouraged with their technological competence. However, the technology that operates through an extension from the face-to-face, invites the problematic romanticisation because of its very distance.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the reference to land as a precipitator of the Zapatista struggle has raised an interesting point of debate. This debate has parallels with the appropriation of meanings attributed to the attachment to land in the struggles of the

⁵² Jaime Aviles, 'Movilizacion Activa Por la Paz Ofrece Danielle Mitterand', (Danielle Mitterand Offers to Actively Mobilise for Peace), *La Jornada*, 19 April 1996, p. 1.

⁵³ A *caudillo* is a charismatic political leader who is seen as the supreme leader of a movement, particularly a guerilla movement.

⁵⁴ Sanchez Lira and Villarreal, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-225.

Indigenous peoples of Australia as highlighted in the previous chapter. The revocation of the *ejido* land law that constitutionally recognised communal ownership of land, had arguably played a significant role in the motives for the struggle. Many commentators have placed considerable emphasis on this as the catalyst for the uprising, arguing that this depicts the communal practices of those working the land.⁵⁵ This issue of communal ownership has proved contentious. Joseph Whitmeyer and Rosemary Hopcroft have argued that this emphasis by commentators has been misplaced:

we examine local property rights and the effect of changes in land tenure law more closely, and find that neither the solidarity nor the organization of the revolt stemmed from communal ownership and management of land by agriculturalists. Truly communal landholding is rare in the areas of Chiapas where the conflict took place. Even property rights which are communal *de jure* are private in practice. Solidarity in the revolt was based in the material concerns of poor peasants and *indigenas*, especially those who had migrated to the Lacandón rain forest.⁵⁶

The emphasis placed on the communal aspects of the land tenure by Whitmeyer and Hopcroft has been on the legalities of the situation. Alternatively the reality behind the everyday practices exhibit the communal working of the land in the Chiapas communities. The contention that has arisen could be attributed to the desire of the northern sympathisers to romanticise the situation, highlighting the differences within the Indigenous communities of Mexico in comparison to the individualism of the Western-centric notion of land. The rejection of such romanticisation may result in the downplaying of differing practices by other observers which arguably, has occurred in this debate. Such debates highlight the possibility of appropriation of struggles by outside others and the ensuing responses that can neglect the meanings and understandings of those living on the land.

The Challenges of Cyber-solidarity

In Chapter One, the popularisation of virtual community was rejected for its inability to provide social formations with integrative depth. Its proponents were criticised for arguing that the potential of the internet was to provide a utopian liberation. The liberation the Zapatistas seek is not a freedom without obligations and constraints. It is rather a desire for involvement and control in the way in which decisions are made, and how these decisions are then carried out. The Indigenous communities for hundreds of years were substantially

⁵⁵ See Whitmeyer and Hopcroft, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-518 for an overview of literature that makes such claims.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

isolated from national and local political forces, and consequently they were organised by the communities and the collective governments they formed. The isolation provoked "the development of another type of 'state', a state to deal with the survival of the collective ..."⁵⁷ These demands and rules of organisation have been set out by the Zapatistas in their Declaration of War, and their Revolutionary Laws⁵⁸ released on the day of their uprising. The Laws include the Women's Revolutionary Law, the Law of Rights and Obligations of Peoples in Struggle, and Instructions to Leaders and Officials of the EZLN, outlining the roles of those involved within the struggle within the desired community living structures.

Those rebelling in Chiapas are struggling for their communities to be autonomous as opposed to being controlled by outside oppressors such as the state and neo-liberal ideologies. However, their community organisational structures demonstrate their acceptance of the internal constraints of community. It is the desire for boundedness on one level, and paradoxically, a rejection of externally imposed boundedness on another. Because human activity is interdependent, it will always have some implication upon others and therefore produces obligations as well as rights. The people of Chiapas are fighting for a form of liberation where they are allowed the dignity to continue and construct living arrangements with their own constraints, enabling autonomy in their communal life. Such collective structures locate considerable obligation on the members of the community. Their desire is not for a situation of living without structure, without constraints, and without order. Their desire is for a life in which the communities themselves determine the way in which they live, without the structures which prioritise ideologies foreign to the Indigenous peoples and which have caused only situations of poverty and oppression.

Collective work, democratic thinking, and subjection to the decisions of the majority are more than just traditions in Indigenous zones. They have been the only means of survival, resistance, dignity, and defiance. These "evil ideas," as they are seen by landholders and businessmen, go against the capitalist precept of "a lot in the hands of a few".⁵⁹

The organisational structures are based on a bottom-up decision-making process, where there are a number of communal assemblies who choose their own representatives as

⁵⁷ Eugenio Aguilar, Ana Laura Hernández, Gustavo Rodríguez and Pablo Salazar Devereaux, 'Interview with Subcommander Marcos', in *¡Zapatistas!*, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

⁵⁸ Full transcripts of the Declaration of War and the Revolutionary Laws can be found in 'El Despertador Mexicano', in *¡Zapatistas!*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-62, or on the Chiapas 95 internet archive, (<http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html>).

⁵⁹ Marcos, 'Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds', in *¡Zapatistas!*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

delegates on the ruling CCRI-CG.⁶⁰ The most telling observations of the practices of consultation and participatory democracy are the principles of command within the organisation of the Zapatistas, *mandando obediciendo* (ruling by obeying) and *preguntando caminamos* (asking we walk). "The will of the majority is the path on which those who command should walk. If they separate their step from the path of the will of the people, the heart that commands should be changed for another that obeys."⁶¹ These principles of command illustrate the emphasis placed on the communal decision-making, discussion and consultation. Members of the councils are also removable or recallable at any time; there are no fixed terms. These rules of organisation and operation are ones under which the communities in Chiapas, fighting for liberty, wish to live their lives. Marcos tells of how the EZLN was not born democratic but rather "the form and organization of the indigenous communities permeate[d] and dominated our movement and we had to democratize in the Indian way."⁶² This participatory style of democracy is the way in which the communities see their liberated lives.

The organisation and the everyday practices, constituted at the level of the face-to-face, which structure the lives of Zapatista communities can be evidenced through specific examples. Such examples can be demonstrated through my own account of the practices of the community of San Isidro el Ocotal, observed while undertaking a peace observation role in 1996. The community, after fleeing into the mountains following threats and intimidation from the Federal Army two years previously, was beginning to return to the site of their original community. There was much reconstruction required as a result of the razing of many of the homes and community buildings. The few buildings remaining were the church and the school. The first buildings to be constructed were the kitchen, library and sleeping huts for the International Peace Observers who the community insistently requested as a security measure before their return. The organisation of the reconstruction took place through a series of community meetings. Generally these meetings were gender-divided. The women would arrive at the Church early in the morning, having walked with their children for sometimes an hour and more, from their temporary residences surrounding the area to meet. The discussions would take place for a considerable time, generally around two hours. Following the meeting of the women who would return into the mountains, the

⁶⁰ Ross, *Rebellion from the Roots*, op. cit., p. 287.

⁶¹ Harry Cleaver, 'Introduction', in *Zapatistas!*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁶² Ross, *Rebellion from the Roots*, loc. cit.

men would arrive carrying tools and equipment, meet shortly and then proceed to undertake the agreed tasks. The meetings and construction were all undertaken through community forums with consensus-style decision-making and communal working practices.

Another example of the organisational structures claimed by the Zapatistas being evidenced in everyday practices, is that of the *consulta* process in March, 1999. This consultation process was instigated by the Zapatistas in order to gauge the weight of opinion of 'civil society'. Marcos stated with reference to the consultation process, "we're going to take the conflict out of the confrontation and monologue, the give and take between the parties, and we're going to take it to society."⁶³ The process was encouraging a political action, rather than a military one, a dialogue rather than a monologue and conducted at many levels rather than among the leaders.⁶⁴ The questions presented in the *consulta* including whether Indigenous peoples should be included in the building of a new Mexico, whether Indigenous rights should be recognised, whether the military should be removed, and whether the people should organise themselves.⁶⁵

The Zapatista's (sic) formed 2,358 brigades with a total of 27,859 people working in them. 265 of these brigades were in 29 foreign countries. The Zapatista's visited 1,299 town halls in Mexico and contacted a total population of 64,598,409. Outside of Chiapas 120,000 people helped with the organisation and realisation of the Consulta. 4,996 Zapatista delegates visited Mexico City. The total number of votes cast in Mexico was 2,854,737. In other countries 58,378 votes were cast.⁶⁶

While the numbers of votes may be debated, the significance of the process lies in what the process symbolises, the opportunity for the voice of the civil society to be heard.

The tension that presents itself is that between the symbolic power of image politics and the existence of communities living in oppressive situations which require new political systems to achieve a free liberated existence. These existences are far removed from the disembodied lives that are lived behind the computer screens in a postmodern world of virtual communities. Harry Cleaver argues that the networking computer systems are complementary to their desired community and living structures, however this argument is

⁶³ Active Distribution, 'Marcos on the Consulta', *Zapatista*, "In the Spirit of Emma" Active Distribution, London, Oct 1999, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

difficult to sustain considering the ultimate on-the-ground isolatory aspects of computerisation. He writes:

as part of their struggles to resist exploitation and oppression and to develop their own ways of life and community structures, they have developed their own forms of self-organization which turned out to be complementary to the computer systems with which they would link up.⁶⁷

While networking, theoretically, assists in bringing isolated peoples together, in a situation such as that in Chiapas such a statement seems unjustified. In the Chiapas communities there is almost no access to electricity, let alone computers, and communication may consist of a days walking to the next closest village. The bringing together of isolated peoples, or recreating a new space, however, would only be useful for the Zapatistas if it effects the transportation to a self-managed community. To this point, the use of new media technology can provide only a virtual or symbolic space. A space where a freedom of sorts exists, but not one which develops a complementary or a negotiated space between the face-to-face community and the disembodied, identity-free existence.

Cleaver argues that the virtual cyber-solidarity communities, engendered by net-based solidarity, replicate the self-organised communities of the Indigenous communities in Chiapas. The emphasis on the newly found opportunities of linking-up and networking that computer-mediated communication brings is one that parallels with that of postmodern capitalism. In the period principally from the 1980s the fluidity of the market has resulted in a borderless trade of products and financial transactions. This fluidity has resulted in a necessary rethinking of the cultural and social implications.⁶⁸ The emphasis and excitement placed on the virtual character of the Zapatista's struggle does not acknowledge the implications of such postmodern fluidity on social constitution and the direct relevance to the goals of the Indigenous struggle. The postmodern market, which parallels and which in some ways is responsible for the 'electronic fabric of struggle' is part of the enemy which the Zapatistas are calling for civil society to struggle against. The demands of the Zapatistas for democracy, freedom and social justice are modernist claims that are being pursued via postmodern means.

⁶⁷ Cleaver, *Electronic Fabric of Struggle*, loc. cit.

⁶⁸ See John Hinkson, 'Postmodern Economy: Value, Self-formation and Intellectual Practice', *Arena Journal*, No. 1, 1993, pp. 23-44, and John Hinkson, 'The Postmodern Market', *Arena Journal*, No. 9, 1997, pp. 77-94.

At issue in these clearly modernist demands is the struggle of Mexico's indigenous peoples to escape the objectively given (and experienced) conditions of their exploitation and oppression; and to do so not in the subjectivity of experience (the construction of social identity), nor even by changing their position within the operating economic system (neoliberal capitalism) and its political adjunct, but to change the system itself.⁶⁹

While modern and postmodern practices are relevant to the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas, the dominating integrative level in these communities is that of the face-to-face. The traditional and tribal practices of the Zapatistas are reflexively maintained through the meanings and ontologies of their practices. The capacity of those participating in the Zapatista struggle to undertake this framing of disembodied practices within the level of the face-to-face demonstrates qualities of integrative community existing in the communities of Chiapas.

Conclusion

Disembodied transportation to utopia is one that is far removed from the everyday lives of common users of new media technologies. It is especially far removed from a political struggle in Mexico that uses communicative technology as a method and strategy in their struggle. The methods of communication used by the Zapatistas have encouraged global media attention, an individualised focus, an intellectualised political debate regarding discourse such as reform or revolution, class and state, and postmodernism. Yet what it has not succeeded in achieving is autonomy for the Indigenous communities of Chiapas. While reaching what is sometimes considered the illusive utopia, or a liberation from all oppression has been argued to be the potential of the virtual world, this has not been the case for those in Chiapas.

This chapter has explored the political struggle of the people of Chiapas and analysed the prevalent excitement over their use of abstract technologies to communicate their demands and to disseminate information regarding the atrocities and sufferings motivating, and resulting from, their uprising. This analysis has indicated the advantages of international prominence and support that has resulted from the global technological forms of communication for those participating in the struggle. Moreover, it has demonstrated the numerous contradictions that have also occurred as a result of the use of abstract

⁶⁹ Veltmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

communicative technologies. These contradictions have resulted from the persistence of those struggling to undertake the reflexive framing of these technologies within their everyday practices constituted at the integrative level of the face-to-face. The people of Chiapas continue to struggle against subsequent and continuous contradictions to maintain the integrative depth of their community formations.

Part Two of this thesis has used empirical examples from Indigenous communities in Australia and Mexico to demonstrate reflexive framing of practices at differing integrative levels. In this section, the emphasis has been on how these communities address the outside world. At the same time, these examples of political protest movements have begun to illustrate the argument that the use of abstract communicative technologies that are commonly assumed to dominate previous communicative forms are nevertheless being reflexively held in place by practices constituted at the level of the face-to-face. These chapters have provided examples of Indigenous communities in which the qualities and characteristics of integrative community exists. This argument has now to be further established by focussing on communication within these communities. In the following chapters of the thesis, further discussion of Indigenous communities of Australia and Chiapas will be used to point to communities demonstrating some of the qualities of what I have been calling integrative community. In Part Three, following a general chapter, the examples will be taken from pedagogical practice to demonstrate the communication technologies that are used within communities.

PART III

LEARNING FROM THE COMMUNITY WITHIN

CHAPTER SEVEN

Learning Beyond Embodied Practice

In Australia, for instance, Indigenous peoples admit the tension concerning their desires for Western education. On the one hand, their children and adults need to succeed at school and university in order to prevent their continued disenfranchisement in a modern technological society. On the other hand, they resist Western education because it jeopardizes their cultural knowledge and methodologies of teaching and learning. Their solution argues that cultural appropriateness for empowerment and ownership includes both Western and Indigenous knowledge and ways and conventions of learning and doing.

Lyn Henderson, *Instructional Design of Interactive Multimedia:
A Cultural Critique*, 1996

The argument of this thesis is that the constitution of integrative community is dependent upon the modes of practice which are reflexively undertaken by a community's members. Emphasis has been placed on the mode of communication as a determining mode of practice that is constitutive of social formations. The changing mode of communication from traditional practices to more abstract ones is often presented as occurring in a linear progression where the more abstract mode is assumed to dominate the more traditional practice. It has been argued throughout this thesis that while there may be a tendency for this to happen historically, it is not inevitable. The assumption of linear progression does not necessarily depict all instances in which abstract technological practices have been adopted. It is, I argue, possible for differing modes of communication to be practiced in dominating and subordinating levels: more abstract mode of communication may, through a reflexive, framing of the practice, be subordinated to a more traditional practice constituted at the level of the face-to-face. This can be demonstrated through an exploration of empirical examples of reflexive practice in the field of education, the subject of this section of the thesis.

Pedagogical practice can be undertaken through a variety of modes of communication. These include oral story-telling through a face-to-face mode of communication; through an institutionalisation of networks of teachers, a form of agency-extension; and thirdly through the introduction of computer-mediated communication, a

mode of education framed by disembodied extension where information may be obtained from numerous electronic sources. The introduction of computer-mediated communication has received a great deal of attention in the area of pedagogical practice. Part Two of this dissertation undertook an exploration of the impact of a community's communicative practice to the outside society. This part of the thesis will explore the impact of communicative practices that are undertaken within the community, focusing on the pedagogical practices.

This chapter serves as an introduction to Part Three to explore the increasing use of communicative technologies within educational practice. It is my contention that such technological use has been enthusiastically, but uncritically, adopted in the belief that it displays an ability to keep up and compete in the progressing world. The debate surrounding the possible impact that computer-mediated technology might have on education has focused primarily on either distance education and the freedoms this brings, or on the effect of bringing computers into the schoolroom. Computer-mediated communication is seen to be liberating, allowing more people access to education through the enabling of learning from a distance. It has also received both praise, in its introduction into the classroom for providing wider information networks and less intimidating settings for dialogue, and criticism for its replacement of other curricula activities such as drama, art and sport. While relatively less emphasis has been placed on the impact that such technology has on learning practices, there has been some concern shown for the limits to encouraging imaginative and lateral thinking. Such observations are all relevant and important.

But to my mind there is a deeper concern. The impact that computer technology has within the pedagogic realm is one which carries through to the constitution of social formations. It is necessary to consider what this means for cultural practice and what impact this has on communities. The consideration of the impact of information technology in the field of education is debated but its adoption is rarely questioned. The debate is framed in such a way as to assume that not to undertake such advances would certainly result in being left behind. Late-modern society is argued to have become an information society: not to take advantage of this change within a realm of societal production would be supposedly to turn our backs on the modern concerns and miss out on the opportunity for increased productive output at a reduced economical cost. In such debates, the societal implications are often left out, or considered too minor a concern. This chapter will argue that abstract

communicative technologies can be productive and beneficial, but if adopted uncritically, can result in the fragmenting of social connection and importantly, change a holistic view of educational practice to a superficial vocational one. It is necessary to broaden the debate on the introduction of abstract communicative technologies within the education sector to consider its implications upon community constitution. These practices must be undertaken reflexively if an integrative depth is to be maintained within social formations.

Pedagogical Practice as Socially Constitutive

The role of education is significant not only upon individuals within community formations, but upon the very constitution of the social formation. Educational practices, relying significantly on the mode of communication, are generally carried out *within* the community formation and have both a structured and a structuring role on the meanings and understandings of those within the community. Much of the research that has been undertaken into the educative realm focuses upon its position of power within society. It is seen as a primary determinant in the reproduction of culture and society. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in *Reproduction: In Education, Society and Culture* write:

In traditionally defining the 'system of education' as the sum total of the institutional or customary mechanisms ensuring the transmission from one generation to another of the culture inherited from the past (i.e. the accumulated information), the classical theories tend to sever cultural reproduction from its function of social reproduction, that is, to ignore the specific effect of symbolic relations in the reproduction of power relations. Such theories which, as is seen with Durkheim, simply transpose to the case of class societies the representation of culture and cultural transmission most widespread among anthropologists, rely on the implicit premiss that the different PAs (pedagogical action) at work in a social formation collaborate harmoniously in reproducing a cultural capital conceived of as the jointly owned property of the whole 'society'. In reality, because they correspond to the material and symbolic interests of groups or classes differently situated within the power relations, these PAs always tend to reproduce the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these groups or classes, thereby contributing to the reproduction of the social structure.¹

It is the intention of Bourdieu and Passeron to highlight the transference of class distinction through the educational institutions. Similarly Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James argue the capitalist reproduction of labour is carried out in education institutions. "The analysis of the school which has emerged during recent years – particularly with the advent of the students' movement – has clearly identified the school as a center of ideological discipline and of the shaping of the labour force and its masters ... Capitalism is the first

¹ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction: In Education, Society and Culture*, R. Nice (trans.), Sage Publications, London, 1977, pp. 10-11.

productive system where the children of the exploited are disciplined and educated in institutions organized by the ruling class."²

Education and particularly its institutions are important in the passing on of the culture of a society. Jack Goody states that the introduction or development of the secular school was "the most dramatic instrument of social change at man's disposal."³ John Tiffin and Lalita Rajasingham also acknowledge the role of education in cultural reproduction and transmission.

Education is not just an interaction between people in the roles of learner and teacher. It is also an interaction between problems and the knowledge in a culture of how to deal with them. 'Problem solving' can be seen as having two sides, like a coin: 'the problem' and 'the knowledge that can be applied to the problem'. Such areas as health, social relationships, dress, shelter and spatial relationships present problems to all peoples. Their existence has provoked cultures to develop ways of dealing with them which, over time, have accreted to form bodies of knowledge. Culture is a society's way of dealing with the world and education is the process whereby the accumulated accepted knowledge of a culture is passed on.⁴

The transmitting of cultural heritage is carried out in three major ways: the society passes on its material resources; it transmits standardized ways of acting; and, it channels words and the meanings and attitudes which members of any society attach to their verbal symbols.⁵ Goody places the greatest emphasis on the last of these. Bourdieu would most likely place greatest emphasis on the second in the form of *habitus*. Education could be seen as a place of transmission and the mode of communication as one of the most important of the modes of practice that influences such transmission. Both ways of acting and verbal symbols are entangled with modes of communication.

The transmission of the verbal elements of culture by oral means can be visualized as a long chain of interlocking conversations between members of the group. Thus all beliefs and values, all forms of knowledge, are communicated between individuals in face-to-face contact; and, as distinct from the material content of the cultural tradition, whether it be cave-paintings or hand-axes, they are stored only in human memory.⁶

The importance of education in cultural practice and its transmission indicates its relevance to the discussion of the integrative nature of community. It is through the social constitutive practices that community is formed. Education is therefore an important aspect of

² Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Falling Wall Press, Bristol, 1972, p. 25.

³ Jack Goody, 'Introduction' in J. Goody (ed.) *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, fn. 3 p. 25.

⁴ John Tiffin and Lalita Rajasingham, *In Search of the Virtual Class: Education in an Information Society*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 24.

⁵ Jack Goody and Ian Watt, 'Consequences of Literacy' in Goody, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

community constitution. The modes of communication and integration required for the undertaking of pedagogical practice is determinative of the social formation that is produced.

This chapter examines the role of education in the formation of community. Changing modes of communication have impacted upon the realm of education. These changes have included the significant transition between the oral and the written modes and now from these to that mediated by electronic forms of codification. It is such changes that require much further exploration in order to recognise the resonance of previous modes of communication within and upon the more advanced modes. The modes of communication also feed into the changing modes of integration – face-to-face, agency-extension and disembodied – which provide the ground for the practice and reflexivity in the *habitus* of social constitution. Domination and subordination in the coexistence and collision of these modes of both communication and integration provide a contradictory framing of socially constitutive practices. These places of contradiction provide us with the spaces of creation through reflexive practice in the cultures of our social formations. A specific area in which contradictions are arising is with the use of computer-mediated technology, arguably enabling the broadening of connections beyond immediate community structures.

Embracing Distance and Replacing Intimacy

The role of education in society is generally regarded as that which prepares children, primarily, for their future lives. This preparation has generally taken a holistic account of the life ahead, one that readies and trains a person for the role of a community member. This has traditionally meant a wide realm of role requirements such as citizen, family member, social actor, producer, worker, innovator, thinker, and so on. In the late-modern age the role of an individual as a citizen is broadening with the changing ontological categories of time and space, requiring an individual to be a global citizen. It is paradoxical that the role of education, rather than broadening in association with this idea, is arguably narrowing in its focus. In contemporary society education is often limited to its institutional place and the position of education is seen primarily as a vocational instructor. While such a shift in thinking has gradually become adopted within society (although there are still some lively advocates of the place of the university as the place of ideas) it has happened in conjunction

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

with an argued shift from the industrial society to the information society. This has resulted in a considerable matching of these two shifts: the shift from holistic education to vocational education, and the shift from industrial to informational society. It is therefore not surprising to find the unquestioned promotion of information technology into schools.

The adoption of methods of teaching reliant upon information technology has permeated most centres of teaching. The introduction of advanced forms of communication is presented as necessary to keep up with the changing nature of society. The discourse surrounding these new teaching and learning practices is presented as a necessity for the advancement of civilisation and is continually equated with progress. In many cases, unfortunately, it is possible to see that information technology has been adopted as a replacement for more creative, intimate forms of imaginative learning practices such as art, drama and outdoor play. An article by Hazel Dicken-Garcia however emphasises the possible harms of the introduction of computer-mediated communication techniques into schools by focusing on inter-relationships and on the impact on the whole person. Such an example in her work documents the funding cuts in music, art and physical education in public schools in the United States in order to pay for computers and technology co-ordinators.⁷

The presentation of the introduction of information technology into schools as necessary in order to keep up with the changing nature of society has been criticised by some who see the arguments put forth as merely justifications for the capitalist system. Monty Neill, in the edited book *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information*, picks up on this point in specific criticism of technology being introduced into schools. He states that the reasons for the introduction of computers into schools is argued to be necessary to prepare highly skilled, highly paid workers and to reform schools in producing students who can think and solve problems.

The "double helix" of high-skill jobs and cognitively complex schooling is presented as liberatory. But the use of the computerization toward a distinctly nonliberatory end is the more likely consequence of the twinning of school and work in the emerging world capitalist economy ... The most obvious thing about this claim is that it presumes an uncontrollable and inevitable economy to which "we" must adapt. It demands that educators accept, not challenge – never mind reconstruct – the economy. Yet two points about the emerging economy suggest that "we" should not accept it. First, continual lowering of wages is

⁷ Hazel Dicken-Garcia, 'The Internet and Continuing Historical Discourse', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol 75 No 1, Spring, 1998, pp. 19-27.

already fact and not likely to turn around; second, most new hires are not likely to be doing high-skill work.⁸

Neill also argues that while the claims that computerised schools are necessary for educating students persist, the reality is for most in the public education system who are experiencing major cuts in funding, such technology is unobtainable.

A softer claim for the necessity of computers is that because of the way the economy relies on computerization, only via computers will it provide access to materials and knowledge that will facilitate higher-order thinking in academic areas for many more children ... Despite the absence of funds, it is claimed that teachers working in poor systems will be able to get this complex operation functioning. However, if teachers had the time, training, and support to do this, they could reorganize their classrooms for inquiry, dialogue, critical thinking, understanding, and problem-solving – with or without computers. They don't succeed for a number of reasons: too many students, lack of resources and knowledge, and standardized tests that militate against thinking. Somehow, though, the computer will be the means to make the instructional leap.⁹

It is not the computer that will provide the means for a more educated, and highly skilled population. It is rather a return to the thinking of education as the site of holistic teaching practices.

Yet, as with the adoption of technological practices throughout many social practices, the computer is seen to be a transforming technology within education and research. There is a sense of excitement about its introduction because of the assumed potential it has for academic methods.

The fact that computers can be connected physically to each other – through telephone, cable, satellite links, or radio links – means that they can be used to exchange information and ideas in a variety of ways. Individuals linked through computers can share data files, use computer systems and data resources that are geographically distant, send mail to others, converse in real time, and participate in conferences on topics of mutual interest. This set of interactional capabilities is made possible by what is no less than an entirely new medium for communication. The introduction of compute networking is changing the way that scholars communicate, creating novel practices as well as novel genres of discourse. The net impact of this will be to stimulate a vast array of changes in the conduct of scholarship.¹⁰

The sense of excitement surrounding its introduction can be associated with a belief in its capacity for carrying us along the path of progress. There is a belief in the liberatory potential of interactive communication that was also discussed in Chapter Six in relation to

⁸ Monty Neill, 'Computers, Thinking, and Schools in the "New World Economic Order"', in J. Brook and I. Boal (eds), *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information*, City Lights, San Francisco, 1995, pp. 181-182.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁰ Teresa Harrison and Timothy Stephen, 'Computer Networking, Communication, and Scholarship', in T. Harrison and T. Stephen (eds), *Computer Networking and Scholarly Communication in the Twenty-First-Century University*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1996, p. 4.

social movements. Such positive claims of the potential of computer-mediated communicative techniques are commonly behind the push for its adoption in order to be part of information technology-led progress.

An essay by Keming Liu, in an edited volume on pedagogy and politics, is an example of the debate that is primarily concerned with encouraging educators to develop new learning environments in order to make full use of digital tools as advanced knowledge resources.¹¹ This is an example of work which promotes the adoption of the technology as an unquestionable progressive resource. Liu conducts correspondence with students by email in order to bypass the inhibitions that he argues the students typically face when in each other's presence. Lui argues there is a need to recognise the "far more powerful and flexible possibilities of electronic media for cultural exchange in comparison with the printed media."¹² There is however the converse argument which sees the role of educator as an 'educator of socialisation practices' and would place an emphasis on an encouraging and motivating force in the bringing forth of social skills. Additionally, it can be argued, the disembodied nature of computer-mediated communication, while assisting those who may be inhibited by the face-to-face communicative style, can also have a negative impact. While on-line conversations can be said to be beneficial to those who are normally inhibited, the lack of social cues and the unpredictability of disembodied conversations may produce undesirable conduct.¹³

Other arguments for the adoption of computer-mediated communication in pedagogical practice have been proffered as enabling the replacement of schools. The above quotation by Neill argues that resource-based arguments for the introduction of computer-mediated schooling are spurious. However, the argument has been presented as not only an answer for lack of resources, but as a positive answer to geographical and resource-based concerns in relation to high capital over-heads. In this scenario the school building itself becomes obsolete. This extension of the above arguments sees the institutions of educational practices as unnecessary in a world that can communicate by telecommunicative innovations. Such arguments see the classroom no longer as a specific room, or a particular

¹¹ Keming Liu, 'Electronic Communication, New Technology, and the ESL Student', in T. Smoke (ed.), *Adult ESL: Politics, Pedagogy and Participation in Classroom and Community Programs*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, 1998, pp. 289-311.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Dicken-Garcia, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

place. Such an example is occurring in university institutions and has been noted by Michael Arnold who writes of the virtual university.

The first thing that might take one's attention about the Virtual University is that by and large it does not exist in any particular geographical location. It does not have a physical campus, grounds, buildings or a place on a map, and is not attended in body by any students or any staff. Instead of occupying a place in space, it has a 'place' in cyberspace, and all teaching, learning and assessment is mediated electronically, through digital communications and interactive multimedia technologies.¹⁴

The place of education becomes a virtual space. It is a place that can be transient and dependent only upon a tele-connection for its locatable existence.

Similar observations have been made generally across all education sectors. The virtual class is presented as one that avoids the restrictions and limitations of the ontological understanding of time and space. It has been argued throughout this thesis that the late-modern age can be described as one in which particularly postmodern practices are overlaying less abstract practices. This has caused a compression of events in time and a broadening of the experience of spatial context. The virtual class therefore results from a desire to conform to the late-modern age. Tiffin and Rajasingham present the flexible time slots outside of physical locations and set hours for both teachers and students as liberating. They also propose such an opening up of education broadens the network of both teachers and scholars around the world. "It links people in communities with mutual interests, lets them enter the catalogues of great libraries in many countries and write books together even though the authors are in different places."¹⁵

This is a vision of the kind of educational system that could become possible in an information society, a virtual network of learners, teachers, knowledge and examples of the problems the learners want to solve. The whole emphasis in instruction tilts towards the learner who is encouraged by the process to become a selective, sophisticated, lifelong customer for educational services that bring learning to the learner at the learner's convenience.¹⁶

Such utopianism gives no consideration to motivation. This places so much more discipline in the hands of the parents who become institutional educators rather than social educators. Lucas Walsh in his review of *In Search of the Virtual Class: Education in an Information Society* by Tiffin and Rajasingham states:

The authors rely heavily on over-simple behaviourist networks ... linking education to technology. The process of learning seems to be reduced to a systematised situation of

¹⁴ Michael Arnold, 'The Virtual University', *Arena Journal*, No. 13, 1999, p. 87.

¹⁵ Tiffin and Rajasingham, *op. cit.*, p. 15-16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

information retrieval and responsiveness to stimuli. The major contemporary addition is the 'fractal dimensional communications paradigms' as the major current model of conceptualising both learning processes and the levels of educational practice.¹⁷

Tiffin and Rajasingham also present the adaptation of information technology into education, and most other aspects of our lives, as a simple choice between substituting telecommunication for transport.¹⁸ Of course, the benefits of reductions in transport, particularly private motor vehicles, are unquestionable. But presenting the case for the introduction of information technology as such an alternative presumes equal outcomes of both methods of interaction.

Information technology being introduced into schools and also into the extended virtual classroom has provided some enthusiastic responses. It appears that there is a certain desire for immediacy while embracing distance. The replacing of teacher-student face-to-face intimacy with disembodied communication systems is presented as necessary and unquestionable in the realm of education. It remains that the discussion and any critique of computers in education remains at the debate of access and affordability, exploitation and concerns for lack of socialisation skills. In Britain, where the government is attempting to establish a 'grid' of all schools on-line, a professor in an educational institute commented: "We are moving into an age when email manners will become more important than table manners."¹⁹ Literature like that referred to above has opened the debate and there has been a shift from concerns over the technology itself and the economic benefits to some broader political questions. While the political questions of funding, support and policy are imperative in the debate over technology in schools there still remains a further contextual area of analysis to be considered, that which links electronic education and pedagogical practice to questions of cultural transmission and social constitution.

Forms of Learning

The previous section has highlighted a concern for the assumptions underpinning the argued necessity for the integration of information technology into the realm of education. Connecting this exploration to other modes of communication, specifically oral and written modes, and their implications on the field of education will prove advantageous. There is an

¹⁷ Lucas Walsh, 'Virtually Finishing Schools', *Arena Magazine*, No. 25, October-November 1996, p. 51.

¹⁸ Tiffin and Rajasingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-3.

apparent lack of research and understanding of the implications of the use, or the neglect, of other communicative methods. There have been few critical inquiries into the implications of the adoption of computer-mediated technology into the area of education, and there has been little done on the implications of oral or written communication methods upon pedagogical practice. In order to examine the impact of changing modes of communication it is necessary to also consider the introduction of writing and literacy as a more abstract mode of communication than that of oral communication constituted at the level of the face-to-face. It is through such an exploration that we begin to see the coexistence of previously dominating forms of communication within and alongside the techniques of more abstract modes.

Goody has been one of the most influential writers in the area of literacy and communication. He has also been one of the few who have entered the debate on the implications of literacy upon society.

It is especially surprising that so little interest in literacy – and the means of communication generally – has been shown by social scientists. Those working in ‘advanced’ societies have taken the existence of writing for granted and have therefore tended to overlook its enabling effects on, for example, the organization of dispersed parties, sects and kin. On the other hand, social anthropologists have thought of their discipline as being primarily concerned with ‘preliterate’, ‘primitive’ or ‘tribal’ societies and have generally looked upon writing (where it existed) simply as an ‘intrusive’ element. But even where writers are specifically investigating the differences between ‘simple’ and ‘advanced’ societies, peoples, mentalities, etc., they have neglected to examine the implications of the very feature which is so often used to define the range of societies with which they claim to be dealing, namely, the presence or absence of writing.²⁰

Goody has explored a number of societies to provide empirical studies in the area of literacy development. He has proffered a number of circumstances which he argues results in the restriction of the full development of literacy. One of these is the introduction of the book into the realm of learning. This realm was zealously guarded as one area in which the “role of the teacher as the mediator of knowledge is given pre-eminent importance.”²¹

The guru tradition is characteristic of situations of restricted literacy, where the role of the teacher as the mediator of knowledge is given preeminent importance. He adds personal charisma to book-learning, in a combination of oral and literate modes of communication ... ‘Truth’ requires a mediator, a contemplative, a contemplative treatment, and an

¹⁹ Patrick Lawnham, ‘Computers Replace Books in School Bags’, *The Weekend Australian*, 10-11 June 2000, p. 10.

²⁰ Goody, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

internalization through the memory, modes of learning that are more appropriate perhaps to the mystical than the empirical approach.²²

Where the word of the teacher was pre-eminent, the book was seen as a text to memorise. It inhibited an enquiring system of literacy.

This mode of teaching (rote learning) fails to take full advantage of the potentialities of 'preserved communication'. Books serve as a mnemonic and have themselves to be committed to memory before they are considered as 'read'. Consequently, initial instruction places more emphasis on the repetition of content than the acquisition of skill. Under these conditions book-learning takes on an inflexibility that is the antithesis of the spirit of enquiry which literacy has elsewhere fostered.²³

Such situations were particularly seen in relation to the teaching of religion. The example of the restrictions to full development of literacy also indicates the "oral residues in a literate culture."²⁴ "Such forms of education are characteristic of many pre-industrial societies, where literacy is seen as an aid to oral communication."²⁵ In retaining the emphasis on memory and oral delivery we can see in this form of learning an undertaking of the written mode of communication framed within the oral tradition. The oral mode continues to retain its importance over the book because of the mediation of the supreme teacher.

Walter Ong has also been prominent in the area of communication and states, on the subject of memorising in oral societies, that accurate verbatim is not the issue because of the necessity for modification.

In all cases, verbatim or not, oral memorization is subject to variation from direct social pressures. Narrators narrate what audiences call for or will tolerate ... The oral word, as we have noted, never exists in a simply verbal context, as a written word does. Spoken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation, which always engages the body. Bodily activity beyond mere vocalization is not adventitious or contrived in oral communication, but is natural and even inevitable. In oral verbalization, particularly public verbalization, absolute motionless is itself a powerful gesture.²⁶

Ong is suggesting here that there must be consideration given to the capacity for practices to be modified and evolve. These references to Goody and Ong both highlight the flexibility, through at least verbal modification, that orality brings to ritual and practices, and in this case, to forms of learning. If we assume that the introduction of the written word necessarily dominates through a collapsing together of the levels of agency-extension and face-to-face

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Methuen, London, 1982, p. 66-68.

integration, we leave no room for theorising the coexistence of other social forms evidenced under certain circumstances. From these references to memory, orality and the written word we can learn that, with the extension of the oral mode through the written word, there is a capacity for a reflexive framing of practices within the level of the face-to-face which maintains an integrative depth within social formations.

Having attributed to Goody a considerable amount of valuable work on literacy it is important to also consider his work with a critical eye. I have used the work of Goody highlighting where it is possible to see a coexistence of tribal, traditional and modern social practices.

Few of the 'traditional' societies discussed in this book can be described as non-literate; they possessed not only writing but alphabetic writing. Nevertheless they were not literate societies in the Greek sense ... we have to recognize an important class of society in which the implications of literacy are only partly developed, one where the oral tradition continues to play a dominate part in spheres that are potentially literary.²⁷

Goody, however, has been criticised for not specifically indicating this coexistence, but rather emphasising a 'great divide' between literate and non-literate societies. The work of Goody can be critiqued because of his overall argument that the introduction of literacy means the domestication of the 'savage' mind. Linda King states that:

literacy is a culturally embedded practice that may vary in its organization and function in different societies. To interpret writing as a neutral skill capable of exerting a transcendental influence over social, economic, and intellectual development is both to misinterpret history and to distort the future of nonliterate peoples.²⁸

Brian Street writes that Goody "would explicitly replace the theory of a 'great divide' between 'primitive' and 'modern' culture, which had been employed in earlier anthropological theory and which is now discredited, with the distinction between 'literate' and 'non-literate'.²⁹ Street critiques Goody's work and argues that we need to move away from the dichotomy between the oral and the literate and examine the interrelations. He argues that

Goody overstates the significance that can be attributed to literacy in itself; understates the qualities of oral communication; sets up unhelpful and often untestable polarities between, for instance, the 'potentialities' of literacy and 'restricted' literacy; lends authority to a language for describing literacy practices that often contradicts his own stated disclaimers of

²⁷ Goody, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²⁸ Linda King, *Roots of Identity: Language and Literacy in Mexico*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994, p. 23.

²⁹ Brian Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, p. 5. See also Brian Street (ed.) *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 1-21.

the 'strong' or determinist case; and polarises the difference between oral and literate modes of communication in a way that gives insufficient credit to the reality of 'mixed' and interacting modes.³⁰

It is the interrelations between the oral and the written rather than a great divide that is emphasised in the levels argument of this thesis. It is likely that the focusing upon either literate or non-literate society has been the most common research inquiry due the assumption that the adoption of the more advanced mode of communication generally makes the previous mode less salient in terms of structures of power. It is necessary therefore to acknowledge the coexistence of different modes of communication practiced within social formations. In many societies today it is possible to evidence all three levels of integration being discussed in this thesis – face-to-face, agency-extended, and disembodied – coexisting, albeit in contradictory ways. Different modes of communication coexist, collide and interpenetrate as practiced activity and consciousness even in its contradictory character. The use of technological communicative techniques by peoples who maintain oral traditions is possible without necessarily eroding the depth of integration which is foundational to their social formations.

It is important to note that some anthropological studies have indicated the very real destruction of the more concrete level of face-to-face integration through a collapsing of the levels together. This occurs when the framing is undertaken without some reflexivity about its possible consequences. Such examples have been provided through the work of Edmund Carpenter. Carpenter acknowledges the importance of memory in the exploration between the oral and written traditions. He states that the ability to restore a text word for word with complete accuracy is common. He goes on to comment that the capability of the memorisation of text meant, "in the late Middle Ages, the Inquisition found it was not enough to burn books."³¹ But the advent of writing and the associated unnecessary memorisation of text were only a part of what Carpenter suggests occurred with the introduction of writing and print.

Writing and print relieve a strain upon memory and give time for deliberate consideration. But they do far more than this: the sensory mechanics of reading, plus the value accorded to the eye at the expense of all other senses, destroy the harmonic orchestration of the senses and reduce each image to one sense or another. The result is that the experience cannot be

³⁰ Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, loc. cit.

³¹ Edmund Carpenter, *Oh, What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*, Paladin Books, Herts, 1976, p. 51-52.

'relived' in memory. It cannot be learned 'by heart' since its unity has been shattered by translation into writing.³²

The examples that Carpenter gives of the introduction of technological communication into pre-literate societies are disturbing. He tells of the adoption of Pidgin in New Guinea as offering a flatness without depth, a language which ignores the past or pasts stored in 700 languages. The depth of a language, which acts as a storage system for ancient perceptions and memories, exists because those who speak the language constantly modify it.³³ He also tells of the radio playing songs that were previously inseparable parts of local groups' sacred ceremonies and dances. He states, "the sacred and obscene now go out over the airwaves stripped of meaning: pure music."³⁴ Carpenter argues that "we use media to destroy cultures, but we first use media to create a false record of what we are about to destroy."³⁵ While I do not agree conclusively with Carpenter's argument that "the media are so powerful that they swallow cultures" and that the end result of advancing media is that it conquers rather than preserves,³⁶ I can see that such outcomes are very possible and in many cases have occurred. However, I argue that Carpenter's analysis that the media can destroy cultures arises from a notion that differing levels of integration collapse together. It is my argument that changing modes of communication, although contradictory, can exist in a layering relationship when undertaken reflexively. In this way, the collapsing of levels together which dominates and subsumes less abstract modes can be avoided.

It is possible to see the coexistence of both oral and written modes of communication through a layering process. To recognise the possibility of different modes of communication existing at the same time allows us to enter the theoretical framework of this thesis. This is particularly important for the consideration of the changing dominances of the levels of integration that this thesis is undertaking. Further reference to the work of Goody can exemplify the change in the nature of education from one of primarily face-to-face to one that enters the level of agency-extension.

With the advent of colonial rule, the situation changed; the value of literacy as a means of social and personal advancement was immediately clear. The new conquerors used writing at every stage in their administration of the country; once they had locked away the Maxim guns in their armoury, it was the pen and telegraph that manifested itself not only internally, but also in communication with the subject people themselves. In Ghana the first schools were established by the army and by an intrusive mission, the White fathers from Upper

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-79.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Volta (now Burkina Faso). More informal instruction was arranged in the remote areas. The District Commissioner of Lawra established a 'Hausa' school for the sons of headmen, who were to act as messengers between district headquarters and their father's villages.³⁷

Through an investigation of the studies of Goody we have been firstly provided with examples which have pointed to the coexistence of different modes of communication, both oral and written. Secondly, we have seen these examples specifically related to the realm of education. And thirdly, his work has pointed us to the implications of differing levels of integration, namely the furthering of the mode of the face-to-face in education through to an agency-extension. The work of Goody sets up some interesting principles on which to further the investigation into the computer-mediated mode of communication within the educational realm and the importance of recognising the capacity for its adoption while maintaining the coexistence of less abstract modes of communication.

Importance of Maintaining Integrative Depth

Education, pedagogy and language are all interrelated and an analysis of communication within the educational realm needs to address not only the mode of communication – such as the introduction of the written word into oral-based social formations – but also the language of the written form. This has particular relevance for Indigenous communities facing colonisation. The introduction of formalised schooling by missionaries and colonisers is significant in its implications upon cultural practices of traditional social forms. King in her study of Mexican language and literacy writes of the use of different languages for different social contexts. The areas in which Indigenous languages are primarily used include the following: family life, village markets, and sociopolitical organisations. At the same time, the national language (in this study Spanish) is used in areas including schooling, the clinic, and political meetings with government and party officials.³⁸ King notes the capacity of Indigenous communities to adopt different languages for different purposes, ensuring that the oral mode maintains a specific place in the constitution of community formations.

Although schools have been introduced into the communities, they have only recently begun to exert an influence. Communities with high levels of illiteracy, therefore, are also (at least in Indian regions) communities with high levels of monolingualism and limited bilingualism, where the strength of the indigenous culture not only presents a linguistic barrier to the assimilation of literate modes of communication in a "foreign" language but is

³⁷ Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 141-142.

³⁸ King, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

also a cultural defense against alternative forms of social organization. Even in Spanish-speaking rural communities, the oral tradition does not immediately cede to the literate mode simply through the introduction of primary schooling; it requires a gradual shift toward the acceptance of the legitimacy of written forms of communication and its mixing with traditional oral forms.³⁹

The use of the linguistic diglossia argument is one that illuminates the reflexive approaches taken by Indigenous communities with regard to their cultural practices and more specifically, language.

Faced with the possible extinction of their language by adoption of the symbolically more powerful national language, however, the majority of those interviewed, with the exception of the Zapotec Indians of the coast, favored a situation in which Spanish and the native languages coexisted, each reserved for a different sphere of social life. In reality, this is nothing more than the verbal expression of a situation that is already taking shape in the Indian communities.⁴⁰

In this discussion, I am proposing that the imposition of formalised, non-native languages is an abstract practice when introduced to orally based, native-speaking communities. In this way, it is institutionally framed requiring traditional practices to be reflexively maintained in order to retain a social formation with any integrative depth.

The impact that different languages have upon constitutive practices within the field of education needs to be explored. It is useful to refer once again to the work of Bourdieu in *The Logic of Practice*. Bourdieu differentiates between practices in which one has 'native membership' as opposed to those practices that one confronts consciously. In his study he makes reference specifically to language and education. He takes to illustrate his argument a person who speaks a native tongue, one they are born into, and who then proceeds to learn a foreign language.

[The person] confronts a language that is perceived as such, that is ... explicitly constituted as such in the form of grammar, rules and exercises, taught by institutions expressly designed for that purpose. In the case of primary learning, the child learns at the same time to speak the language (which is only ever presented in action, in his own or other people's speech) and to think in (rather than with) the language.⁴¹

In this way, Bourdieu argues, the person who adopts the foreign language, the practice into which they are not born, is able to reflect upon it more explicitly as a distinctive practice with learned rules and structures. They are able to do this in a way they are not able with practices of which they have 'native membership'.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, R. Nice (trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1990, p. 67.

So long as the work of education is not clearly institutionalized as a specific, autonomous practice, so long as it is the whole group and a whole symbolically structured environment, without specialized agents or specific occasions, that exerts an anonymous, diffuse pedagogic action, the essential part of the *modus operandi* that defines practical mastery is transmitted through practice, in the practical state, without rising to the level of discourse ... But the fact that schemes are able to pass directly from practice to practice without moving through discourse and consciousness does not mean that the acquisition of *habitus* is no more than a mechanical learning through trial and error. In contrast to an incoherent sequence of numbers which can only be learnt gradually, through repeated attempts and continuous, predictable progress, a numerical series is mastered more easily because it contains a structure that makes it unnecessary to memorize all the numbers mechanically one by one.⁴²

In other words, the more embedded practices do not require the same degree of reflexive, conscious and active learning like the adoption of practices presented from different cultures, but they are not just mechanical nevertheless.

It is possible, moreover, that having learned a practice which one is not born into that the reflexivity which has ensued may well be applied to the practices which were previously taken for granted and unconsciously carried out. Barry Morris has also made a similar argument in his discussion of the Dhan-Gadi Aborigines in *Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State* in which he comments that in the face of domination by way of colonisation some traditional forms which ordered and patterned social life gained significance. This occurred "because unconscious and unreflexive acts of everyday life may become conscious and conspicuous."⁴³ Street also observes the way in which imposed written forms can be reflexively transformed.

Research in cultures that have newly acquired reading and writing draws our attention to the creative and original ways in which people transform literacy to their own cultural concerns and interests. Research into the role of literacies in the construction of ethnicity, gender and religious identities makes us wary of accepting the uniform model of literacy that tends to be purveyed with the modern nation state ... Research into 'vernacular' literacies within modern urban settings has begun to show the richness and diversity of literacy practices and meanings despite the pressures for uniformity exerted by the nation state and modern education systems.⁴⁴

It is by recognising the capacity for a reflexive framing of abstract modes of communication including formalised, imposed methods of communication upon native languages, that we are able to argue that more abstract communication does not necessarily dominate the traditional form.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁴³ Barry Morris, *Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Berg, Oxford, 1989, p. 74.

⁴⁴ Brian Street, 'Introduction: The New Literacy Studies', in Street (ed.), *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy*, op. cit., p. 1.

Computers have now been put forward as the latest in the inevitable linear procession of modes of communication. This debate has been completely replaced by one that simply promotes the adoption of computer-mediated technology as necessary in keeping up with the civilising progress. Any discussion of the introduction of computer-mediated communication often assumes or ignores the fundamental importance of the oral and written modes of communication. The previous discussion has highlighted how both of these modes of communication have not only coexisted but have been significant in the changing nature of their relationship to each other. This thinking needs to be transferred to that relating to computer-mediated communication. While the adoption of computers into the realm of education can certainly bring some benefits, thinking that theorises the layering of earlier modes of communication that can be reflexively promoted to a position of domination for particular practices, has been ignored.

The ritual of learning when undertaken within a mode of practice that is not layered around and upon other modes is enacted at the risk of losing its groundedness. It is evident that many forms of teaching and learning are practiced where there is no connection to earlier forms of teaching and learning. Goody shares an example from his personal experience.

I have now seen the other side of this process, my children learning botany from a book and getting to know the flora without knowing the trees and flowers, though admittedly some urban environments take pains to keep nature as far away as possible – flowers are patterns on plates, designs on material, even bunches of blooms collected in a vase.⁴⁵

This is further evidenced with the introduction of computer-mediated communication into the practices of teaching. Computers systematise education practices that can be demonstrated by the phenomenological implications of learning. An example of this is given by Walsh again from his review of the book by Tiffin and Rajasingham.

A group in a North Brazilian teleclass were convinced that a triangle had three *curved* sides because of a bad television receiver. The one student who disagreed eventually concede to the others. Given the effect that a faulty television receiver had on those Brazilian students' understanding of basic geometry, what effect might corporate influence be having on the eight million ad-watching Americans?⁴⁶

There are further examples of the risks of adopting computer-mediated communication without the necessary grounding within less disembodied modes of learning. There has been

⁴⁵ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴⁶ Walsh, op. cit., p. 52.

significant work into the reclaiming of endangered languages. The popular way of undertaking the reclamation and saving of these languages is to promulgate the language on CD-ROM, requesting people to adopt it. The problem with such an exercise is that without actually practicing the language within the setting or the culture within which the language has been developed, or without the cultural practice attached to the language, it holds little validity. A particular example of this is the attempt to create a dictionary of particular Indigenous languages of Australia that are no longer spoken which will be discussed in the following chapter. If these languages are not actually practiced within an Indigenous group to which this language belongs it holds no particular resonance except as a museum item. Further CD-ROM projects such as those which document an Indigenous community in order to hold onto it, or interactive CD-ROM packages which teach people the spiritual meaning which the land holds for other people in order to facilitate reconciliation, will not provide meaning and understanding without practices to sustain them.

Pedagogical practice is an action that is socially constitutive of community. It is a practice which can be reflexively undertaken layering different levels of communication and integration in order to constitute a learning and teaching practice which resonates the depth of the community in which it is building or reinforcing. It is only when communicative practices, whether they be primarily embodied or disembodied, are linked and co-dependent upon other more or less concrete modes of integration that the depth and richness of integrative community is achieved. Goody recognises this need to retain a coexistence of less advanced communicative modes when a more advanced mode has been introduced.

When the bulk of knowledge, true knowledge, is defined as coming from an outside, impersonal source (a book) and acquired largely in the context of some outside, bounded institution such as the school, there is certain to be a difference in intra-familial roles, relations with the elders, compared to societies where the bulk of members of the same household, kin-group or village. There the elders are the embodiment of wisdom; they have the largest memory stores and their own experiences reach back to the most distant points in time. With book cultures, particularly with mass cultures of the printed word, the elders are by-passed; they are those who have not 'kept-up', attached to the old way rather than the new.⁴⁷

Goody goes on to say that it is not his intention to enter into the realm of socio-political action, but that "intrinsic to any effort to change the situation is a revaluation of forms of knowledge that are not derived from books. Not a return to 'savagery', but a modification of one's concessions to the civilization of the book."⁴⁸ This sentiment is also relevant for the

⁴⁷ Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, op. cit., p. 164.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

use of computer-mediated communicative technology. The constitution of integrative community is only going to be meaningful when pedagogical practice is constituted through a process of layering of levels of integration that includes the most concrete level of the face-to-face.

Conclusion

This chapter has elucidated the different levels of the modes of communication and their relationship to the realm of education. It has outlined the contemporary debate surrounding the introduction of information technology into the realm of education and criticised its inadequacies. In addition, it has inquired into the relationship between two earlier modes of communication, the oral and the written, and the levels of integration of the face-to-face and agency-extension, and their impact on teaching and learning practices. It was necessary to return to the constitution of community in order to establish the connection of social formations and education. The pedagogical practice undertaken within the realm of education, which is reliant upon the modes of communication, is socially constitutive. This constitutive practice of education plays an important role in the formation of community. It is only possible to fully explore the assertions that have been made throughout this chapter when applied to empirical examples. I will now proceed with an exploration of education practices within case-studies of communities within Australia and Mexico.

In choosing the two case-studies of the Zapatistas of Mexico and the Indigenous peoples of Australia it has been my intention to provide examples of social forms in which tribal and traditional practices have been maintained or reconstituted. Yet, while these two case-studies are in many ways traditional, they exist within two varying situations of modern placement. The Zapatistas of Mexico have been living in virtual isolation, existing primarily in a style of subsistence. Until quite recently, the past twenty-odd years, their existence had been virtually ignored by the rest of the state and certainly by the rest of the world. Arguably, it was when the Mexican Government recognised the value of their land, and desired to reap those benefits with no concern for the people living on this land, that the area of Chiapas became contested. The historic situation of the Indigenous peoples of Australia have been considerably different. They have faced more than two hundred years of dispossession and for many, they have faced a forced association with the settlers and others who over the years have come to Australia.

The impact such associations have had upon their modes of practice and in particular the pedagogical practices will be explored in the following chapters. Both have varying degrees of association with modern practices, adopting and adapting them. These various communities have adopted modern practices that overlay their traditional practices, in subordinating or dominating ways. It is not accurate to consider their use of traditional communicative practices as simply that which has yet to be outmoded. It is possible to demonstrate the capacity of these communities to reflexively frame modern practices within those constituted at the level of the face-to-face as was established in Part Two. The following chapters will use examples from the field of education to consolidate the argument that the adoption of communicative technological practices must be done critically, and reflexively, to retain the quality of integrative depth constituted within integrative community.

Chapter Eight will address the pedagogical practices in relation to, and within, Indigenous communities of Australia. It will document some of the advanced communicative techniques, seen as innovative, being used to teach about the culture of community and attempting to retain a sense of culture in these communities. In contrast to these disembodied teaching techniques, the chapter will explore some innovative education programs where embodied teaching, and the face-to-face mode of communication are being prioritised. These programs are being designed and controlled by Indigenous communities for the teaching of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in order for them in turn to teach Indigenous peoples. Chapter Nine revisits the Indigenous communities of Chiapas to discuss some innovative reform projects within the New Education Movement. In addition it will return to the case of the Zapatistas where education has become a focus for many who have supported the struggle for the Indigenous people of the area. A school project that has been developed along various levels of community – local, national and international – is analysed highlighting the various modes of integration which coexist, inter-relate and collide in such a project. Both case-studies will reinforce the theoretical stance that disembodied educative technologies will be meaningful only when they reinforce the presence of face-to-face practices.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Australia: Embodied Teaching Persists

The night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard.

Wa Thiongo, *Decolonising the Mind*, 1986

There has been a significant increase in the adoption of technological communicative practices throughout numerous areas of life for many people throughout developed countries. These include such areas as business, entertainment, political struggles and education. The adoption of these practices into everyday life is seen by those supporting it as a necessary step in 'keeping-up' with progress in the modern world. Sometimes this progressive tendency goes as far as assuming a techno-utopian position suggesting it is the way to a utopian existence. Such thinking derives from a modernist world view. This thinking also assumes that the electronic mode of communication is effective and adaptable, and a necessity for all of society. This sense that the incorporation of technology into daily practices is inevitable, full of promise, and even the answer to all of the world's problems, needs to be questioned. A questioning is required because a view, which holds technology as the answer to the world's problems, can only lead us to the shallowness of virtual communities that lack engaged social relations. However, if the adoption of technology is undertaken reflexively and critically it is possible to achieve a coexistence of practices.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the face-to-face communities of Indigenous peoples of Australia. The prominence of the face-to-face mode of communication within some Indigenous communities has been explored throughout this thesis. It has been argued that within these communities there is a closer association between the oral and the electronic than the oral and the written form. The adoption of computer-mediated techniques can be argued to be appropriate because the electronic form of communication is more accepted than the written mode of communication for Indigenous peoples, as argued later in this chapter. This correlation between the oral and the electronic has the potential to offer significant benefits to the potential processes and practices of communicative methods.

However, the prioritisation of oral communication within these communities must be considered within the design, development and implementation of these technological practices for them to be beneficial to the community. Technological communicative methods within educational practices can also seem beneficial for Indigenous communities because of the prevalence for many of geographic isolation. While there may be benefits in bridging distances through the introduction of computer-mediated technology this will be ineffectual if the dominant face-to-face mode of communication is not considered. Without recognising the importance of the oral mode to these communities the linear-progressive assumption can easily negate any possible educational benefits of technological processes within schools and within societies. This argument is relevant not only for Indigenous communities but is equally important in wider communities.

The persistence of face-to-face teaching can be evidenced in Indigenous communities where there has also been an emphasis on the adoption of new teaching programs which use technology but do not necessarily prioritise it. It is possible to adopt abstract technology in a way that allows for its benefits to be acquired, without it becoming a dominating practice. This is occurring at both the level of school education and general public education. Education outside of the formal education system is of particular importance in the Australian context with the popular issue of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and the need for non-Indigenous communities to have a better understanding of Indigenous ones. There have been a number of innovating and exciting projects and funding delivered into research and development of computer-based education and language resources within Indigenous communities of Australia. These projects include distance education for remote students, CD-ROM language packages, and the collation of words and meanings of some Indigenous languages. These projects are varied in their content, their effectiveness, and their appropriateness. A dictionary for a language that is not spoken at the level of the face-to-face could be seen to be nostalgic, whereas practices framed at a more concrete level of integration are more culturally appropriate. After a general discussion of the introduction of computer-mediated technology within education programs within and related to Indigenous communities, this chapter will explore and analyse some of these projects. The projects presented are the Koorie Open Door Education project for preschool to Year 12 in Victoria, the Bachelor of Education from Victoria University of Technology being offered remotely at the level of the face-to-face in an Indigenous community in northern Victoria, and the Remote Area Teacher

Program operating from James Cook University. These projects demonstrate the capacity to incorporate the level of the face-to-face and the disembodied in a culturally appropriate pedagogical practice.

Technological Wizardry Meets Primitive Savagery

It has been argued throughout this thesis that the persistence of traditional practices, which have an importance to the social ordering of the community in the face of modernising technologies, demonstrates the way in which practices can adapt to varying circumstances while still being framed in a socially sustainable way. However, the retaining of traditional practices within the education system has been largely denied throughout history. The custodianship of the colonised by the colonisers destined the Indigenous communities to undertake formal systems of learning in English rather than in their Indigenous languages. This was both through repressive interventions from outside the communities and from within through forms of control to facilitate pedagogic interventions.¹ The forms of control that were used in colonisation sought to create new forms of sociality amongst Indigenous peoples.²

The significance of the period is not only in the shifting relations between Aborigines and the state, but also in the correspondences between particular forms of state control and constructions of Aboriginality. The evolution of policy signalled a departure in content from the previous ideological constructions of Aborigines as a race. An interpretation of such processes must extend beyond the repressive and punitive forms of domination associated with state apparatuses to pedagogic forms of cultural domination. By definition, colonial relations are relations of exploitation, domination and violence. Yet, the dichotomy between the repressive (disciplining bodies) and the pedagogical (disciplining minds) should be rejected. The use of sheer force not only disciplines bodies, but also creates meanings and shapes consciousness. The pedagogical not only manipulates attitudes, but also habits, bodily movements and gestures.³

There was little or no respect for their culturally specific ways of learning created significantly through their preferred oral mode of communication. This was a similar case to the Maori of New Zealand.

The education system developed in New Zealand since arrival of large numbers of 'settlers' has long over-valued the literate and under-valued the oral. One outcome has been to belittle the whole culture of the Maori people as it was judged to without a written literature. Indeed, it has been suggested that Maori people do not have a literature, only a 'arts and crafts'. The oral transmission has been de-valued as being unreliable because it was claimed that

¹ Barry Morris, *Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Berg, Oxford, 1989, p. 90.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

memories were not as reliable as written documents. Such attitudes reveal both a lack of understanding of the principles upon which orally literate societies operate, and the ethnocentrism of the critics. These attitudes do not acknowledge that the Maori placed a high cultural value on the transmission of facts and beliefs without embellishment or innovation. Traditional learning processes differed from modern methods. They involved a great deal of time and repetition, and were fostered within the social context of underlying principles of the culture, e.g. mana, tapu and mauri, the mana of the person being enhanced in proportion to the range and depth of knowledge displayed.⁴

There has been little value placed on the oral mode of communication and its social practice while there has been significant emphasis placed on the electronic mode of communication.

The introduction of technology into many aspects of everyday life has been ubiquitous. This presence of technology in wide-ranging areas has often been read as having an inevitable and paramount place in progress and modernity. For this reason there are numerous examples where electronic communicative technology has been embraced by Indigenous peoples of Australia and those associated with these communities. This has been significant in educational contexts. In an article in *The Weekend Australian* the promise of an information technology-led economic boom is one in which Indigenous peoples of Australia believe they may have an opportunity to begin on a level-playing field with white Australia.

But information technology and electronic commerce are predicted to totally rearrange the white man's economy. Some Aborigines see this as a chance for a fresh start, a chance for their people to take their place on the starting line of the new economy ... "If we do nothing, current disparities in employment and education are only going to expand," says Tony Driese of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Training Advisory Council. "Information technology is the world's most rapidly expanding industry and it also impacts virtually on all other industries. "It's very important, both for reasons of cultural affirmation and of equity, that we ensure that all Australians are participating in this."⁵

Technology is seen as an innovative way to teach the wider community about indigeneity and reconciliation but also to reinforce the culture of the communities for themselves. There are a number of CD-ROM packages and projects that document Indigenous communities' histories and cultures. Such interactive technology and digital imagery is presented as a way to enable understanding and promote reconciliation between cultures. The internet or multimedia presence is proffered as an opportunity to use new technology with the purpose of retaining an historical presence and to share the culture.

⁴ Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn, 'He Kanohi Kitea: Conducting and Evaluating Educational Research', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1992, pp. 128-129.

⁵ Robert Wilson, 'WEB Walkabout', *The Weekend Australian*, Information Technology Supplement, 3-4 April 1999, p. 12.

One of these technological tools of reconciliation has recently been released in Victoria and is illustrative of this phenomenon. It is a CD-ROM multimedia package entitled *Lore of the Land*. This extensive venture has been undertaken by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy and the Mercy Foundation in association with Indigenous activists, singers and elders. *Lore of the Land* is a CD-ROM package that has been marketed as a meeting of worlds, 'Where the newest communication tool meets the oldest civilisation'. This multimedia tool is an interactive package, with a connection to an internet web site, which purports to encourage understanding and reconciliation between cultures around spirit and place. The vision of the "evocative new interactive documentary" heralds digital forms of communication as shaping the future and enabling the crossing of new frontiers of knowledge.⁶ A review of the multi-media package by Mark Butler in *The Australian* includes the following statement:

[Reconciliation] will come through an acceptance on the part of non-indigenous Australians that indigenous culture is worthy of respect, and an understanding that indigenous peoples' religious practices and beliefs are no less sincere than our own. It will also come through the recognition that all those who are born and live on this continent are in some way shaped by the landscape around them. *Lore of the Land* aims to nudge the process along. It is a collaboration between indigenous and non-indigenous artists, writers, storytellers, musicians, filmmakers and computer professionals from Victoria, and it "invites all Australians to explore, understand and reflect on their own relationship with and love of the land", using every cutting-edge piece of digital technology it can cram onto one disc.⁷

This package does not offer anything new and exciting in ideas however. It does offer the possibility to hear the oral histories and the songs of the Indigenous peoples taken out of context. A multi-media computer package is an opportunity for recorded stories to be heard in their oral rather than written form. Nevertheless it is still necessary to be critical of the way in which the stories are told, in what context and the impact of editing and scripts.

The *Lore of the Land* interactive package can claim to offer an innovative presentation however the content of the package is extremely disappointing. There are relatively few Indigenous stories to make the most of the ability to communicate in the oral. Those that are offered are short, predictable statements that are not contextualised with any teachings about the Indigenous ways of life or visuals from the speakers' communities or urban situations. There is an overuse of still photography accompanied by background Indigenous-typical music that is presented without information about where or what is being displayed. An interactive game primarily tests only one's patience as the player is instructed

⁶ *Lore of the Land*, Information Brochure, Fraynetwork Multimedia, Alphington, 1999.

to move around images supposedly representing a cave and collect 'artifacts' such as spears, boomerangs and woven baskets which simply appear without any explanation of their cultural meanings. Indigenous people speak all too briefly about their connection to the land in what seems to be a white person's understanding which is paralleled with a middle-class suburban family 'playing' in their backyard and a group of young surfers speaking of their affiliation with the ocean. These examples make a mockery of the possible spiritual meaning of the land and denigrate the significant and foundational meaning of place for Indigenous peoples of Australia. The claim that a 40,000-year-old culture meets the newest communicative tool fails to portray a meaningful representation of that culture.

The use of technology, as in the above example, does not engage with the Indigenous culture through its representation in a multi-media format. While it may carry sophisticated methods of representation I would argue it does so only to somehow suggest Indigenous cultures can be modernised. The modern representations are used to portray the communities as progressive. The common assumption behind the inclusion of the electronic form is that it is the latest in the line of progression in communicative developments. This assumption has profound implications for those communities who have retained their oral traditions. It is possible for the levels of the oral and the written and the electronic to coexist, even in a contradictory manner, yet this assumption of linear progression dismisses this possibility promoting rather the most advanced form as the dominating one. This linear progressive view establishes the most advanced mode of communication as the dominant level and collapses the other levels into it in complete subordination. It is possible however for both these forms to coexist in changing levels of domination and subordination.

Sustaining Oral Cultures Electronically

While the marketing of 'reconciliation' uses the irony of the 'old meeting the new' it is important to recognise that there is a significant connection between computer-mediated communication and the oral mode of communication for Indigenous peoples. This connection arguably links these modes through their similar practices of interactivity. Such connection dismisses the linear path of progression by skipping the 'natural' progression from the oral to the written to the computer-mediated. Eric Michaels has argued throughout his work and in particular in his essay, *Hollywood Iconography: A Warlpiri Reading* that

⁷ Mark Butler, 'A Tool for Reconciliation', *The Australian*, 18 January 2000, p. 7.

evidence of the persistence of a unilinear theory of progression is everywhere. In particular he discusses the persistence in relation to the communicative media and Indigenous communities. Michaels argues that the Western world's media development sequence has been naturalised; from orality to literacy, print, film, and now electronics.⁸ As discussed in Chapter Three his discussion in defending such a statement begins persuasively with reference to the terminology that is used. He illustrates this by arguing that the terms for contrasting societies that are used in literature are generally 'literate' and 'preliterate', rather than taking up an impartial term such as 'non-literate', which assumes an evolutionary advancement.⁹ His thesis rejects such unilinealism as he documents the Indigenous peoples of Warlpiri's rapid adoption of electronic media: a move from oral directly to electronic society.¹⁰ As discussed in Chapter Three, it must be acknowledged that Michaels' work might be criticised for its lack of recognition of the contradictions that are likely to result from the coexistence of the oral and the electronic. Michael Rose has also commented on the connection between the oral and the electronic modes of communication.

However, it should not be terribly surprising that for Aboriginal people who adopt European media technology, radio and television would be something they would generally consider first. Radio and television production are much closer to the oral nature of traditional Aboriginal communication than printed-word newspapers, magazines or books. There is also the problem of language and literacy: a small television service or radio station can be set up and people in a particular community can, given certain basic equipment and training, produce and listen to broadcasts in their own languages without necessarily being able to read or write in English or any other language.¹¹

According to this research, electronic communication technology in this way provides an attraction to Indigenous communities which is not provided by reading and literature. For this reason many technological communicative programs that have been developed may be culturally appropriate for Indigenous peoples. More commonly, however, technological educational packages that relate to Indigenous issues are presented as a bridging 'the old with the new' more for marketing purposes rather than out of any attempt at cultural appropriateness.

While there is a link between the oral and the electronic for Indigenous cultures the issue of electronically stimulating Indigenous languages is not so simple. The Australian

⁸ Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, pp. 81-82.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹¹ Michael Rose (ed.), *For The Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p. xx.

Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has an extensive program to encourage the reinvigoration of Indigenous languages. Their role aims to revive, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages. They claim to do this in three ways: through the maintaining of the world's largest collection of computer-based information about Australia's Indigenous languages; through the provision of advice to communities and educational bodies about the effective use of computers for the language work that they wish to undertake; and by the electronic publishing of materials and encouraging local communities to publish on the Internet.¹² It is important to consider the focus of this program in relation to the language restoration and its actual use within social contexts. Some of the projects in this restoration program have been focusing on the storage of these languages in order to avoid their extinction. While Zimmerman, *et. al.* are reserved in their support of new technologies they do suggest the use of CD-ROMs in language preservation or restoration.

Without a unique language, a culture uses the language of the dominant society, losing many of its important thought processes and altering its worldview. Also, print media or conventional classroom language instruction are difficult to use in traditional cultures reliant on oral presentation. On CD-ROMs, voices and texts can be combined with video, photographs, pictures and music to give accurate, contextualised presentations of linguistic and cultural knowledge.¹³

However, I argue that languages stored on advanced digital equipment become a different language than the one that is continually used within the context of social practices and community integrative communicative practices. This is as a result, for example, of the fixed codification of a moment of speech and the abstraction of the body of the speaker.

The association between spoken words and the written version is often so taken-for-granted it is difficult to critically examine the recording of orality. Walter Ong states:

At present the term 'oral literature' is, fortunately, losing ground, but it may well be that any battle to eliminate it totally will never be completely won. For most literates, to think of words as totally dissociated from writing is simply too arduous a task to undertake, even when specialized linguistic or anthropological work may demand it. The words keep coming to you in writing, no matter what you do. Moreover, to dissociate words from writing is psychologically threatening, for literates' sense of control over language is closely tied to the visual transformations of language: without dictionaries, written grammar rules, punctuation, and all the rest of the apparatus that makes words into something you can 'look' up, how can literates live? Literate users of grapholect such as standard English have access to

¹² Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 'Indigenous Languages and Interactive Technology at AIATSIS', (http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/res_rsc.htm#1git).

¹³ Larry Zimmerman, Karen Zimmerman and Loenard Bruguier, 'Cyberspace Smoke Signals: New Technology and Native American Ethnicity', in C. Smith and G. Ward (eds), *Indigenous Cultures in an Interconnected World*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 2000, p. 78.

vocabularies hundreds of times larger than any oral language can manage. In such a linguistic world dictionaries are essential.¹⁴

Ong argues that by contrast with literate societies, oral societies can be characterized as homeostatic, which he describes as a society that sloughs off memories that no longer have current relevance. He goes on to explain the relevance of this to the dictionary.

The forces governing homeostasis can be sensed by reflection on the condition of words in a primary oral setting. Print cultures have invented dictionaries in which the various meanings of a word as it occurs in datable texts can be recorded in formal definitions. Words thus are known to have layers of meaning, many of them quite irrelevant to ordinary present meanings. Dictionaries advertise semantic discrepancies.¹⁵

The assumption then that the recording of languages in electronic forms of dictionaries will save the languages is one that is debatable. The recording of a social language, which is never spoken in a social setting in which it can evolve and develop, bears little resemblance to the oral traditional language of that society. While the written form may not be beneficial in this scenario, a multimedia package on which the spoken words can be heard may offer little more benefit unless it is practiced in everyday social settings.

An example of a dictionary that has been produced for use electronically on the world-wide-web is that of the Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay Dictionary.¹⁶ The web site states that the Gamilaraay language from north-central New South Wales has a vocabulary of many thousands of words and quite a complicated grammar. This language stopped being used daily in the first half of the century due to the impact of colonisation. The world-wide-web version is a hypertext document that has many links to activate cross-referencing of words with similar meanings. The dictionary has a computer-generated finderlist (reverse dictionary) and a thesaurus-style index. It has been designed to be attractive and easy to navigate. The impact such a program would have on the communities of this region in reinvigorating the use of their Indigenous language in their everyday lives in order to have a social and cultural impact is questionable. While the language research has, in an innovative way, prevented the dying out of the language, it may only have prevented it because the language is now electronically stored. Another of the programs undertaken by AIATSIS in its language program is the *Language of the Month Series*. This is a series which publishes an article on the world-wide-web in multi-media format about a particular Indigenous

¹⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Methuen, London, 1982, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁶ Peter Austin and David Nathan, 'Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay Web Dictionary', (<http://coombs.anu.edu.au/WWWVLPages/AborigPages/LANG/GAMDICT/GAMDICT.HTM>).

language. An example of such as article is that of the Ngarrindjeri language of a large part of the lower Murray and Coorong area of South Australia.¹⁷ The web page includes a sound file that allows the spoken form of the language to be played and heard. The historical researcher who has presented this article, Rhonda Agius, "has spent nearly seven years researching, and continues to find words that haven't been in use for decades." There are no fluent speakers of the traditional language in the community, however, there is an altered form of Ngarrindjeri words with English endings which continues to be spoken. Agius researches and records the traditional forms and is currently teaching this form in the local primary school in order to renew the language and revive it within the community. The face-to-face teaching program has the potential to revive the language rather than relying on an archived electronic store. Languages are social practices that must be allowed to develop and vary with cultures over time. The languages must be used and practiced within everyday social settings to have meaning for the community who uses it.

The question of how to change literacy in order to help sustain a culture has been addressed by Jim Martin in the edited volume, *Language: Maintenance, Power and Education in Australian Aboriginal Contexts*. He suggests that bilingual literacy programs have been mainly concerned with orthography, dictionaries and the production of reading materials for the use of early grades in the bilingual schools.¹⁸ Martin argues that the functional interpretation of writing symbolised in this process is of transcription, one where the model of writing implicit in this program is one of writing as speaking written down. He argues that for the vernacular language to aid the conservation of the culture there needs to be a functional reason to write that complements the speaking form.¹⁹ The use and maintenance of the vernacular, which is arguably integral in the maintenance of the cultural practices of the communities, will only occur if there is a specific reason for its existence. Martin goes on to suggest that reports on significant knowledge learned from elders, procedural texts on how things were and may continue to be done, and traditional stories.²⁰ His concerns however are undeniable.

It's the kind of writing our society deems appropriate for the least powerful members of our community: the telling of personal experience and imaginative stories with the odd factual

¹⁷ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 'Language of the Month: Ngarrindjeri [South Australia]', (<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/LOTM/jun99.htm>).

¹⁸ Jim Martin, 'Language and Control: Fighting with Words', in C. Walton and W. Eggington (eds) *Language: Maintenance, Power and Education in Australian Aboriginal Contexts*, NTU Press, Darwin, 1990, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

text thrown in. Given the rather precarious situation in which Aboriginal people find themselves in Australia and the fact that few finish more than primary school, this kind of writing is more than pointless; it is profoundly depowering and holds out no hope whatsoever of Aboriginal people being able to use written language to do business with other Australians.²¹

This is once again due to the prioritising of the written form over the oral in the linear progressive world-view.

The preference for the electronic over the written form, however, still holds relevance in some of the new developments. There are examples of the preference toward electronic forms within the education system in Indigenous communities within Australia. The Strelley Community School displays the importance of the electronic form being introduced within the cultural framework of the community. The Strelley Community School was established in Western Australia in 1976 and has maintained a strong Nyangumarta language and cultural maintenance program. Part of the school program involves a series of 'Culture Camp' field excursions experiences.

Essentially, the focal activities on the culture camps turned the school curriculum over to the oral traditions of Marnngu Elders and teachers. They returned the well travelled students to their school classroom with new knowledge and experiences upon which to keep the language practice thriving in many modes of expression.²²

The School has also introduced new technologies such as CD-ROM and video that have been used to produce projects in Nyangumarta.

Students found this new medium of expression fascinating and a novel change from previous teaching resources based on the print medium. Their computer literacy and interest in writing Nyangumarta has been stimulated by CD-ROM projects.²³

This culturally appropriate integration of the electronic form into pedagogy is not evidenced in many situations. There is often a tendency to assume that the electronic technology itself will provide benefits in its very form. This benefit is thought to overcome the 'uncivilised' or less progressive nature of communities that have retained a face-to-face level of integration. Even in situations when there is recognition of these communities and the purpose is to understand rather than overcome, there is an assumption that the technological mode is appropriate and commanding.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²² Richard Routh, 'The Strelley Community School Nyangumarta Language and Cultural Maintenance Program', *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1997, p. 32.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

The inequity in education of Indigenous peoples of Australia occurs primarily through a lack of understanding. There is a lack of understanding of the informal education practices and their implications upon learning techniques. There is gradually becoming a recognition that equity in Indigenous education is not only achieved through the involvement of Indigenous educationalists, in establishing accreditation programs with institutions and Koorie influenced curriculum, but also in recognising that the teaching practices which are used must be culturally appropriate. The emphasis upon oral traditions in educative practices and Indigenous communities is evidenced through the studies of learning styles and through preferred methodologies. Discussion of research conducted within Indigenous communities acknowledges the importance of the researcher to be known to those being researched. Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn have written of this in Maori communities as being referred to the 'seen face'.

"He kanoahi kitea" – a face seen is an argument understood. Making a request in person is more courteous, more comprehensible, and consequently more likely to be followed up. Researchers should be able to identify, and know how to mihi to appropriate Kaumatua who support the respective organisations, institutions or communities involved in the proposed research.²⁴

Without some understanding of these culturally specific practices the introduction of electronic technologies are unlikely to be beneficial. Cathryn McConaghy and Ilana Snyder write of the survey carried out by John Hobson in 1997 'on the websites that have a predominant focus on Indigenous topics'.

He characterized sites in terms of level of consultation with Indigenous people in their development and degree of Indigenous participation in aspects of their construction. Hobson concludes that Indigenous activity in online services is very limited, with only three of the 174 sites surveyed designed by Indigenous people and 61 per cent having no Indigenous involvement. In particular, Hobson notes that there is a dearth of Indigenous personal home pages.²⁵

Many multimedia packages and enterprises offering technological wizardry will find these endeavours ineffectual if not grounded within the more concrete practices of the learners' communities.

²⁴ Bishop and Glynn, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

²⁵ John Hobson, 'Strategies for Building an Indigenous Australian Cybercommunity: The KoorieNet Project', Paper presented at the *Fulbright Symposium: Indigenous Cultures in an Interconnected World*, Darwin, July 1997, and John Hobson, 'Where are all the Aboriginal Home Pages? The current Indigenous Australian Presence on the WWW' Paper presented at the *Fifth International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference*, 1-4 October 1997, Alice Springs. As cited in C. McConaghy and I. Snyder, 'Working the Web in Postcolonial Australia', in G. Hawisher and C. Selfe (eds), *Global Literacies and the World Wide Web*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 81.

Integrating the Electronic

Instructional tools and pedagogical methods are culturally reproductive. These cannot be effective methods of communication if divorced from social practices. The application of computerised communicative techniques cannot simply be imposed with effectiveness and benefit without consideration for the cultural practices of the community in which they are being used. The integration of information technology into pedagogy has been presented as necessary to keep-up and to be progressive. Discussions around the adoption of technology have generally been around the access and affordability questions. There has been considerable concern that schools that are unable to afford to install up-to-date computer hardware, will be disadvantaged. Schools often position themselves competitively by promoting their information technology resources. Yet it is not only the issue of access that needs to be questioned. The implications of disembodied communicative practices upon the constitution of social relations needs to be critically examined.

The use of information technology has been promoted as an avenue for teaching to be carried out away from institutional settings, and allowing individuals to learn at their own pace. This move away from the face-to-face in a pedagogical discourse has been assumed to be part of the linear-progressive march that technology is taking us on. There has been little debate around the implications on communicative practices that such an adoption of information technology may have. Like the question of language in schooling, computer technology needs also to be discussed. While the use of technology can be beneficial in bridging geographic isolation, this reason often clouds some of the problems that it may engender. One of these reasons is the problem that is pursuant to the neglect of the cultural implications of technologically based educational practices. The adoption of packages designed for majority cultures by minority and/or Indigenous cultures will not solve educational concerns or aid educational needs. The design of computer instructional packages needs to 'empower, extend, and enrich the students culturally specific knowledge and ways of thinking' and unfortunately this is not generally occurring.²⁶ The way in which learning is culturally undertaken is crucial for the incorporation of educational programs. A difference in learning styles between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is that between the formal, institutional style and the informal, 'learning-by-doing' style.

²⁶ Lyn Henderson, 'Instructional Design of Interactive Multimedia: A Cultural Critique', *Educational Technology Research and Development*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 1996, p. 93.

It is possible to see through studies of learning contexts in Indigenous communities of Australia a continued emphasis on informal education. This method of teaching incorporates the everyday practices of the social grouping into the learning environment. It is a process of learning that corresponds to the preference for face-to-face communicative practices, or those practices that are framed within the level of this most concrete mode of communication. The technological communicative techniques which are becoming more and more popular in educative settings must be introduced in such a way as to be sensitive to this learning style and this integrative mode to be the most fruitful. Stephen Harris summarises the context of learning as incorporating both informal and formal education. He states that formal education maintains two distinguishing features: that language (written and/or oral) is the major means of transmitting knowledge; and that teaching and learning are carried on out-of-context, that is, outside of immediate everyday experience. In comparison, he states that informal education is characterised by learning by observation and by doing rather than by verbalisation and that the learning is situation-specific.²⁷

Many educators are aware that Western children learn in schools much of the knowledge that they need for living, and that Australian Aboriginal children learn outside of schools in more informal settings much of the knowledge and many of the skills that they need for living. What many teachers are not aware of, however, is that this contrast between formal and informal learning runs deeper than merely a contrast in terms of the *content* of learning, or the type of discipline and degree of organization involved ... Perhaps, a more significant contrast between formal school learning and informal traditional learning is that the processes, or methodologies (as opposed to content) of teaching and learning are fundamentally different.²⁸

Recognition of the differences in learning techniques is integral to any proposed developments in pedagogical practices. When these developments include the involvement of modernising, technological communicative methods it is also necessary to consider the preferred mode of communication and traditional practices.

Lyn Henderson of James Cook University has also commented on the need to be aware of and adapt teaching to accommodate differences in learning practices. Henderson has been integral in the design of culturally contextualised computerisation for the Remote Area Teaching Program in Queensland, discussed in detail below. Her research interests focus on "the mental models, thinking processes, and teaching-learning strategies used by

²⁷ Stephen Harris, *Culture and Learning: Tradition and Education in Northeast Arnhem Land*, Professional Services Branch, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1980, pp. 165-166.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

teachers and learners when interacting with electronic databases, interactive multimedia and the world wide web."²⁹

For instance, questioning and justifying the validity of statements and analysis are endemic to academic discourse but are generally unacceptable in Australian Indigenous current-traditional ways of learning and teaching. Thus in one academic context, evaluation of Indigenous learners who are having difficulty with justification questions embedded in IMM courseware can identify the learners as deficient and, at best, remedial, and design feedback loops for context mastery. In a multiple cultural academic context, it is understood that Indigenous acceptance of the rationale for questioning and interrogating the knower (the White lecturer) and providing evidence based on objective research (rather than tradition and the authority of the elders) will need a cognitive apprenticeship approach.³⁰

This is a step beyond that of the introduction of electronic communicative forms such as that of the Strelley school as discussed above. It is not only introducing the equipment to be used in a culturally appropriate manner, but also adapting the programs which are used within the forms of the media to also be culturally appropriate.

There are significant issues within the instructional design of computer technology which are essential to the debate of technology, education and cultural specificity. Betty Collis has argued that culture has a critical influence on the acceptance, use and impact on learning resources. She points out that these cultures "include those of the institution, the subject disciplines, the instructors and the learners."³¹ She also indicates that such concerns will become more relevant as student mobility is seen to be increasing across subject areas, geographic borders, and study programmes.³² These have specific implications for the case within Indigenous communities.

To this point, the paper has stressed that instructional design is socially and culturally determined. Instructional design, no matter its paradigm, is therefore about the maintenance and creation of cultural identity. But whose cultural identity? It is argued that instructional design of IMM [interactive multimedia] artifacts generally ignores or dismisses issues of cultural diversity.³³

Computer technology carries with it culturally specific meanings. Even iconic information has proven in a number of studies to have had little clarity for some users, for example the question mark to indicate help, or the pointing hand to mean 'go to' or the arrow to mean 'continue'.³⁴ Henderson outlines a number of reasons why instructional design shows

²⁹ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³¹ Betty Collis, 'Designing For Differences: Cultural Issues in the Design of WWW-based Course-Support Sites', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1999, p. 202.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³³ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

evidence of being culturally unidimensional and exclusionary. These include having an unconscious culturally homogenous approach; wishing to avoid the possible controversy in the contradictory stances; treating the user as 'the learner' with no other identity; assuming the call for multiculturalism in educational software as wavering to political correctness; or assuming that developing such design is cost-ineffective and naïve.³⁵

The recognition of the need for distance education programs to incorporate culturally specific design and process to be inclusive of Indigenous students was discovered by the Sydney Distance Education Primary School's program. A co-operative review between the school and the Indigenous communities began in 1996 to study the low participation and retention rates of Indigenous students. The outcome of the review was documented in the Brady Report in 1997. This report included in its conclusions the notions of distance at both a geographical (living in a remote or isolated community, or through family movement) as well as a personal level (feeling distanced from the structure and the environment of the institutional school) for Indigenous students.³⁶ Other important outcomes included those that are supported by findings from other studies conducted overseas. One such study was the McGreal report of Indigenous secondary students from Cree in isolated communities on the James Bay coast of Ontario in Canada. These outcomes include the cultural inappropriateness of the teaching materials, language difficulties, inadequate face-to-face teaching support, and the perceived lack of community ownership.³⁷ Such concern is also supported by a number of presenters who gathered at a conference in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands in 1992 to discuss the imperative of culturally based pedagogy to ensure the survival of small Indigenous cultures.³⁸ There is an emphasis on the importance to include cultural studies in the curriculums and not only languages indicating the necessity for one to support and make sense of the other.³⁹ It is necessary, therefore, for any distance education programs implemented for Indigenous students of Australia to be culturally appropriate if they are to be beneficial for the learners.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-91.

³⁶ Wendy Brady, 'Research With Aboriginal Communities to Determine Access of Indigenous Australian Children to the Sydney Distance Education Primary School', *Sydney Distance Education Primary School Report 1997*, as cited in S. Kenney, 'A Whole School Approach to the Distance Education Needs to Indigenous Australian Children and Communities', (http://www.ilce.edu.mx/icde_ilce/ponencia/viena/ponencia/p01400.htm).

³⁷ Kenney, *loc. cit.*

³⁸ Bob Teasdale and Jennie Teasdale (eds), *Voices in a Seashell: Education, Culture and Identity*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific in association with UNESCO, 1992.

³⁹ Konai Helu Thaman, 'Cultural Learning and Development Through Cultural Literacy' in Teasdale and Teasdale, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-35.

However, it should be noted that the adoption of culturally appropriate instructional design can also have its problems. A suggested method of what Henderson calls 'soft multiculturalism', to design in a culturally inclusive way, is simply to include various elements of the minorities' cultures. One of these methods is to include myths and legends from around the world. Often this instructional technique involves the students in devising their own myth and legend with authoring software. Henderson does point out the hazard in such a technique:

the activity becomes culturally inappropriate if, as constantly happens in Australia, Aboriginal and Native American creation stories are put into the category of myths and legends. Such classification demonstrates an inexcusable lack of understanding about the spiritual significance of creation stories. (We would never consider asking students to devise their own Christian creation story to model the genre used in the Bible.)⁴⁰

Other design changes may be seen to be tokenism, such as superficial modifications to the coloring of characters, voice-overs, and music in an attempt to localise the courseware. Henderson notes that this does not have to be the case:

the inclusion of music, still and moving pictures, colors, characters, voice-overs, and languages (with subtexts or user-choice of a language) of particular ethnic groups is not cosmetic or an act of tokenism when it (a) is embedded with those of the majority culture, (b) acknowledges the students' identity in the learning task, (c) personalizes the IMM courseware, and (d) supports multiple cultural content and multiple cultural learning activities.⁴¹

This instructional design occurs in various subjects developed at James Cook University in the program that is outlined below. While acknowledging these concerns, it is possible to illustrate educational programs operating within Indigenous communities of Australia which have reflexively adopted computer-mediated technology into their educational programs. These examples demonstrate the capacity of many Indigenous communities to adopt technology in such a way as to maintain the face-to-face practices crucial to their socially integrative communities.

Cultural Reflexivity in Educational Practice

Three programs which are in operation in the field of Indigenous education in Australia can illustrate the maintenance of traditional practices while incorporating modern abstracted technologies within pedagogical practice. These examples, discussed below, are the Koorie

⁴⁰ Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

Open Door Education program in primary education in Victoria, the Nyerna campus of Victoria University and the Remote Area Teaching Program in Queensland. These examples illustrate the innovative and successful programs being established which emphasise the face-to-face in an increasingly abstracted global arena.

In 1995 the Koorie Open Door Education (KODE) primary school of Woolum Bellum was established in Morwell, Victoria as a result of a community submission.⁴² The KODE schools have been developed in order to provide education that is culturally relevant for Indigenous students. This is a scheme that operates under the auspices of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated. It is a program running from the Preparatory year to Year 12. There are three schools in Victoria which are organised in this way: Glenroy, Morwell and since 1998 in Mildura. There are certain curriculum requirements defined by the State Government Education Department. However, local community members determine most of the curriculum and its details through a consultation process with the school community. There are officially established Local Aboriginal Education Consultation Groups which are established through open membership from the Koorie community in the respective localities. The classes and the way in which they are taught are community and culturally inclusive as the community culture of an Indigenous child has implications for the classroom. Many Indigenous children at Woolum Bellum have not attended preschool programs and have had limited print-based experiences which affects their readiness for formal literacy learning programs.⁴³ "Informal storytelling and demonstrated practical learning occurs more often in many Koorie family situations than more formal literacy experiences such as regular reading of story books."⁴⁴

The model that is used addresses four key issues in contemporary Indigenous education. These issues are retention of Koorie students from early childhood through 12 years of schooling; participation of parents in decision making about policy, programs and resource allocation, and their children's learning; curriculum reform; and access to higher education beyond school.⁴⁵ An important aspect of these schools is the emphasis on contextualising language-use. "At Woolum Bellum three forms of language are used and

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴² Karen Cain and Cameron Tingay, 'Koorie Literacy: Using IT', Unpublished Paper written by Principal and Information Technology Co-ordinator at Woolum Bellum KODE school.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

valued, Koorie English, traditional Ganai Language and Standard Australian English."⁴⁶ While the retrieval and use of local Indigenous languages is arguably crucial in the transmission of culture as "cultural knowledge is embodied within language"⁴⁷, it is the intention at Woolum Bellum to inspire a trust and respect with the teacher and therefore the children's natural language is unconditionally accepted and recognised.⁴⁸

Both literacy and technology have been identified as priorities within the curriculum program at Woolum Bellum.⁴⁹ The information technology implementation has been deliberately placed throughout the school rather than having a specialist computer facility. There are at least five computers in each classroom with CD-ROM and Internet access, the computers are networked across the school, and there is access to laptop computers. The school has reported that many enhancements have been noted since the implementation of the computer resource, including:

- increased school attendance.
- increased student self-esteem, especially in terms of willingness to share and display work.
- increased participation rate in the curriculum.
- improved teacher morale.
- a more focussed school community.
- greater school pride.
- increased awareness of own and other cultures.
- improved community and parent involvement in the school.
- enhanced student behaviour.⁵⁰

These improvements were established through school attendance records, teacher assessment, student portfolios/drafts/completed tasks, school newsletter, and the less definitive attributes such as relationship development and out-of-class contact.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Victorian Aboriginal Education Association, 'Koorie Open Door Education', (<http://www.vaeai.org.au/kode.html>).

⁴⁶ Cain and Tingay, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁷ Joel Wright, VACL Language Issues Paper 2000, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, (<http://www.vaclang.org.au/discussionpaper.htm>).

⁴⁸ Cain and Tingay, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁹ Kumai College Woolum Bellum KODE Campus, 'Using IT To Enhance Literacy Outcomes and Cultural Identity', (<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/it/casestud/kumai.htm>).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Woolum Bellum has participated along with the local community in the development of a CD-ROM for teaching the Ganai local Indigenous language. The three-part Nambur Ganai CD-ROM software will include a dictionary and video and sound files to aid pronunciation and uses a combination of animation and the spoken word as its teaching tools.⁵² Woolum Bellum recognise the introduction of a computerised technology is ineffectual without access to the technology. As most students and members of the community do not have easy access to computer equipment they are also opening a community room at the school with computer equipment for local community members. The school also operates a web site that allows children to show their work anonymously, which is an example of the culturally appropriate learning opportunity.⁵³ The school is also an active participant in the International Education and Research Network – I*EARN (Australia). This technologically mediated site of communication allows for the mediation between other First Nation schools around the world which promotes cultural relativity. The establishment of the school as “a community determination to change the way in which ‘education’ is provided for local Koorie children”⁵⁴ has reflexively integrated abstract technology into a cultural relative education program.

The Nyerna program is a tertiary course that is offered through Victoria University of Technology located in Echuca and Moama. This is in the north of Victoria on the border of New South Wales situated on the Murray River. It began in 1998 at the request of a delegation from the local Koorie community, which includes the Cummeragunja area. The delegation travelled to Melbourne to approach the University with their request for a professional degree program in their local area. The aim of the program was established to provide an alternative to regional students who “felt alienated when forced to leave their family and country to study, often failing to finish.”⁵⁵ The centre offers a three-year Bachelor of Arts in Sport and Recreation and Youth Studies and a four-year Bachelor of Education program. There are also TAFE accredited qualifications applicable to first and second-year courses. The program has been designed with flexible, integrated, informal and enquiring approaches to teaching and learning in order to be culturally and locally appropriate.

⁵² Wilson, *loc. cit.* and Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, ‘Nambur-Ganai Language CD-ROM’, *VACL News*, June 2000, p. 1.

⁵³ Kenney, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁴ Cain and Tingay, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁵ Helen Westerman, ‘Education and Reconciliation the Focus at Nyerna’s Echuca Launch’, *Nexus*, Vol. 10, No. 6, August 2000, p. 1.

There are a number of agreed principles for the Nyerna Studies program that incorporates the democratic approach to learning and teaching. These include, firstly, a community responsiveness and partnership strategy between the students and the community based on mutual respect, interest and authority. Secondly, the teaching and learning is based on an inquiry, learn-by-doing approach fostered through small group workshop and seminar formats which enable students to build on real-life situations, encouraging reflection and analysis of situations encountered particularly in their community partnership programs. Thirdly, there is a system of flexible pathways and outcomes where it is possible to exit the program at a number of points and achieve certain accreditation and also there is a practice to encourage the students to determine their own questions, outcomes and forms of assessment. Fourthly the nature of learning is prioritised through innovative practices such as the integration of year levels and the combination of classes which may bring about economic efficiencies but not at the expense of learning. Finally, there have been two further principles that have developed during the first two years of practice. One being the recognition and incorporation of learning from the land in which the study centre is located and the other being the consideration of culture in the program's design while maintaining an awareness of the necessity to support open inquiry.⁵⁶

There are different and varied ways of knowing which should determine both the form and content of teaching practices. The project has accepted the legitimacy of other ways of knowing, in this case culturally aligned ways derived from the community.

A university program that genuinely seeks to grapple with definitional social and educational issues of such magnitude must, in the first instance, decide to reverse the relationship and usual flow of information from the expert to naïve learner. Instead, it must base its teaching and learning program in the culture and knowledge of the local community. The contradictions so created, of elevating community knowledge to a level equal to that of academy knowledge, of recognising alternative interpretation, explanation and theory and of exploring the interface between different social paradigms, will transform the nature of traditional university life.⁵⁷

The emphasis on community involvement is paramount to the Nyerna project.

A program that aspires to be epistemological pluralist and democratic must establish open communication with its community, learn from it and draw upon the central features of its

⁵⁶ Neil Hooley, 'Nyerna Studies: Learning as a Community Partnership', *Australian Indigenous Education Conference: Learning Better Together*, Fremantle, 4-7 April, 2000.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

culture. This will take time, patience and a willingness to adopt methods that will be subject to institutional criticism as the journey continues.⁵⁸

When a pedagogical project is undertaken with its way of knowing derived from the community in which it is based, it is operating at the most concrete level of integration. The role of the face-to-face is the framing for the educational practices undertaken by the group. While the project is framed within the analytical category of the face-to-face, the students do use more abstract modes of communication in their learning activities. The students of Nyerna have designed their own web pages on the internet and have communicated world-wide via a chat line to discuss, respond and amend their work.⁵⁹

The Remote Area Teacher Program (RATEP) is based at James Cook University in Queensland and began in 1990. It was established in collaboration with Education Queensland and the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE. RATEP is designed to educate teachers who are located primarily in Indigenous communities in remote areas in Torres Strait, Cape, Gulf and east coastal regions and in the far south. It is an off-campus degree which is the same as the in-campus Bachelor of Education but it is studied through interactive multimedia computer courseware supplemented by other electronic technology, texts and on-site tutors. The course is accredited throughout its three-year program the Certificate of Community Teaching, the Associate Diploma of Education, and the Diploma of Teaching. The course has had an unprecedented better than 85 per cent successful graduation rate over the first nine years of operation.⁶⁰ The significance of this program is that the course has been culturally contextualised for its primarily Indigenous university students. However, while it is possible to commend this course for its cultural sensitivity, the largely disembodied form of its teaching program needs to be acknowledged. An analysis of the form of the program will be undertaken below.

RATEP has addressed the pedagogic and theoretical question of designing an appropriate instructional interface between the learner and the interactive multimedia materials.⁶¹ This program was particularly designed for Indigenous teachers as the traditional methods of distance teaching were found to be inappropriate. The retention and

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Remote Area Teacher Education Program, 'Teacher Education Information Web Page', (<http://www.soe.jcu.edu.au/ola/aboutratep.shtml>).

graduation rate for special entry Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander on-campus students studying the same Diploma of Teaching with the same lecturers was 30-40 per cent.⁶² Long periods away from the communities were unacceptable for the teachers as was carrying out the course by internet-based programs or by written distance-education packages. Each teacher is provided with a lap-top which has the required projects to be undertaken already loaded on to them. The actual design of the interactive material has also been designed and modified to suit the requirements of the Indigenous users. It has also been revealed through research that non-Indigenous students are not disadvantaged by using the same culturally contextualised materials, but that rather many see numerous personal and importantly, cognitive advantages.⁶³

The multiple cultural model which has been outlined by Henderson and has been used for the design of RATEP aims to combine the academic, mainstream and minority cultures in a coherent interplay. Henderson describes this in detail:

The following guidelines are based on RATEP's multiple cultural model. First, instructional design of a multiple cultural model needs overtly to incorporate the specific requirements of mainstream school and tertiary culture. These are expressed through the content to be taught, types of assessment, written and oral genres, research methodologies, and culturally-specific ways of promoting cognitive development within an academic environment. Second, as academic culture is embedded in society's dominant culture, aspects and values of the macro culture, including systemic issues to do with power, control, and disadvantage, need to be included in the overall instructional design of any IMM [interactive multimedia] package. Third, it is also necessary that instructional design incorporate the minority's culture, knowledge, and preferred ways of thinking and doing in a manner that goes beyond tokenism. In this way, the multiple cultural model does not merely encourage, but stipulates, the integration of shared value systems.⁶⁴

While RATEP is still a distance education program enabled and dependent upon computer technology it recognises the inherent cultural and social reproduction in its instructional design. If it is not possible to simply adopt computer technology without recognising that this must be done in a culturally appropriate manner. Henderson has researched this incompatibility of instructional design with minority cultures and has been influential in the setting up of this program. The RATEP comes out of such a study, one that recognises the cultural specificities that impact on learning.

⁶¹ Lyn Henderson and Ian Putt, 'The Remote Area Teacher Program (RATEP): Cultural Contextualisation of Distance Education Through Interactive Multimedia', *Distance Education*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1993, p. 214.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

Audioconferences are usually conducted weekly or fortnightly and, depending on the appropriateness for the subject, seek to: clarify points of difficulty, ascertain levels of understanding, promote discursive discussion, encourage usage of the language of the particular discipline, discuss assessment criteria, and give feedback on written work ... Importantly, the audioconference seminar combines Torres Strait Islander oral teaching/learning strengths with the language, analysis and questioning requirements of academic genre. Audioconferencing taps Torres Strait Islander preferred ways of learning by providing personal contact with the authority, the lecturer, in order to obtain clear direction, particularly about subject requirements, through a medium that hides non-verbals and thus helps prevent public shame.⁶⁵

The program is designed in a cyclic model to accommodate the specific learning characteristics of its students. This can be illustrated by the way in which the student is directed to move between various texts, the workbook, the textbook, video and computer to complete a task. This cycle of observation, demonstration, practice, with immediate feedback correlates with the methodologies of 'current-traditional' ways of learning.⁶⁶ It is possible for this cycle to be repeated and importantly it is possible for this rehearsal to occur privately as there is a reticence to take risks publicly.

However, as indicated at the beginning of the discussion of the RATEP program, while being culturally sensitive, the form of the teaching program is mainly of a disembodied mode. Unlike, the other programs illustrated above, the RATEP program does not extend its culturally specific style of teaching and content of material to the form in which this is practiced. The teaching is carried out primarily through the use of computer-mediated technologies within the student's community. In order for the program to carry an integrative form, addressing the intersecting of disembodied and face-to-face modes of communication the program would need to be extended to include extensive periods of face-to-face relations between the student and the teacher within the student's community. Such an extension of the teaching method would achieve the necessary emphasis upon the foundational oral communicative mode. In this way, the pedagogical practice would maintain the intersecting and overlaying of the different modes of communication to reinforce the dominant mode of face-to-face relations within the Indigenous community.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the popularisation of electronic communicative technologies within educational practices in Indigenous communities of Australia. Within effective

⁶⁵ Henderson and Putt, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

Indigenous pedagogical practice it is necessary to address specific cultural practices. The instructional programs in electronic forms must acknowledge the culturally specific practices in their design. The preferred mode of the face-to-face communicative mode must also be addressed in the learning and teaching practices and be integrated with the disembodied mode of the electronic in appropriate ways. This also has significant bearing upon language and the language options that must be available for learning. There are a number of programs operating in Australia which have taken measures to acknowledge and incorporate culturally appropriate practices, those which are framed within the face-to-face level of communication. A number of these have been studied in this chapter to exemplify the possibility for oral traditions to retain their significance and integrative framing of practices within communities while adapting to electronic forms.

The persistence of face-to-face teaching in culturally reflexive ways indicates that the adoption of technology need not be a dominating, all-changing one. There is a persistence of the face-to-face which grounds the use of information technology within some educational programs and evidences communities maintaining integrative depth. In some circumstances a predominance of the disembodied form of computer-mediated communication is both necessary and advantageous. But without the groundedness of the framework of the more concrete face-to-face integration, disembodied communication will prove empty and unsatisfying. The examples that have been explored within this chapter have demonstrated the capacity of Indigenous communities of Australia to maintain or reconstitute characteristics of integrative community. This has been achieved through a reflexive framing of the abstract forms of communication being framed within social practices constituted at the level of the face-to-face. Further examples of the maintenance of integrative depth within community formations will be undertaken in Chapter Nine which looks at Indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

CHAPTER NINE

Mexico: The World Builds a School

Today the Penghulus, the longhouse chiefs, have assembled in splendour. Tattooed and armed, in leopard jackets and feathered headdresses, they sit facing Temonggong Jugah, chief of chiefs, who paces back and forth in front of them, pointing at me, then sneering at them: 'You with your tattooed fingers [for heads taken]: his hands are clean. You with your spears; he has come to collect them to show to children. You with your parangs [swords]: he is unarmed; he mocks you. Why? *He reads*. He has come so far in a day, you could not travel in a lifetime. You will not disobey me: your children will come out of the fields and go to school.'

Here's a man who recognizes that power today lies in media, not weapons.

Edmund Carpenter (Sarawak, Borneo; 1957)
Oh What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me!, 1976

Throughout Mexico's history education has been used as a political tool. Government policies and projects have carried the assimilationist ideal. There was an assimilationist ideal behind the political decisions and allocation of resources in order to achieve a unified Mexican nation that would be able to compete economically. Through the 'nationalization' programs and the bilingual projects enforced from the cities, the Indigenous communities had their education formalised and Spanish was used as the language of schooling.¹ The Mexican state was able to affect social change through these programs even though, or perhaps as a result of the fact that, education was seen to be democratic and a right of all children. However, despite the powerful project administered by the Mexican state, the Indigenous communities have struggled against this rejection of Indigenous languages and informal teaching and learning styles. They have undertaken a persistent campaign of maintaining an education system in which there coexists a place for Indigenous languages and community practices alongside the formalised Spanish programs. It could be argued that even before the governments administered their social projects of change through education, it was already politicised through the peasant revolutions and uprisings. There have been repeated demands by Indigenous peoples presented to national governments since the 1910

¹ Salomon Nahmad, 'Mexican Colonialism?' *Society*, Vol.19, No. 1, 1981, p. 53.

Mexican Revolution for the maintenance of Indigenous face-to-face education practices.² The struggle of the Indigenous peoples over education and the call for reform continues today in the state of Chiapas by way of the Zapatista rebellion and through other education movements.

The national political project of national identity and modernisation set in place to achieve economic competitiveness within the global arena, has been undertaken through formalised, disembodied forms of education. The way in which Indigenous communities have reinforced their own languages and communicative practices has been through the maintenance of formal and informal schooling practices. Informal schooling is where there is an emphasis to develop community-specific practices for adulthood and where the Indigenous language is spoken while formal schooling includes institutional teaching through the national language of Spanish as a reflection of official knowledge. In Chiapas the new forms of schooling which are discussed are focusing on education that prioritises the local community and its languages and cultural practices. These new education movements contradictorily have been assisted through new computer-mediated technologies. The issue of technology *within* educational practices in Chiapas is not one that is as much a priority as in the case of education for Australian Indigenous peoples as discussed in the previous chapter. As Marcos commented days after the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas: "Communication in Chiapas is a grotesque joke for a state that produces petroleum, electricity, coffee, wood, and cattle for the hungry beast."³ While computer-mediated technology is negligible in Chiapas, it is rather the reflexive use of the technology for stimulating international solidarity (as discussed in Chapter Six) and for broadening pedagogical practice which has also benefited the Indigenous communities in their desire to maintain their face-to-face practices within the education system.

Indigenous peoples of Mexico are reflexively and strategically using technology to maintain their languages and the local qualities of their communities. Schooling within many Indigenous communities in Chiapas is an example of the accentuation of the local within the global context. The education movements in Chiapas are "targeting the perceived

² Gabriela Vargas-Cetina, 'Uniting in Difference: The Movement for a New Indigenous Education in the State of Chiapas, Mexico', *Urban Anthropology*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1998, p. 143.

³ Subcommander Marcos, 'Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds', *¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, Autonomedia, New York, 1994, p. 28.

opportunities that global movements are opening for local action."⁴ There have been significant steps made by teachers and communities themselves in reforming the formalised education system. Various organisations of teachers have fought against the political pressures of their posts to align themselves with the community in promoting culturally appropriate pedagogical practices. There has also been considerable work undertaken by the Union of Teachers for a New Education in Mexico (Unión de Maestros de la Nueva Educación para México, or UNEM). This movement of Indigenous teachers is utilising the wider organisations that have become more known and available to them such as research centres and non-government organisations to implement teaching programs and strategies which the Indigenous communities themselves have formulated and demanded for the education of their community members. These programs have direct relevance to their cultural practices but retain, at the same time, a sense of openness to outside opportunities.

In addition to the New Education Movement, as a result of the significant international support for the plight of the Zapatistas of Mexico, various acts of solidarity have been ventured. One of these projects is the Schools for Chiapas project. The first of the schools built under this project has been a secondary school in Oventic, Chiapas, for which the funding and the construction have been undertaken by international organisations and visitors to Chiapas. The school has been constructed in the community of Oventic, miles from the closest city within an autonomous zone of the Mayan land. This project is now proceeding with the training of Indigenous local teachers and lessons are conducted in the Indigenous languages and in Spanish. The project has only been possible through international financial support, in addition to assistance of manual labour provided by international visitors. The call for the project has been made primarily using the solidarity networks of the internet while providing concrete, on-the-ground pedagogical support. Throughout the eighty or so years since the end of the Mexican Revolution there has been continual struggle and demands for Indigenous education to be reformed in a way which emphasises its association with the community in which it exists.

Revolutionary Education in Mexico

There have been significant and symbolic changes to education brought about since the 1910 Revolution. The Revolution stands as an event that brought about equity and change

⁴ Vargas-Cetina, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

for peasants' demands, one being that of democratically available education. Free and universal primary education was constitutionally mandated with the requirement that any population center with more than 20 school-age children should have a school.⁵

Public education dates to the beginning of this century and was an essential achievement of the revolutionary movement of 1910, that was generated by the conditions of injustice and great social inequalities that had been long in the making. Article 3 of the Constitution of 1917 offers education to the great excluded masses by establishing the right and obligation of every Mexican to receive elementary and the obligation of the State to offer it. Public elementary education – and currently secondary education – has distinguished itself by three attributes that give it its popular character: it is free, mandatory, and nonreligious.⁶

The progress in democratic schooling achieved through the Revolution, however, was not unproblematic. The responsibility and emphasis placed on individualism within the reform dictated the modernised form schooling was to take. This emphasis can be evidenced in the OECD document, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Mexico*. It states "[t]he 1917 Constitution enshrined ideas of social reform and individual guarantees and at the same time embodied the ideas of liberty and social justice put forward by the groups that headed the Mexican Revolution."⁷ There were also a number of concerns for the local community in relation to the involvement of the federal bureaucracies.

While federal educators proffered a radically different, and presumably more relevant, rural agenda, literate peasant leaders and traditional authorities often defended the precepts and contents of education they had appropriated during previous years. Beneath the controversies over the content of schooling, a structural issue – the intersection between central control and local autonomy – was also at stake. The federal system tended to restructure school governance in order to counter local powers and brace central rule, while the local population attempted to preserve its control over the school – a control symbolized by its possession of the keys.⁸

The existence of local schools was contradictory for the communities, for while the schools were prized for the prestige associated with them⁹, the local communities had to struggle against the appropriation of control over the form of education that was imparted.

⁵ John Kelley, 'A Social Anthropology of Education: The Case of Chiapas', *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1977, p. 214.

⁶ Beatriz Calvo, 'The Policy of Modernization of Education: A Challenge to Democracy in Mexico', in Y. Zou and E. Trueba (eds), *Ethnic Identity and Power: Cultural Contexts of Political Action in School and Society*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. 159.

⁷ OECD, *Reviews of National Policies for Education, Mexico Higher Education*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 1997, p. 32.

⁸ Elsie Rockwell, 'Keys to Appropriation: Rural Schooling in Mexico', in B. Levinson, D. Foley and D. Holland (eds), *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996, pp. 304-305.

⁹ Kelley, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

One particular area of concern over the appropriation of the form of education for Indigenous cultures and practices, which continues to be relevant today, is the emphasis on the nation-building component evident within education programs. The previously mentioned OECD report states:

Article 3 of the Constitution establishes that education in Mexico shall be designed to develop harmoniously all the faculties of human beings, fostering a love of the homeland, awareness of international solidarity, in independence and justice. Based on these general philosophical principles, education aims to produce critically-minded, thoughtful, patriotic citizens capable of changing their present circumstances and furthering social and economic development.¹⁰

A nationalistic sentiment carries with it the idea of acculturation and assimilation. One very efficient way to build a nation is through the education system and particularly through one common language. Nancy Modiano argues, within a study of education within the highlands of Chiapas, that schooling has been seen as the tool to assimilate the Indigenous populations.

Indians, speaking fifty major indigenous languages, comprise slightly over 10 percent of Mexico's population. As in many countries of the world, the national leaders have turned to formal education to lay the groundwork for major economic development and social change. They see in formal schooling the means for incorporating the Indian minorities into the national life.¹¹

While there has rhetorically been a bilingual and bicultural program operating within the formalised education system in Mexico, in practice this is rarely the case. Rather, there has been a politically enforced project to ensure the predominance of the Spanish language above all other existing languages in Mexico and a formalised uniform education program in operation.¹²

Following the Revolution and the changes that it brought to education, Mexico has experienced a conservative rule. Mexico is a state which until recently has been controlled for over seventy years by the Party of the Institutionalised Revolution (PRI) through a multi-tiered system of national organisations. The ways in which they undertook social control over people, particularly in ethnic relations, was politically. This has been carried out through the exercising of the health care system, the schools and the Institute of Indigenous

¹⁰ OECD, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹¹ Nancy Modiano, *Indian Education in the Chiapas Highlands*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1973, p. 1.

¹² Gabriela Coronado Suzan, 'Educación Bilingüe en México: Propósitos y Realidades', [Bilingual Education in Mexico: Intentions and Realities], *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, Vol. 96, 1992, pp. 54-55. See also Kelley, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

Affairs (INI).¹³ In addition, federal teachers also played a role, sometimes being a fundamental link in the reconfiguration of the central government, aligning local groups with federal organisations which were eventually integrated with the official political party.¹⁴

Educational policy and action cannot be analyzed *sui generis*, but only in its relation to the other institutions in the sociocultural milieu. The normative rule of schooling for every community with over 20 children is violated for a long period of time. It requires complex political maneuvers by local politicians to obtain a teacher. This teacher becomes a resource that is sought by the local politicians, controlled at the local level by the Inspector, and for which the local politicians must enlist the aid of other political institutions.¹⁵

This power, however, is now being challenged, and it is being asserted that the old structures are not able to answer the demands of the local communities in the global arena.

[T]he old corporate state is currently unable to respond to and satisfy the demands of local communities and the Mexican society. The market, the global system of communications and the new forms of flexible capital are reconfiguring the economy and the local culture of the different regions of Mexico. At the same time, the papers make evident how locals are appropriating global culture, already translated and adapted to their own concerns, to frame their collective self-representation in ways that appeal to people in other parts of Mexico and abroad.¹⁶

This has been powerfully articulated by the uprising of the Zapatistas and the associated movement against the policies of neoliberalism. The struggles of the Indigenous peoples are expressing their dissatisfaction of the neo-liberal project in such areas as education.

The democratisation of education, which was an objective of the Mexican state following the Revolution, largely failed for the Indigenous peoples. The accessibility of education did not expand into the rural areas as it did into the urban ones.¹⁷ There has been recognition of this failure to address the inequality of Indigenous education and there has been a history in Mexico of the undertaking of Indigenous education projects and reviews of Indigenous education policy. However, the history is strewn with the abandonment of these projects and reviews after only a few years following the changes in the political

¹³ Gabriela Vargas-Cetina and Steffan Igor Ayora-Díaz, 'Local Expressions of Global Culture: Four Case Studies of Mexico', *Urban Anthropology*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1998, p. 125, and Joseph Whitmeyer, 'Ethnic Succession in a Highland Chiapas Community', *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 1997, p. 462.

¹⁴ Rockwell, *op. cit.*, p. 305. See also Nahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁵ Kelley, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

¹⁶ Vargas-Cetina and Ayora-Díaz, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁷ Kathleen Densmore, 'The Teacher and the Community: A Case Study of Teacher-Community Relations Among the Zapotec and Mixtec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1998, p. 79.

administration.¹⁸ There have been devastating problems with the provision of teachers with low educational levels¹⁹ or with teachers being sent to areas where they do not speak the Indigenous language and often the newest teachers being sent to the most remote of locations with a gradual transfer toward the city with time served. The historical close relationship between the school and the community, and between the teacher who held a position of prestige in the community, has posed a considerable challenge to teachers in this situation.²⁰ Teachers have also claimed that the formal education they receive, when they receive it, carries a dominant ideology of modernity through a consumer mentality, one that conflicts directly with the cultural and spiritual practices of Indigenous communities. The teachers have also tended to interpret their roles bureaucratically and define and solve their problems separately from the community.²¹ There has been little assistance from the federal and state levels to the instructors and consistently overdue service payments that, when teachers living standards are generally low anyway, has reduced their commitment. Beatriz Calvo discusses the modernization reform program which was introduced into the public education system in 1992 and states that "the material conditions under which the teachers had always worked worsened with the arrival of the modernization."²² The teachers have also been faced with a lack of material, or appropriate material support²³ to Indigenous rural areas.²⁴ Also, when there have been changes advocated in the education system where bilingual and bicultural teaching are concerned there has been little support for the teachers who are required to carry out these changes. Those who have been determinedly convincing communities that teaching Spanish is the most advantageous course for the children are then

¹⁸ Linda King, *Roots of Identity: Language and Literacy in Mexico*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994, p. 62.

¹⁹ The following authors note that "Some teachers had no more than 15 days of teaching practice before they were sent to work after receiving their certificate of enrollment!" Aurora Elizondo Huerta, Norma Tarrow, and Gisela Salinas Sanchez, 'Intercultural Education: The Case of Mexico', in K. Cushner (ed.) *International Perspectives on Intercultural Education*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 1998, p. 330.

²⁰ Densmore, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

²² Calvo, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

²³ The general lack of material in Indigenous languages and the inappropriateness of available teaching materials, being based on Spanish linguistic norms, has been highlighted by positive descriptions of curriculum materials which have been developed to be appropriate to their Indigenous readers in which the chosen word content and illustrations are familiar to the children in their daily lives, showing different styles of dress and sleeping arrangements such as straw matting on the floor or a hammock rather than beds inside sleeping rooms, in Diana Drake, 'Bilingual Education Programs for Indian Children in Mexico', *Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 5-6, 1978, pp. 243-245.

²⁴ G.G. Patthey-Chavez, 'Language Policy and Planning in Mexico: Indigenous Language Policy', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 14, 1993/1994, p. 208. See also Coronado Suzan, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-70, Elizondo Huerta, Tarrow and Salinas Sanchez, *op. cit.*, p. 330, and Margaret Freedson and Elias Perez Perez, 'Educación Bilingüe-Bicultural y Modernización en Los Altos de Chiapas' [Bilingual and Bicultural Education and Modernisation in the Highlands of Chiapas], *América Indígena*, Vol. 55, No. 1-2, 1995, pp. 383-424.

required to counteract these policies, due to a contradictory policy directive being issued by the bureaucracy in the Capital, with little direction, assistance and support.²⁵ In relation to the teaching profession it is also beneficial to note that "the teaching profession is male-dominated and functions as a means to reach social and economic mobility, thus alienating the teacher from his community."²⁶

Despite the many problems and inadequate services that have ensued from the education programs their continues to be a recognition of the advantages of formalised education programs. Many parents of children retain the belief that Spanish is the main language that has any power for their children. Education is often viewed by parents as the key to urban migration and there continues to be a negative evaluation of the Indigenous language.²⁷ This belief has been produced over many years of policies carrying the assumption that Indigenous languages were primitive and inferior. Linda King argues:

...being an Indian is portrayed as a shameful condition that can be resolved by learning how to speak Spanish. In the 1953 Tojolabal workbook, the ability to speak Spanish is explicitly equated with the crossing of ethnic boundaries and an improvement in social status: "If you learn to speak Spanish you will no longer be ashamed when you talk. People are going to treat you better. They are going to pay attention to you. You are going to be happier. You will be happy to speak to a *ladino* or a *ladina*."²⁸

The recognition of the importance of the capacity to read and write in Spanish has resulted in the educational reform insisted on by Indigenous peoples being one in which both traditional practices and languages coexist with disembodied, formalised practices. This can be illustrated by reviewing the demands made at the Congress of San Cristóbal in 1974 which has been documented by John Womack Jnr in his historical account of the event leading to the uprising in Chiapas.²⁹ This Congress was instigated by Bishop Samuel Ruiz of Chiapas who wished to organise a congress for the various Indigenous groups in Chiapas in which the 'Indians could have their own say'. The Indigenous peoples chose to organise their discussion at the Congress around four issues: land, commerce, education and health.³⁰ The various Indigenous groups agreed on a number of demands with regard to education which included the following:

²⁵ Patthey-Chavez, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

²⁶ Margarita Hidalgo, 'Bilingual Education, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Mexico', *Language Problems and Language Planning*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1994, p. 195.

²⁷ Coronado Suzan, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-70.

²⁸ King, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

²⁹ John Womack Jnr., *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader*, The New Press, New York, 1999.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-161.

1. We want Indian teachers to be trained who will teach in our language and our custom, and that they also teach Spanish. We do not want teachers who do not know our language and customs.
2. We want teachers who will respect the communities and their customs. We want them to teach us our rights as citizens. We want the community to be taught its rights.³¹

These demands demonstrate the capacity of the communities to reinforce their traditional and tribal practices while reflexively adopting modern technologies, such as the Spanish written mode, and practices, such as the demands for rights. It is interesting to note that the final demand within the area of education at the congress was "that there be an Indian newspaper in our four languages [Chol, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal]", and that "the paper be the Indians' and that it serve for our own communication."³² This illustrates the desire to maintain their own face-to-face communities through internal communications using modern technology. While there needs to be a return to the emphasis upon community involvement in education for any possible reform to be successful, there is a recognition that this can interpenetrate with a formalised system. The reform instigated by Indigenous communities is to maintain control over the education program to ensure the maintenance of the dominant face-to-face traditional practices while momentarily stepping outside of this dominance to practice modern, disembodied communicative forms.

The role of the community in local educational programs has proven paramount for educational success in Mexico. There has been an historic relationship of intimacy between rural schools and their communities.³³ There must also be the input of the community to achieve the integration of traditional forms into contemporary pedagogical practices so as to make education relevant to its community. "[T]he most fundamental element is the involvement of the indigenous community itself in the definition of educational projects for children and youth in accordance with their expectations and realities."³⁴ The involvement of the community is required in a holistic educational reform, including the reallocation of resources to domains other than those of formal education, incentive programs for users of Indigenous languages, media campaigns and promotion of Indigenous languages in public arenas,³⁵ examination of teaching practices, and a plan for the continuation of educational

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³³ Densmore, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³⁴ Elizondo Huerta, Tarrow, and Salinas Sanchez, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

³⁵ Hidalgo, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

practices in Indigenous language instruction through higher education. In a study conducted by Densmore the *Zapotecos*, an Indigenous group of Oaxaca, concluded that they needed to develop their own schools in order for education to serve their cultural problems.³⁶

A sense of optimism about the role of public school education is clearly not shared among the *Zapotecos*. Education does not equip their young for daily life in the village nor does it impart an understanding of their role in the world, or of what is expected by their community. In order for schooling to develop a proper notion of community, in which collective concerns take precedence over individual concerns, and where the maintenance and development of their culture is perceived a priority, the *Zapotecos* have concluded the Mexican government and the SNTE are unwilling to work with them.³⁷

The *Zapotecos* believe it is possible to fuse the traditional with the modern, taking advantage of new technology in order to maintain and recognise the value of their traditional way of life.

The *Zapotecos* believe it is possible for them to interweave the traditional with the new. By maintaining their way of life, day-to-day, to as great an extent as possible, while taking advantage of cameras and video equipment, they resist assimilation. They view education potentially as a key cultural institution through which this fusion can occur.³⁸

The case of the *Zapotecos* is one that illustrates an Indigenous group reflexively positioning their difference, against an historically persistent assimilationist ideal, to achieve cultural recognition and respect. The situation for this Indigenous group is replicated across Mexico. In the area of education they have faced continual racism and a denial of their differences in cultural practices.

For the *Zapotecos*, education, including teacher education, is deeply scarred by the effects of the racism that permeates Mexican society: the denial of self-determination, the widespread poverty, and the dominant ideology of 'progress' and 'modernization'. These indigenous peoples are literally fighting for their survival as *Zapotecos* on a daily basis.³⁹

The realm of education which has for so long been a state political tool of unification and the creation of homogenous national identity is being appropriated by groups such as the *Zapotecos* and Indigenous communities throughout Chiapas to achieve their own goals.

The history of Mexico's policies in relation to Indigenous languages was for many years one with the objective of unification and the integration of the Indigenous peoples into the nation's mainstream. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, there was a definite change in the policies regarding the nation's Indigenous peoples and the recognition of the 'pluri-

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

cultural composition' of Mexico and the INI's budget was increased to promote and support Indigenous languages.⁴⁰ Although it is arguable that such policies have had significant impact, the reason for these changes in policy are significant. G.G. Patthey-Chavez documents the history of the Indigenous voice emerging from 1975 specifically in relation to the recognition and the revival of the Indigenous languages. It includes a number of developments: Indigenous leaders forming the Council of Indigenous Peoples in Pátzcuaro and drafting a letter including demands for educational services addressing language maintenance; the creation by Indigenous pre-school teachers of the National Alliance of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals in 1976 who lobbied for language changes; more regional and ethnic based groups throughout the 1970s being formed, with some since growing to national stature; and in 1979 the creation of a new university program was created to train Indigenous professionals as ethnolinguists.⁴¹ This history documents the significant Indigenous activism which has arguably been responsible for language reform in Mexico. In some cases it has been noted that teachers who did not speak their Indigenous language or had an incomplete knowledge of it and who were then required to teach within a bilingual system were relearning it.⁴² The relation between language maintenance and educational reform is important. The significance of Indigenous language within education and pedagogical practice must be recognised in order to achieve a learning practice which is culturally relevant and in turn favorable.

In 1979 another movement of teachers emerged in objection to the education sector in the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca. The Mexican teachers union (the National Union of Education Workers, SNTE) had been the largest official union in Latin America. It had also been known for its corruption and repressive control in response to any threat to its power over teachers due to affiliation with the PRI government. However, in 1979 a strong, democratic reform movement, the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE) emerged. This organisation worked from within the SNTE securing advancements for teachers in relation to participation and decision-making, securing autonomy from political parties and calling for an alternative education operating on broader notions of teaching and learning by more actively and intimately involving parents and communities in the education process.⁴³

⁴⁰ Patthey-Chavez, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

⁴² Elizondo Huerta, Tarrow, and Salinas Sanchez, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

⁴³ Densmore, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

Thus, distinct from members of other occupational groups, CNTE activists worked closely with members of their communities, mostly indigenous peoples and other organized sectors, on a wide range of local issues. Because of this work, teachers were widely recognized as a democratically oriented popular force, particularly in rural areas of Mexico. This inevitably put them into conflict with government officials, especially at the local level, who are often corrupt and abuse their power. Consequently, other people struggling against corruption and government repression in Mexico identified with CNTE.⁴⁴

The CNTE's most important feature was arguably was its communication and co-operation with parents and other community members.⁴⁵ This organisation carried with it a call to move away from the prioritisation of the formalised, centralised and removed education system which extended through from the 1930s to the 1970s to a return to a community-oriented education system. The system which was being demanded was to change the emphasis to one which was directly relevant to the community, and involved the teachers, students, parents and overall community in the decision-making and educational program.

Language, Schooling and Practice

Indigenous communities of Mexico have consistently struggled to retain a sense of community control over educational practices to ensure the maintenance of the face-to-face practices that are constitutive of their social formations. One of the ways in which these practices are maintained is through the reinforcement of traditional languages. The denigration of traditional languages and practices within education occurred because of the imposition of formalised education that has been administered through a requirement to teach in the national language. In Chapter Seven of this thesis I discussed the concept of diglossia. The theory of a diglossia of communication outlines that within bilingual communities different practices invite different languages. I suggest that, similarly, there can be a distinction in the uses of different modes of communication. The oral mode of communication is more likely to be used in family-based informal situations, while formalised situations such as schooling invites the written mode of communication to be practiced. In this way the Indigenous languages which are used in the informal, family settings remain unwritten modes, while formalised schooling is based around the national Spanish language.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

The imposition of the written mode taking the Spanish language as its communicative form has resulted in various concerns over the levels of literacy within communities. However, a discussion over the literacy levels carries with it assumptions about language-use. Literacy is generally associated with progress, civilisation, individual liberty and social mobility assuming low literacy levels correlates with a lack of modern capacities. However, this assumption fails to acknowledge a literacy which is a culturally embedded practice that interacts with oral modes of communication.⁴⁶ When an interpretive approach is taken in relation to the nature of literacy we are able to distinguish between the technical and the social aspects of reading and writing.⁴⁷ Linda King asserts, in the light of the work of Brian Street, that the levels of illiteracy in Indigenous communities results from cultural practice rather than lack of education.

It is in this sense that the explanation of the pattern of illiteracy in Mexico has less to do with the expansion of educational opportunity than with the nature of communicative practices in specific cultures. In this context, illiteracy is highest in regions with a largely Indian population because writing in the indigenous languages has ceased to occupy a central place in these cultures and writing in the Spanish language is marginal to the social organization.⁴⁸

In addition to the social context determining the use of different languages there is a reluctance placed on the use of a written form of Indigenous language because of the historical dominance of the Spanish form. The desire for the creation of the modern nation included the desire for a unified language. In order to achieve this the use of Indigenous languages in any official capacity was abandoned and they gradually reverted to predominantly oral usage for informal situations.⁴⁹ The hegemonic dominance is an arguable explanation for the assertions that the adoption of a written form is too difficult or that there is little utility to learn to read and write a language in which there are few books printed and that has no official or legal uses.⁵⁰ For this reason the reflexive reclamation of language-use for specific social contexts is justified and achievable. This is also a reaction to the common self-devaluation that is attributed to illiteracy, due to the symbolic power of the dominant mode of language-use. "Illiteracy has meaning only by contrast with literacy, for to be illiterate implies that literacy is central to the society in question, a standard against which its members are measured."⁵¹

⁴⁶ King, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

The dominance of the formal, national language, while taking the role of the official and formal language, should not be considered superior. Indigenous languages used primarily in informal situations have a specific role in the constitution of community. "Language, either as a shared remembrance or as the current practice of a particular group, is an intrinsic part of ethnic identity in that it marks off natural and symbolic boundaries between groups."⁵² Linguistic practices are culturally embedded and in many Indigenous communities in Mexico the Indigenous languages are not necessarily a written system to be used in the formal capacity. In oral traditions such as these the word has a symbolic significance which may be lost with the introduction of the written form.

In agraphic cultures, speech is the primary means of communication; it is also the instrument through which the group reproduces itself socially in the education of the young through the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. At family and ritual reunions, the young listen to and learn from their elders. Mothers tell stories to their children. In the evening the family gathers around the hearth to exchange gossip and to comment on community affairs. This continuous flow of language, words and knowledge is the basis of the social and cultural system of reproduction. The "word" has a symbolic significance that is largely lost when a community makes the transition to a dominantly literate mode of communication.⁵³

In a review essay by Fernando Cervantes of Gruzinski's book *The Conquest of Mexico*, he reiterates Gruzinski's assertion that oral traditions were not destroyed by literacy.

Gruzinski begins by pointing to the passage from pictograph to alphabetic writing, a process which he sees as one of the major and most underestimated effects of the Spanish presence in Mesoamerica. The cultures of central Mexico, he reminds us, were primarily oral; yet Mesoamericans took great care to cultivate, codify and transmit the various oral traditions through pictographs, ideographs and phonetic signs. The sudden irruption of literacy did not, as is often assumed, completely destroy these traditions.⁵⁴

In this way, the Indigenous languages play a specific and crucial role in the constitution of community beyond a formalised education system. The concern with literacy in these communities would be considered over-inflated and unnecessary.

The bilingual and bicultural teaching programs which have been undertaken in Mexico were developed on the basis of the extremely poor educational standard of Indigenous rural communities and the lack of access to schools. Gradually the program included a sense that the educational practice must be linguistically appropriate for the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵⁴ Fernando Cervantes, 'Review Essay: The Impact of Christianity in Spanish America, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1995, p. 202.

Indigenous students in order to achieve higher literacy rates. Studies have shown the educational benefits of teaching in the first language of the students.

Indeed, it is argued, Mexican experiments in education have shown that Indians who do not speak Spanish achieve literacy most effectively and rapidly if reading and writing in the mother tongue are taught first, with reading and writing in Spanish following after. ... Instruction through the Spanish language and knowledge of the functioning of the national society can be added to a solid base of knowledge that is gained when children receive initial instruction through the mother tongue, in an atmosphere of respect for indigenous persons and their cultures.⁵⁵

While it is recognised that teaching practices are more efficient if the Indigenous languages are used, there must still be a critical assessment of the way in which these policies are implemented. It is possible for the use of the Indigenous language to be used as an instrument in attaining eventual national assimilation and the reduction of national illiteracy rates. The policy program has been known to begin with the use of Indigenous languages simply to gain confidences and motivation with the intention of the eventual subordination of the language to that of Spanish. In the article published in 1978 by Diana Drake we can see the evidence of the gradual or abrupt transfer of language of instruction.

Over time within each grade, and from one grade to the next, the national language is used increasingly, while the indigenous tongue is used less, as the medium of instruction in all parts of the curriculum – from about 100 percent use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in first grade, to about 100 percent use of Spanish by fifth or sixth grade.⁵⁶

The transitional model is also documented by Margarita Hidalgo who asserts that these programs which are disguised as 'balanced bilingualism' fail to lead to the acquisition of either language in total and enhance cognitive disadvantages that inevitably lead to academic failure.⁵⁷ As recently as 1995 a program was announced by the Program of Educational Development in Mexico for the period of 1995-2000 which proposed to "promote initial learning of reading and writing in the mother tongue during the early grades and to advance, when the first improvements allow it, to the teaching of oral and written Spanish as a second language."⁵⁸ Salomon Nahmad, who was joint director of the INI has stated that the objective was to make Spanish not only a means of communication within the wider society, but also a living tongue within Indigenous areas.⁵⁹ This model of assimilation may have a detrimental impact on Indigenous language maintenance, respect and recognition. Some of the teachers referred to by Drake who teach in this manner, however,

⁵⁵ Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁵⁷ Hidalgo, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

⁵⁸ Elizondo Huerta, Tarrow and Salinas Sanchez, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁵⁹ Nahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

believe that such a model is not necessarily detrimental as they believe the Indigenous language will continue to be spoken in the home and the community and that in many cases, the school would be their only opportunity to learn and practice Spanish.⁶⁰ However, when the communities have faced years of racism and devaluing of their Indigenous languages the cynicism which may be attached to the bilingual programs can be understood if such replacement models as this are exemplified. As mentioned previously both the pedagogy and the materials used in teaching have been invariably inappropriate for Indigenous students. This was found in studies undertaken during the period of 1964-1965 by Nancy Modiano which showed that the materials were generally unrelated to the lives of the children.⁶¹ This has also been documented more recently by King in her book *Roots of Identity*.

On the one hand, those materials that include references to rural life tend to demean indigenous culture, showing it as poverty- and disease-stricken, with problems of alcoholism, "paganism", and economic backwardness. On the other, texts that take little account of the context of rural Mexico are so far removed from everyday life as to be incomprehensible to the Indians.⁶²

One of the major problems in the introduction of the bilingual program is that of the objective of raising the educational standard and the literacy rate as a national indicator of the country's standard in the global arena. The objective never appeared to be to offer a fair and equitable, relevant and appropriate education system.

The introduction of bilingual and bicultural education, although heralded as an important step in the education process, needs also to be analysed not only in its success or failure in its implementation but also in its structural composition. The question of the role of the language that is used must go further than assuming that the use of the Indigenous language is in every case the correct decision. In most discussions of bilingual and bicultural education there is often an assumption made about the role of language without careful consideration of its various roles in an education context. These roles are language as the language of literacy, the language of instruction and language as an academic subject.⁶³ It is important to recognise these differences particularly in relation to the Indigenous languages which do not carry an alphabetic script. In cases where an alphabetic script is devised the emphasis is placed on which characters and how many and obtaining some agreement and

⁶⁰ Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁶¹ Modiano, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁶² King, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

acceptance. There is little emphasis placed on the consideration of the impact of an imposed alphabet on a community because "giving an alphabet to a community is not the same as giving it a writing system."⁶⁴ If the community does not already practice a written form as a communicative mode to create an alphabet with the intent of making an Indigenous community literate in their own language is purely artificial. Further, where the language of instruction is a bilingual situation with the Indigenous language being used orally to instruct and explain and the Spanish language as the written form the students must have the ability to contrast and analyse the two languages to be an effective pedagogical practice.⁶⁵

Instead of continuing to ask which language should be used to teach reading and writing to children in indigenous communities, we should first become aware of the advantages of contrasting both languages simultaneously. This is what any bilingual child does without any education intervention. We should also try to give equal chances for both languages to appear in their oral and written forms in bilingual classrooms, the way orality and writing interact in any monolingual school.⁶⁶

These questions arise from the need to see education as a cultural practice within the everyday lives of the Indigenous communities.

Other ontological questions such as the use of time within pedagogical practice is one which highlights considerable cultural differences between informal and formal education practices. Diana Drake comments on the need to address the educational practices on a broader scale.

Clearly, this concept of bilingual education refers not only to linguistic, but also cultural, pedagogical, and attitudinal variables which *in combination* are expected to foster efficient learning of academic subject matter and constructive learning about oneself as a person.⁶⁷

It is the overall place of education as a practice within local communities who are increasingly reflexive in their daily lives that have led to a more autonomous educational reform in Chiapas. These reforms are focussed upon the role of the community and their daily practices. Imperative to the programs is the appropriate use of Indigenous languages and their relevant modes of communication. These reforms have, contradictorily, benefited from the global arena through their ability to encourage broader learning techniques and programs and increased solidarity from those sympathetic to ideas of community-based autonomous education. The continued calls for changes to education can be evidenced

⁶³ Alejandra Pellicer, 'The Construction of Orthography by Maya-Speaking Children', Proceedings of the 1996 World Conference on Literacy, *Literacy Online*, (<http://www.literacyonline.org>).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

through a teacher-based New Education Movement and also through the Zapatista Autonomous Education movement.

New Education Movement in Chiapas

Throughout the history of Mexico there have been continual struggles by Indigenous peoples over the control of education programs. As established above, the desire of these communities is to maintain a place for traditional language and practices through teaching programs and methods. While there have been significant programs and policies administered by the Mexican government, particularly through the Institute of Indigenous Affairs (INI), there is little evidence that such bilingual and bicultural programs have been successful in any educational sense for Indigenous Mexicans. Robert DeVillar writes that there is a significant schism "between the official rhetoric which seemingly advocates democratic inclusion of indigenous groups and official practices that actually move significantly toward it."⁶⁸ This is also the general argument of the chapter in the same edited volume by Calvo which outlines the contradiction between the official discourse of democratization specifically in relation to public education in Mexico and reality.⁶⁹ The programs which the INI undertook focused on raising the literacy rate for Indigenous peoples. Throughout the 1960s, educational reform implemented a new mode to achieve this objective. The idea was to use Indigenous language and culture through the bilingual and bicultural program to further the educational capacity of students. However, this method was only used with the intention of later assimilating Spanish grammar, natural sciences, social science, math and national culture.⁷⁰

In response to the lack of success in the programs that have been directed and dictated by the official government organisations there has been an movement of Indigenous teachers from throughout the state of Chiapas who have initiated a new education movement. This Union of Teachers or a New Education in Mexico (UNEM) began as a result of an INI seminar in 1995 where a number of teachers met and shared their ideas. The seminar was intended to take up the issue of unqualified, untrained, and inappropriate

⁶⁷ Drake, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁶⁸ Robert DeVillar, 'Indigenous Identity in Pluricultural Mexico: Media as Official Apologist and Catalyst for Democratic Action', in Y. Zou and E. Trueba (eds), *Ethnic Identity and Power: Cultural Contexts of Political Action in School and Society*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. 188.

⁶⁹ Calvo, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-185.

⁷⁰ Vargas-Cetina, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

teachers with a project to assign community-elected teachers. It was through this seminar that the Indigenous teachers discussed the problems of not only the teachers but the education system itself.⁷¹

One of the major concerns carried by UNEM was the community concern that the formalised education practices sustained little relevance to the community life. The communities requested teaching curricula to include ethnic cultural practices and an emphasis on agricultural classes. While such an emphasis bears direct relevance to community practices there was still a community concern that the educational program should have the capacity to provide aspirations to higher education. These aspirations illustrate the communities desire to overlay both traditional and modern practices, constituting a coexistence of social forms. This indicates the capacity for Indigenous communities to maintain the predominance of face-to-face practices while momentarily stepping outside of this to undertake more abstract practices such as formalised education. The teachers believed educational reform desired by the communities could be achieved through the implementation of an educational program that combined theory and practice. In order to achieve their objectives UNEM approached the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology Sureste (CIESAS) located in San Cristóbal, Chiapas. In turn, to develop teaching programs local NGOs and government-funded human rights organisations make up an advisory and pedagogic team.⁷² These teams designed and helped implement, with the assistance of the Department of Education, teaching programs for over 1400 Chiapas community instructors and advisory staff.⁷³

Changing the emphasis of the teaching program to one with local relevance is not an action that was an intended act of dislocation or an accentuation of a reductive binary opposition as outlined in Chapter One. The capacity to overlay the oral mode with a written (and computer-mediated) form is paralleled through the accentuation of the local in the face of the global. Such an act refutes a local-global divide through its coexistence and interpenetration of the ways of living. The promotion of the local and the ethnic was one that is undertaken bearing in mind the global characteristics of their environment. This illustrates the reflexive capacities of these communities. The Indigenous communities of Chiapas who are demanding and designing the New Education Movement "want the global

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

world to reinforce their local concerns, bringing the world into their classroom, but shaping it according to the indigenous communities' interests."⁷⁴ Gabriela Vargas-Cetina argues that this united collective of social actors working within a common framework in response to the global culture in addition to the national educational programs. She argues that the movement of Indigenous teachers is an organisation which is actively promoting its local character while recognising the need to do this in a globally advantageous mode.

Ethnic movements, which are among the most frequent forms of local responses to today's globalizing tendencies, seem to draw on both self-referential and exogenous collective images particular social groups have of themselves. UNEM's proposals are framed within an ethnic logic, as the idea of an indigenous education is what is articulating the organization's program. UNEM is trying to accommodate, simultaneously, the self-referential image of the various culturally distinct groups within its membership and a collective self-representation built around the idea of Indigenusness. The organization is finding that, to be successful, it has to speak at least two kinds of language: local dialects of the several indigenous languages extant in Chiapas, and "global slang", including a very developed ethnic vocabulary. In the new education movement, therefore, locals are appropriating the global language of "locality", "ethnicity" and "civil action" without losing sight of their own diversity and cultural specificity.⁷⁵

This ability to recognise and reflexively use the local character of the educational practices in a global framework allows the communities to retain and enhance their cultural practices. This coexistence of traditional practices and modern practices ensures the maintenance of the face-to-face practices in the face of abstracted and globalised neo-liberal programs rather than becoming subordinated to them.

While the Zapatista movement has been influential in the education movement in Chiapas, discussed below, the UNEM organisation of teachers has enabled the issue of Indigenous education to cut through the divisions and factions which have evolved in communities between those who are supporters of the Zapatistas and those who are not.⁷⁶ This organisation is advancing the cause for more adequate rural education for Indigenous communities in the face of sometimes local hostilities, the shifting tolerance and intolerance of the state to the popular movements such as the Zapatista rebellion and the international attention pursuant from the Zapatista movement, while trying to maintain a politically neutral front.⁷⁷ The contestation between the local and the global is one which has enabled, while also contradictorily inhibited, this process.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

Zapatistas Construct Schools for Chiapas

Within the state of Chiapas lives a number of diverse Indigenous groups including Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Mam, Zoque, Lacandon, Mixe and Chol. In 1994 a mostly Indigenous army, the Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional (EZLN) or referred to as the Zapatistas staged an uprising demanding the end of neoliberalism and the poverty it brings particularly to Indigenous peoples.⁷⁸ The Zapatista rebellion centred around a criticism of the neoliberalism project. Education for all Indigenous children was one of the Zapatistas' specific demands. They called for "adequate bilingual indigenous education, devoid of the ideology of the state."⁷⁹ The Zapatistas claim that austerity programs which have been administered by the Mexican government in order to meet the neoliberal requirements of global organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the North American Free Trade Agreement have meant the reduction and devastation of social programs including an equitable and appropriate Indigenous educational program. Bonfil Batalla writes of the imaginary Mexico, one which relegates its Indigenous roots to history and propels a fictitious Mexico, as a monocultural Western civilization.

The instruction given at school ignores the culture of the majority of Mexicans and attempts to replace it rather than develop it ... It is schooling that negates what exists and provokes in the student a schizophrenic dissociation between his concrete life and the time he spends in the classroom.⁸⁰

Prior formal schooling only represented examples of acculturation. "Relatively few children attend the Chiapas rural schools beyond second grade."⁸¹ In response to the previously administered state educational projects, the Zapatistas have developed an alternative educational autonomous pedagogy that is defined and determined by the Indigenous communities.⁸²

One of the instigating facts for the Zapatista rebellion was the denial of their cultural practices of which language was a primary one. The education program administered by the state, as discussed above, carried with it an assimilationist ideal which

⁷⁸ See Chapter Six for a detailed analysis of the Zapatista uprising.

⁷⁹ Roberto Flores, 'Breaking the Ideological Hold: Zapatista Response to Mexico's Bilingual Program in Chiapas', *In Motion Magazine*, (<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/chbilin.html>).

⁸⁰ Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, P. Dennis (trans.), University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996, p. 126.

⁸¹ Modiano, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁸² Flores, *loc. cit.*

intended to create a unified Mexican identity in order to become more globally and economically efficient. There had often been problems with unqualified and inappropriate language speakers in schools in the Chiapas region and throughout the Indigenous populated areas. It has been argued, that as a result of the uprising, bilingual teachers were banned from entering communities, although in many communities the teachers were government supporters and they simply left. In many cases school for the children of Zapatista supporters was ceased altogether. Occasionally this role was taken up by International Observers simply to entertain the children who were missing out on schooling.⁸³ In some communities new teachers were appointed by the communities themselves.⁸⁴ The result of this was for the Ministry of Education to begin a project, Indigenous Community Instructor, to help train, qualify and provide resources to communities in this position. However the Ministry did not have the resources to fulfil the stated objectives of the project.⁸⁵ The Indigenous people of Chiapas have, with assistance from a national and international support base, to build an autonomous high school for Indigenous students who have never had this opportunity before.

The support for the Zapatistas came from across Mexico and throughout the world. This interest took on various levels of support. The Junior High School in Oventic has been arguably built by various levels of mediated communication. There has been national and international construction teams sent to support the local community and the hundreds of supporters rallying from the surrounding communities who risk harassment and violence from military and paramilitary patrols. In addition there has been national and international non-government organisations supporting the project. And finally, there has been considerable funding and support from networked individuals and groups instigated through the Internet. The response of the government has been telling. They have expelled one of the international supporters from Mexico on the grounds that he was supporting an unconstitutional school.⁸⁶

⁸³ Information evidenced from field research 1996. The role of the Peace Observers organised through the human rights center in San Cristobal (Fray Bartolome Centro de Derechos Humanos) was one where the observer was to take *denuncias* or to act as translators for the evidence of non-observance of agreed peace agreements but often became one of teacher to many children, particularly of pro-Zapatista families, because official schools, where they existed, were only available to those children of the supporters of the PR.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Vargas-Celina, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁸⁶ Schools for Chiapas, 'Director of Chiapas Schools Construction Teams Deported From Mexico', (<http://www.mexicopeace.org/newsletters/pb-deport.html>).

Since 1997 there has been construction teams visiting Chiapas to help build a school and living area for a boarding school for 400 students.

The Oventic Aguascalientes II School will offer a comprehensive 7th through 9th grade curriculum with emphasis on agriculture and animal husbandry. This multilingual education center is being planned, and will be administered, by the popular Zapatista leadership in the community of Oventic Aguascalientes II in the municipality of San Andres Sakame'en which is located in the highlands of Chiapas about one hour from the ladino city of San Cristóbal de las Casas.⁸⁷

These people supporting the program travel to Oventic and assist on the ground carrying sand, gravel and cement blocks as required by the community to build the Oventic school. The community which has defined the project has used the assistance of these people in creating their project. Those travelling to Chiapas are not required to be skilled, but are required to have "respect for human diversity and enormous patience."⁸⁸ In addition there are specific projects and committees which have been setup to discuss the pedagogical practices which will be used and the training of teachers from local Mayan communities. These committees have been developed in order to share ideas from educators around the world.

There has been considerable support from non-government organisations within and outside of Mexico. This level of support has assisted through the organisation of both teams of visitors who have assisted in the construction of the schools and other needs, but also in the development of a networked support base which exists from the internet networks. Global exchange, is a major non-government organisation based in the United States and has a primary role in administering the project. This has included the administering of funding which has primarily come from a bonds scheme and the organisation of construction teams. The construction teams are generally made up from the international support base created through the internet during the Zapatista struggle and continued with the electronically mailed newsletters and updates from Global Exchange. Peter Brown, when he was one of the participants of a construction team has commented on the reasons for their support.

Gazing up the rocky hill of Oventic we were struck with the numerous contradictions of a small private, Jr. High School – in the center of an Indian insurrection against corporate globalization – seeking to become a public school. Perhaps many of those who are

⁸⁷ San Diegans for Dignity, Democracy and Peace in Mexico, *Proposals for Oventic Aguascalientes II School Site*, (<http://www.spanweb.org/ezschool.htm>).

⁸⁸ Schools for Chiapas Homepage, (<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org>).

supporting the school at Oventic do so specifically because the same forces fighting the Zapatistas want to privatize and cut funds for public schools in their home towns.⁸⁹

There is a contradiction between the occurrence of the internet, a technology of the globalised world, which has created the national and international support base for the Zapatistas, and the struggle itself, which has criticised globalisation and, in opposition, reflexively accentuated the culture and the localness within the practices which they are defending and for which they are demanding recognition.

At a more abstract level there are funds and support networks which have developed through the internet support base. The support of the educational program has been particularly popular with those who have not been comfortable supporting the Zapatista *Army* with its view of necessary violence but still wanting to support the movement. These disembodied networks are paradoxically supporting embodied practice.

A basic premise of the autonomous model is that autonomous education cannot exist outside of the context of the autonomous community. There is a dialectical relationship between the two in that autonomous education is part of the building the autonomous community and the autonomous community helps to develop autonomous education. A corollary to this premise is that the autonomous community is interdependent with the autonomous municipality and the municipality interdepends on the autonomous region, etc. In this global context, where dependence is absolutely necessary, transnationalism is natural enemy to autonomy. It is no coincident that the Zapatistas rely so heavily on international (global) support and protection to their peaceful approach.⁹⁰

Across several levels of abstraction, the face-to-face, agency-extension and the disembodied, it is possible to see the support which has aided in developing a local, community-based school in Chiapas. This school maintains its traditional practices while reflexively using abstract communicative practices to support its project.

Conclusion

Education in Mexico has proven to be a significant area of political struggle. The education system has historically been used to carry-out a nation-building exercise through the undertaking of centralised and formalised education programs administered in the Spanish language. Government organisations and their policies and practices have historically borne the concept of assimilation and continue to do so. The Indigenous peoples of Mexico have

⁸⁹ Peter Brown, 'Zapatistas Unleash New Weapon', April 1997, (<http://ilag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/accounts/zapschool.html>).

⁹⁰ Flores, *loc. cit.*

struggled against this to maintain control over the educational practices, their existence and their development. While they have acknowledged the benefits in acquiring skills in the Spanish language and other abstract practices, they have insisted on ensuring there is a teaching program that is relevant to their face-to-face communities. This has resulted in an emphasis in Indigenous communities for an education program controlled by communities which enables them to ensure there is a maintenance of traditional practices and languages within the education system. The Indigenous communities have struggled to achieve pedagogical practice that is appropriate and relevant in order to develop new skills, recognising the value of the coexistence of traditional and modern practices.

Their struggles have now become recognised within the international arena. The reflexive use of globalised technology has opened up the Indigenous communities of Chiapas to the global arena in the form of national and international support. It is this global stage, with its threat of homogeneity, which has provided a platform for the accentuation of the local and the ethnic through reflexive projects. Such projects have been exemplified by the educational reform programs that are now operating in Chiapas. The government system, which has for so long carried the assimilationist ideal, has been evaded by the recent educational reform programs running in Chiapas. Autonomous, community-based, culturally appropriate and relevant educational programs have been supported by national and international organisations and individuals alongside the locals who are reflexively determining their own mode of educational practice.

CONCLUSION

Integrative Community Constituted Through Coexistence

We're dealing with an indigenous population that had little contact with the rest of the world. We're dealing with people who were essentially hunter-gatherers. They didn't have chariots. I don't think they invented the wheel.

Phillip Ruddock, Minister for Reconciliation, as quoted by
Rajiv Chandrasekaran in *The Washington Post*, 6 July 2000

In contemporary Australia, statements such as the above example from the Minister for Reconciliation, outrageous as they may be, should not surprise us. For many people a linear progressive model of thinking continues. This model prioritises progress through the adoption of modern technological practices while at the same time banishing traditional practices. This way of thinking reinforces the 'savage' versus the 'civilised' dichotomy that carries the assumption that there is a divide between two diametric states which is bridged only through the relegating of traditional practices to the past. This belief in progress results in continuing the assimilationist project in the relations between black and white Australia today. While there is much talk of reconciliation within the public realm, including government posturing, the underlying belief in a linear path of progress to civilisation prevents an acceptance of contemporary ways of being, which includes traditional and tribal practices, for Indigenous peoples. Assimilationist policies and ideals have, throughout history, assumed that Indigenous peoples need to be 'civilised' in order for *them* to become empowered and part of *our* society. Linear progression theory has extended the assimilationist ideal by assuming adoption of modern technology brings the user closer to a progressive 'civilised' way of life, and that traditional practices and modern practices cannot coexist. It is assumed that in order to progress and become 'civilised', traditional practices must remain a part of history, retained only for their exotic qualities and entertainment, and society must continually advance through the adoption of modern technologies. This thesis has argued that such a bias prevents recognising the richness of communities in which the

maintenance of social integrative, face-to-face practices coexist with abstract technological practices.

Within the field of social theory, significant consideration has been given to the transition that has occurred from tradition-bound, face-to-face societal formations, to modern, rationalised, abstract societal formations. The shift has been signified by the "subordination of social and cultural frameworks of belief and action to the instrumental goals of economic accumulation."¹ The result of this transition for societal members has been offered as an ambivalent one. The rationalisation of life, on the one hand, has the potential to advance a feeling of alienation, disenchantment and anomie. However, on the other hand, the loosening of the constraints of tradition, it is argued, has the potential for emancipation and liberation. Moreover, the debate has now progressed to one which attempts to further analyse society's movement away from modernity to that of a late-modern or postmodern society. This debate now focuses on the increased fragmentation of the formations and practices which once unified societal structures. Community has been popularised through the desire to replace the perceived loss of boundedness as a result of the fragmentation of modernity.

This thesis has entered the popular debate over the possible fragmentation of society and more specifically community, questioning one of the central tenets of progress that underlies a transitional theorisation. It has not been my intention to suggest that a shift has not occurred. The shift from a traditional to a modern, and perhaps to a late-modern or postmodern social form, has undoubtedly occurred. This thesis has rather argued that the proposition about an epochal shift from one distinct period to another is reductive. This reductive analysis does not allow for the possibility for tribal, traditional, modern and late-modern social forms to overlay and interpenetrate each other with all their contradictions and tensions. The notion of linear progress within social theory has been an assumption that has prevented a thinking that allows for a social formation constituted by the interpenetration of different modes of practice at differing levels of social integrative depth. This thesis has argued that it is possible for different levels of abstract practices to coexist with more concrete practices within community formations although such coexistence often creates contradictions and tensions. While there may have historically been a subordination

¹ Martin O'Brien, Sue Penna and Colin Hay (eds), *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*, Longman, London, 1999, p. 3.

of one period over another, it is possible to retain practices and structures from the previous determining period in the practices and structures of the following one. Traditional practices and modern practices, while often contradictory, can coexist. I have argued that this is not only possible, but that it is preferable. It is preferable because such an integration of the dynamics of societal actions encourages a richer, more meaningful social formation.

To retain the practices of traditional or tribal social forms and not allow them to become subordinated requires a reflexive project. This project is constituted through a framing of disembodied practices within face-to-face relations resulting in the maintenance of the dominance of the depth of social integration. The reflexive capacity of communities in working to achieve a coexistence of traditional and modern practices was demonstrated by empirical examples within the areas of political dissent and educational practices. The examples throughout the thesis have been taken from Indigenous communities in which the purposeful retention of concrete practices has been necessary in order to maintain the dominance of the face-to-face way of being. Predominantly in non-Indigenous modernised communities there is an eagerness to take up technological innovations due to the linear progressive bias. The adoption of technologies is seen to be civilising and progressive and therefore, a commitment to retaining the practices at a more concrete level is less likely. While it may be easier to retain these practices in the face of transition, it is possible, with a reflexive framework, to maintain or re-constitute these practices.

This thesis has demonstrated that the adoption of technologies is not a one-way process. There is value in the retaining of traditional practices within a modern social formation. The dominating and subordinating shifting of levels of integration in accordance with the reflexive practices of the community. The argument against a totalising linear progressive framing of societal practices has been demonstrated through the changing mode of communication. The mode of communication provides an interesting and illuminating illustration and has been popularised through the introduction of disembodied communicative techniques. Communicative technologies have been one of the most prominent modes of practice in the modernising of social formations. Their ability to connect people through disembodied means over vast distances within immediate time has changed the ways in which we live. It is through an analysis of these changes that I have been able to critically examine the way in which such transitions have impacted the constitution of our community formations. This has resulted in the argument that such

change need not be considered totalising and that it is possible for the co-existence of the traditional and the modern in a rich and integrative social form. The communicative mode of practice was selected because it is one of the most important constitutive practices for communities. The way in which a community as a formation communicates to the outside world and the way in which the community communicates between its members within the community formation have both been addressed within the empirical sections of this thesis. This has highlighted the changing modes of communicative practices and the differing levels of reflexivity that are attached to these practices.

Modern communicative technology can be used by communities that are formed primarily at the level of the face-to-face without dominating the traditional form. Disembodied, abstracted technological practices are subordinated to the integrative level of the face-to-face through the reflexive integration of face-to-face practices such as kinship ties, tribal affiliations, ceremonial and social customs, and so on. In this way it is possible for an oral, written, and computer-mediated mix of practices to exist rather than more abstract practices dominating more concrete practices. The written mode of communication is generally privileged over the oral and computer-mediated modes within non-Indigenous communities. However, within the examples from Indigenous communities that have been explored throughout this thesis I have argued that the traditional oral practices can be advantageous in the maintaining of social integrative depth while still using disembodied communicative and other abstract technologies.

Throughout this thesis I have explored examples within Indigenous communities of Australia and Mexico which display the character and qualities of integrative community. Social forms that have maintained or re-constituted social integrative depth through the maintenance of face-to-face levels of integration while adapting technological practices have been demonstrated as rich and rewarding community formations. While the examples that have been used to illustrate the character and qualities of integrative community have been of Indigenous communities, integrative community is also possible for modernised and non-Indigenous societies. Broadening the perspective of integrative community among contemporary late-modern communities would allow for richer communities in the age of the tyranny of immediacy and fragmentation. In the contemporary age where gated-residential enclaves and solitary workers tele-connecting from within their homes is becoming more and more common, engaged social relations are more difficult to maintain.

In the face of globalising practices, which have the propensity to rupture and fragment the integration of social connections, it is necessary for the coexistence of social forms to be consciously, reflexively, actualised. The challenge of reconstituting social integrative depth within communities of the late-modern era is one that takes us into a much-needed area of research.

Integrative community, created at a point of contradiction through a layering of practices from different social forms is rich and rewarding. It is one which is practiced in many Indigenous communities, as evidenced throughout this thesis. My intention with this thesis was to provide a theoretical framework for the reflexive constitution of integrative community. The establishment of this framework, I hope, can contribute to social theorising in two ways. The first is to broaden its application to many more communities, including non-Indigenous community in which the engagement of social relations appears increasingly under threat. The second is to provide recognition of the complexity and sophistication of Indigenous communities in the face of contemporary governments and publics who continue to proclaim the goals of assimilation through their ignorance and racial bias. Such ceaseless persistence in maintaining and reconstituting the richness of the face-to-face against aggressive threat surely deserves acknowledgment and commendation, and in my opinion, replication. Integrative community is one that is possible, and preferable, in the face of abstracting technologies of the modern age.

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