MONASH University

Learning for school together at playgroup: -
An exploratory case study
of the Early Year's Program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands

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Abstract

This qualitative case study of the *Ngaanyatjarra Early Years' Program* explored how the Ngaanyatjarra parents prepared their children ready for school through shared participation in their community-initiated playgroup program. During the mid-1990s, families from one of the Ngaanyatjarra communities identified a lack of readiness for school as a reason that their children weren't succeeding at school. They felt that this had to do with their children not being equipped with the skills required for school and asked me for assistance to help them get their children ready.

Framed within the literature of *school readiness* and children's *early learning experiences in families*, this thesis argues that young children learn and develop through their early experiences within their families and the culture of their family. The parents' role is the primary means of developing the child within the family's culture. However, the literature identifies that these early experiences also influence a child's readiness for Western school. For Indigenous families, ways of bringing up children are culturally different from the dominant Western perspectives that determine *school readiness*. Indigenous children are *ready to learn* within the family and within their cultural ways. However, the school readiness literature rarely makes this distinction but rather argues for interventionist programs for Indigenous children. Therefore, the challenge has been to examine how Indigenous families might teach their children the skills required for school readiness within their cultural ways and without the need for interventionist programs.

I was the Program Facilitator/Educator of the playgroup for various blocks of time between 1995–2019. I maintained an archive of historical documents about the program, journal notes, program journals, reports, program operational documents, conference papers, and media releases. Commencing my PhD studies in 2015, using a case study approach, I brought this material together with documentation of the research journey, writing auto-ethnographic field notes and journal entries and interviewing participants. I conducted data analysis using inductive and thematic analysis techniques.

The findings highlight that the playgroup was a learning program for the adults who then taught their children. My adult educator's role was one of walking alongside the families as they learnt the cultural practices of Western schools through participation in the program. In response, as the adults became more confident, the children developed school readiness through learning within their family. This thesis argues that school readiness for Indigenous children can be achieved within the family and within the cultural ways of the family. Now as the second generation of Ngaanyatjarra children participate in the program this study stands as a testament to the program's requested purpose by embracing its location within the Ngaanyatjarra family and cultural ways.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Name: Anne Shinkfield

Date: April, 2022

Publications During Enrolment

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My appreciation of the opportunity to tell this story as a PhD thesis is extended to Monash University. As an external, remote student, my essential links with the university have been through my supervisors, Professor Zane Diamond, Dr. Linda Henderson, and Dr. Jennifer Rennie, with Dr. Henderson taking over at the later stages of my candidature when Dr. Rennie moved from Monash. Their timely guidance through this thesis process and their patience with my evolving thinking have been greatly valued, yet even more importantly, their belief that this story was an important story to share has been of immense encouragement to me in this process. My thesis has certainly benefited from the experience and knowledge that each of my supervisors has had in working and living alongside Indigenous families, and their unique perspectives on the development of this story have been greatly appreciated. My appreciation is greatly extended to Bronwyn Dethick for her timely and supportive proofreading and editing.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. When the Ngaanyatjarra families asked for my assistance in 1994, I didn't know that when our family left the communities in 1998, after a few years my husband and I would come back to these communities, and this program, for another 15 years. Consequently, I would like to acknowledge the time spent by my family, my husband Rowan, and sons, Joel, David, and Simon, during our six years in the Ngaanyatjarra communities in the 1990s. In many ways, our time there as a younger family prefigured the family context of learning through this program, as the Ngaanyatjarra families asked me for assistance in getting their children ready for school like we had for our children. Years later, when each of our sons visited us with their wives, and our first granddaughter, their meeting up with the Ngaanyatjarra children that they knew in the 1990s, and their children, reflected the essence of the family nature of this program, that somehow, they were all part of this family and community story.

My family and friends have been a source of great encouragement to me during these years of thesis writing, and I am thankful for each one of them, with their understanding of my pre-occupation during this time, and their confidence that I would complete this thesis and that it would be an important story to tell. To Rowan, my husband, whose steadfast patience and selfless support have made the writing of this thesis possible, you have raised the standard of care and encouragement. Thank you.

Bronwyn Dethick (B.Ed. AALIA) edited this thesis. Her editorial intervention was restricted to Standard D—Language and Illustrations and Standard E—Completeness and Consistency in accordance with the Standards of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice.

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Glossary

This study is set in the bi-cultural and bi-linguistic context of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, a group of remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia, near the Northern Territory/South Australia/Western Australian tri-state corner.

This glossary is presented as three sets: English words, Ngaanyatjarra words and locally used English terms by the Ngaanyatjarra families in this program.

English words: Use of terms within the context and purpose of this study.	
1. 'Learning for school'	a. As the content, and purpose, of the program requested by the Ngaanyatjarra families in this study, the activities, and routines that children require at school entry age. b. As the differentiating name of the program requested by the Ngaanyatjarra families, as in 'the 'learning for school' program', in contrast to the more general terms of similar programs such as 'school readiness programs', 'preparation for school programs' and 'early years programs'.
2. 'Playgroup'	When this program commenced, *playgroup* as an English word, was not a familiar word for the families. The program was called a playgroup for administrative purposes because within playgroups, family adults / parents are with their children in the program activities.
3. 'School readiness'	The use of this term in this study is usually in connection with the literature of school readiness.
4. Learning within the family	Children of birth to school entry age learning alongside their family adults, within the culture and language of their family, during their child-rearing years.

5. ‘Family adults’	In this study the term ‘family adults’ is nearly always used instead of the term ‘parents’. The cultural family structure of the Ngaanyatjarra families is that of extended family.
6. ‘Out-of-home-yet-within-family’	As the learnings within this program were not possible in the physical location of their homes, the program was often described as an ‘out-of-home-yet-within-family’ program.
7. ‘Ngaanyatjarra families’	The Ngaanyatjarra families of this program will usually be referred to as the Ngaanyatjarra families.
8. ‘Indigenous’	The term ‘Indigenous’ usually will refer to Indigenous families, but not specific to the Ngaanyatjarra families, unless specified.
9. The name of the program in this study	There is some variety of this name, usually in relation to the context within this thesis, and contrast required: o A learning for school playgroup program o A learning program o The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program o The Ngaanyatjarra program o The Ngaanyatjarra early years program
10. The program facilitator/educator	The title of the role of the program facilitator.
Ngaanyatjarra words: Regarding the pronunciation of the word ‘Ngaanyatjarra’, Glass (1990), recommends that ‘Nah.na.tha.rra is a useful approximation’ (p. 10). Translations from Glass et al., (2003).	
ninti *nintirringkula* *palya* *maku* *wiya wanti* *yilala* *yuwa*	know, knowledgeable, skilled, or experienced getting learned (verbalized and present tense of ‘*ninti*’) all right, okay edible grub, bardie, or witchetty grub no, stop it or leave it pull something out yes

Locally used English terms by the Ngaanyatjarra families in this program	
'get learned'	The often used English version of *nintirringkula* – getting learned. Example: '… bring their kids to playgroup to get learned, while they are little' (Family conversation, 2018)
'sit down self'	A child doing an activity, thinking, or learning by themselves. Example: '…Some kids they learn from here [playgroup] and then when they go home, they sit down self and think of it in their head' (Family conversation, 2018).
'Crying for playgroup'	'crying for' means letting their family adult know what they want. Example: 'He wake me up and he was crying to come here, to the playgroup. That's why I bring him here' (Family conversation, 2018).
'I learn him' and 'I teach him'	The distinction between learning and teaching is not reflected in Ngaanyatjarra language, as the base word for 'learn' and 'teach' is about knowledge and knowing, '*ninti*'. Therefore, in this program the families' use of 'I learn him' and 'I teach him' are often used interchangeably.
Ninti	*(adj., adv.)* 'know, knowledgeable…'
Nintipunku	(*transitive verb)* 'teach someone' (similar to giving knowledge)
Nintirringku	*(transitive verb) '*learn' *(*similar to becoming more knowledgeable)

Chapter 1: Introduction

> When the families asked me to help them prepare their children for school, I remember not being overly concerned about carrying out their request, because, as I told myself, I knew what was helpful for children to know prior to day one at kindy, both as a teacher and as a mother, and they knew their children and their ways of helping their children learn new things. (Reflection on my 1995 program journal, 2016)

1.1 Purpose of this Study

This study explored the shared learning journey with the Indigenous families of the remote communities of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, in Western Australia, in developing their *learning for school* program, within which they can prepare their young children for the activities and routines of the different culture of the school. The program began in 1995 and is ongoing, with the *playgroup* graduates of those early years now the *family adults* bringing the second generation of children to the program.

This case study, documents the development of this program over the years, covering the beginnings, the significant events along the way that impacted its development, and the shape of this program at the end of the study time period, 2019. Within the case study the findings revealed how non-Indigenous family adults can walked alongside Indigenous family adults, sharing the program development, so that the Indigenous family adults could prepare their young children for the culturally unfamiliar activities and routines of Western school.

How to ensure that children from these very remote Indigenous communities are ready for schooling in a language and culture vastly different from their own is a vexing problem for families, schools, and government. The question of what *getting ready for school* means for Indigenous children in these communities awaited answers. For the Ngaanyatjarra families, the expectation was that their children attend school, but the families had not had an opportunity to learn how to prepare their children for school activities.

The families asked me to help them prepare their children for school and this study is my story about the program's development, reflecting on the work with the participating Ngaanyatjarra families in a program that has become part of their family and community life over the last 20 years. In this thesis, I offer an analysis of my journals, notes, and program materials over the years. Such rich data provided a comprehensive description and reflective analysis of the program's development. I was the program facilitator and/or coordinator for almost twenty years, only beginning the writing of this thesis in the final few years, from 2015–2019, as a way of honouring the vision of the participating families,

and to preserve into the future what they achieved in early years education through a community-led initiative embraced intergenerationally and supported by trusted professionals.

1.2 Situating This Study of the Program in Location and Cultural Context

In Western Australia, the Ngaanyatjarra Lands comprise of a group of ten very remote and isolated desert communities near intersection of the WA/SA/NT borders in Australia, covering 160,000 square kilometres and with a population of about 1850 people. Warburton Mission served the people from 1933–to 1977 with a school opening at Warburton, the largest community, in the late 1950s. Many of the smaller communities developed in the 1970s with schools opening in these communities in the early 1980s. In March 1981 the Ngaanyatjarra Council was formed to represent the interests of the communities and, for local government purposes, the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku (https://www.ngaanyatjarraku.wa.gov.au/index.php) came into existence in July 1993.

Indigenous languages predominate in each community, with Ngaanyatjarra the language of families around Warburton (Glass, 1990). Though the Ngaanyatjarra people live in the bi-cultural environment of remote communities, the Ngaanyatjarra people's culture is strong, with Harris (1990) describing Indigenous people living in the remote, central communities of Australia as "confident and unconscious carriers of traditional culture" (p. 3). Yet their cultural ways are quite different from Western cultural ways, with *Into Another World* the descriptive story of long-term missionary linguists living in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Glass, 1990), and, for me, when friends or family asked me what it was like living in these remote communities for many years, my answer was always that, although it was still in Australia, it was like living in another country, but without needing a passport.

The schools, as noted earlier, are a very recent addition to the life of the Ngaanyatjarra people living in these remote communities. These schools are similar to Western Australian public schools throughout the state within the Department of Education and follow the West Australian curriculum. For the Ngaanyatjarra children, before 2007, each community had its own small school, the school situation for the first decade of the program of this case study, but in 2007, all the schools in the communities merged into the one, multi-campus Ngaanyatjarra Lands School (www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/overview.do?schoolID=5899&pageID=S001). Schooling is all in the English language, although there is limited use of English in the communities. For the students, educational outcomes are minimal even if children attend school, there are limited employment possibilities for adults in the communities, and, therefore, the young children in the programs of this case study are often third-generation welfare-dependent.

The schools within these remote Indigenous communities are Western cultural institutions, with the activities, routines, equipment and expectations of the schools built on the early childhood

experiences of children within families of the Western culture. Such early childhood experiences are distinctly different from the early childhood experiences of Ngaanyatjarra children within their childrearing years in their families within their Ngaanyatjarra culture. Therefore, for the Ngaanyatjarra families, during the few decades that Western schooling has been in their communities, although it was expected that their children attend school, there has not been any opportunity given for the families to learn how to prepare their young children for the activities of the different culture of the school, by school entry age. However, in 1994, the Ngaanyatjarra families requested an innovative and creative 'within family' program response to their recognition of the cultural difference between the activities of young children in Western cultural families and the activities of their young children within their Indigenous Ngaanyatjarra families and culture, to prepare their young children for school within the Western culture.

1.3 The Coming Together of Families in the Request for This Program

My family had moved to live in the community in 1993, and my husband and I initially both worked as teachers, but after a year or so I took study leave and began home-schooling our three sons. As my husband had spent the first 6 years of his life at an Aboriginal community in rural Western Australia, there were some families in our new community who knew his parents and remembered him as a child, and so our family was known in a relational way by the families

The Indigenous families wanted their children to do well at school, as, in the words of my Indigenous colleague, Beryl, "Children are the future of our community" (My program journal, 2006). But it was not simply a matter of children turning up for school:

> Leaning on the school gate one morning in 1994, watching the children jumble into their classrooms with one of the older mothers, she turned to me and said, "We're sending our children to school, but they're not learning anything". Most mornings we weren't the only ones hanging around the school gate. Younger siblings would often come with their school-age family to school, but they'd be told that they couldn't stay. Eventually, they would be encouraged to go outside the schoolyard where they'd hang around the fence or play on the ground beside the fence until they saw something interesting, and they'd run off to see what was happening. (Reflection on my 1995 program journal, 2016)

Later that year, a group of the Ngaanyatjarra women asked the community advisor for a place for their young children to play while they were busy, where their children, in the company of some family members, could participate in a program of activities that would prepare them for school. They

also requested a training component for the women who would be with the children so that they could eventually lead such programs themselves. Their requests were approved, and funding was obtained for some initial set up costs and the appointment of a short-term position to lead the program, along with a community agreement that two or three family adults would be paid each week through CDEP (Community Development Employment Program) to work as assistants in the new program.

> A few weeks later, this same group of women came to visit me.
>
> During the home-schooling time within our family, the Indigenous children in the community would often visit our children after school, joining in with our children in activities outside, or spending time colouring or drawing at the activity table on the veranda. One afternoon some of the family adults called in too, including the mother that I had been talking with at the school gate. (Reflection on my 1995 program journal, 2016)
>
> They talked about their conversation with the advisor and then they asked me to help them with the program, in their words, to 'help them get their children ready for school and to teach them how to do this. (My program journal, 1995)

I was surprised by their request, but I don't remember hesitating for long. I agreed and was quite excited about their purpose for the program for the children and the family adults as the teachers of their children in this new program. (Reflection on my program journal, 1995)

Their request to me was *family to family*, the Indigenous family adults asking me as another family adult for help with an activity for their children, as they knew I had experience. The families obviously expected that I would know how to assist them to be part of this *getting children ready for school* process with their children. The family adults could see that our children must have been prepared for school because they were learning well in their school years, they had watched me as a teacher for a couple of years with their older children, and some of them had also worked alongside me in the classrooms as an educational assistant during that time. They observed that I knew the purpose of preparing children for school—how the activities and routines that children develop in their young years are foundational to the activities and routines of learning in my classroom. For me, I knew that success at school was extremely difficult for any child who wasn't ready for *learning at school* from day one, a fact continually reinforced during my time teaching their older children at the local community school.

The program was called a *playgroup*, because it was a place for children to *play*, within the larger family *group*, as family adults and children would be together in the program. In the 1990s, programs for under-school-age children were either playgroups, with family adults and children together, or creche/child care, where family adults dropped off their children to be cared for by others.

With my acceptance of their request, the allocated short-term funding was stretched across 2 years of playgroup sessions, which gave the women and children more time to become comfortable with this new program intended to become part of the daily routine in their family and community life. Significantly, this program was the first time that families in these communities had ever had the opportunity to participate in a program within the context of their families that revealed how children in Western cultures are prepared for school.

1.3.1 My Experience and Interest in Education

My educational qualifications and experience were in primary education, special education, and adult education. Professionally, most of my teaching had been in primary schools, and in special education schools alongside exceptional teacher assistants and remote Indigenous schools alongside wonderful local Indigenous family members in the shared task of providing the best experiences from both of our cultures to support the children's learning. I had also spent a number of years in tertiary training colleges, working in the context of adult education in the educational workplace, linking teacher assistant training with working in special education and in remote Indigenous schools. As a matter of interest, I am not early childhood trained and I have had no experience of early childhood education and care settings, either personally with our children, or professionally, apart from a rare visit or two as a family adult. Additionally, my experience with home-schooling over the years had increased my awareness that schools are not the only possible environments for promoting children's learning and development.

In retrospect, my diverse professional background provided a broad range of somewhat unusual, professional skills that made me an ideal person to respond to the request of the family adults in 1994. The family adults asked me to teach them, and to help them prepare their children for school—they did not ask me to help their children. Indeed, I expect that I would have used my zero experience in early childhood educational settings as a reason to recommend that they ask someone else for that task. But the family adults asked me to teach them, as family adults, and to assist them to develop this program in which they could prepare their own children for school, within the context of their family. Given that my professional opinion is that family adults are the best teachers for their prior to school age children, the Ngaanyatjarra community women's request sat well with my confidence in my expertise.

As an educator, how people learn fascinates me. I know the importance of learning from an *experienced other*, in learning to read, to play music, or to repair bikes, and the value of learning by doing, rather than learning by just talking about doing. I believe that anyone, child, or adult, can learn the next step in what they'd like to learn, if the teacher scaffolds the learning from where the learner is

at in their learning and development. As a learner, I may have passed year 12 physics, if my teachers held a similar view of scaffolding their teaching to my current level of learning—but their teaching did not reach the 'zone' of my learning and development in physics, so closing that gap in my knowledge just didn't happen for me. However, that experience remained with me in my teaching over the years, instructive in my efforts to always teach people from their current level of knowledge, and within ways through which they can learn.

1.4 The Research Question

In 2015, I began this program study, while continuing my roles with the Ngaanyatjarra families until 2019. It seemed purposeful for the families, and myself, for me to study and document the development of this program within the context of exploring its development over the years. The study explored two identified gaps in the literature about the development of preparation for school programs, specifically programs for Indigenous families living in the context of remote communities within their Indigenous culture.

The research question is:

> How does the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enable the family adults to prepare their children for school?

Sub-questions supporting the data collection within this study are:

1. *How has the program's development over the years supported the families in their purpose for this program?*
2. *How have the roles, actions, and interactions of the family adults with their children, and the program facilitator, enabled the families in their purpose for this program?*
3. *How do the roles and tasks of the program facilitator/educator contribute, and enable the roles of the families with their children, in this cross-cultural learning program?*

1.5 Outline of Chapters in this Thesis

Chapter 1 introduced this study's purpose and context within the cross-cultural program of the Indigenous families of the Ngaanyatjarra. The beginnings of this program are retold in detail, as the coming together of the reasons for this program with the Indigenous families alongside my family relations, experience, and educational background in the context of our shared development of the program during the years of this study.

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature about children learning within families (Rogoff, 2003) school readiness, the development of early years programs to prepare children for school (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) and the implementation of these programs for Indigenous families in remote communities of Australia. As a result of this review, this study situated itself within two gaps in the literature, firstly, early years programs that have, as their foundation, the recognition of the difference between the families' culture and the culture of the school, and secondly, the place of family adults working with their young children in these programs, where the family culture forms the foundation of their *learning for school* program.

Chapter 3 is a description of the selected research approach and methodology, that of a qualitative case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014) and the data collection to explore how the study program enabled the Indigenous families to prepare their children for school. Information for this study was gathered from archived documents, my program journals over 20 years, and conversations with long-term playgroup parents. In the context of my long-term experience in living in these communities and working within the study program, I describe my added position as a researcher in this study as taking various stances along the continuum of *insider- outsider* research (Fleming, 2017; Mercer, 2007). As described in detail, my close researcher position, and awareness of the different cultural understandings about knowledge, informed the ethical research processes specifically designed for the families within this cross-cultural study.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. Part 1 is the chronological story of the development of the program, covering the three time periods when I was the program facilitator/educator and/or the coordinator of the program, 1995–1996, 2006–2010, and 2011–2019. Part 2 presents four common themes that emerged across the time periods, leading to the identification of four major findings in relation to how the program enabled the families to prepare their children for school.

Chapter 5 is the discussion of the four findings found to be integral to the operation of the study program enabling families' participation in this learning program with their children. This discussion is complemented by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and concludes with a summary of the four findings in relation to the research question.

Chapter 6, as the conclusion to this study, uncovers how the interwoven findings contributed to answering the research question, and puts forward suggestions for the contribution of these findings to the wider body of knowledge as well as the findings' implications for policy, practice, and further research, within the limitations of this study. Finally, this chapter reveals the significance of this study, for the Ngaanyatjarra families in their Indigenous culture, in the development of their requested learning program which equipped them to prepare their children for school.

The following chapter is the review of literature relevant to this program study to create the literary background for the discussion of the findings later in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Ngaanyatjarra families involved in this study, live in remote communities in Western Australia. Schooling from Western culture is now part of family life for them and their children, but that school is different from the culture of their family, as frequently happens for minority groups around the world (Rogoff, 2003). In 1994, the Ngaanyatjarra families requested my assistance to help them develop a program that would enable them to prepare their children for the activities involved in the different culture of school because they had not had the opportunity to learn how to prepare their children previously. Their learning for school playgroup program has now continued for over 20 years.

These works of literature converge in the Indigenous families' request for assistance with a program in which their children could learn the new experiences required for school within their family, and the culture of their family. There was extremely limited literature on Indigenous families in remote communities learning to prepare their own children for school, and, more widely, there was limited literature on families' preparation of their children for school when the culture of the family is different from that of the culture of the school.

2.1 Children's Early Learning Experiences Within Their Family

In this section, I engaged with the literature on young children's learning and development within family and culture. I examined the school readiness literature, specifically in relation to Indigenous children. I then briefly turned to theories of young children's learning and development for the purpose of situating parents' guidance of their young children's development within their family.

2.1.1 Young Children's Learning and Development is Within the Culture of Their Family

Young children, birth to school entry age, learn and develop through their early experiences within their family and the culture of their family. They acquire the behaviours required within the culture of their family, as "each community's valued skills constitute the local goals of development" for their young children (Rogoff, 1990, p. 12). The role of parents and family in the children's child-rearing is foundational to the development of the child, and the culture of the family is "reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 25). Across cultures, child-rearing

practices vary both in their expectations of children and their development, and the prescribed roles of family adults in relation to their children's' development:

> Family is recognized as the primary vehicle for the transmission of culture, serving to mediate cultural beliefs from one generation to the next… in part because child-rearing is so strongly organized by each culture. (Garcia Coll, & Magnuson, 2000, p. 97)

Across the world, young children become ready for the next stage in their life through sharing in the child-rearing experiences of the cultural environment of their family and community. However, because child-rearing practices vary across cultures the outcomes of children's early experiences within the child-rearing practices of their family, community, and culture, are likely to be demonstrated differently at any point in time (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Rogoff (2003) explained that within communities, "cultural practices fit together and are connected" (p. 368), that how children learn and develop aligns with the opportunities for children's learning and development within the culture of their family. For example, for children growing up within communities where children participate in adult family life, children would be expected to learn within the ebb and flow of that family life, by participation in everyday activities. In contrast, for children growing up in families which externalises much of adult life from the children's daily life, the children's learning would be separate from the context of many tasks, often requiring more frequent verbal explanations for both the task and its link to their future life as adults (Heath, 1983; Rogoff, 2003).

The Ngaanyatjarra families live in the Indigenous remote communities of central Australia. From the small amount of literature about child-rearing practices of families living in these areas, the following excerpts provided glimpses of the context of their young children's early experiences within their families. Unlike the non-Aboriginal cultural view of babies as "helpless creatures who need all decisions to be made for them" (Kearins, 1984, p. 13), families in central Australian communities explained how they viewed young children:

> When people look at the little babies or small children, they see small adults. These 'little people' have a set place in the family and the community with all the responsibilities of law and culture. They are addressed as 'my young auntie', 'my mother again', 'my young grandfather'. (Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, 2001, p. 9)

From birth, the children are part of the ebb and flow of community life within their cultural ways:

> Babies are taken everywhere with the family, and they are carried upright so that they can see where they are going, and their surroundings…They learn a sense of direction very early and develop extensive knowledge about their environment and who or what is in it. (Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, 2001, p. 11).

Therefore, because these children's early experiences aligned with their family purposes and culture, their experiences at school entry age were different from the experiences of children growing up in families within the Western culture of the school. Kearins (1984) explained this difference:

> Since small Aboriginal children are not required to limit their activities according to adult verbal instructions, there are consequences for both adult expectations of children's conduct and the learning styles of children. Aboriginal children… have no obligation to listen and obey when another makes a request. They may do so, but no punishment or disapproval normally results if they do not. (p. 22, 23)

Within a study of child-rearing across Indigenous locations in Australia, Penman (2006) concluded that although there were commonalities in beliefs and principles, child-rearing practices differed across locations, and that "only from within the specific communities that the differences can be known" (p. 39). Therefore, in this study of how the Ngaanyatjarra families guided the learning of their young children through their requested program, the findings were specific to these families in the social and cultural environment of their everyday life within their cultural ways.

2.1.2 Young Children's Experiences and Readiness for School

With the development of all young children, and the functioning of all families, "unfolding within a distinctive cultural context" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 369), in terms of school readiness, Kagan and Rigby (2003) made the distinction between "readiness to learn [and] readiness for school" (p. 1). Britto (2012a) added that "readiness to learn [is a] characteristic from birth…all children are born ready to learn" (p. 9). Writing of Indigenous child-rearing practices within families in remote Australia, Kearins (1984) remarked that,

> ways of bringing up children seem to be closely related to adult work, to interactions with others, and to special skills needed in a particular lifestyle. If two cultures expect quite different things from their adults, the ways in which they rear their children can also be expected to differ a lot. (p. 7)

Therefore, within the Western–European culture, the early experiences of children within families often include elements of school-like activities within their daily life, because schooling is one of their cultural goals of development for their children and is foundational to both the work of family adults and the daily comings and goings of their family members. For example, reading books, both for enjoyment and as a cultural tool, is one of the Western-European culture's valued skills, and it is an activity in which young children frequently see their older family members participating (Heath, 1983). Heath (1982), describing young children's experiences at home within the Western-European culture, made the observation that "by the time they enter school, they have had years of practice in interaction situations that are at the heart of reading—both learning to read and reading to learn" (p. 56). Studies by Heath (1983), Graue (1992), and Brooker (2002) described the differing experiences of children at school entry age, both within and between cultural groups, as a demonstration of young children's experiences within their family with Brooker (2002) concluding that "parents bring up their children in accordance with their own cultural rules" (p. 11).

For children within the Western culture, Kagan and Rigby (2003) made the distinction that young children's readiness to learn is "fostered" in their early years within their family, whereas children's readiness for school is "expected" at school entry age (p. 2). This distinction between children's readiness to learn, and their readiness for school is not frequently made, because the literature about children's readiness for school is usually set within the context of children and families within the Western culture, where readiness, and learning, within the home is expected to lead to readiness and learning for school. However, Kagan and Rigby (2003) made the point that because of this lack of distinction, the literature is filled with work regarding readiness, with "much of it confounding these two distinct concepts: readiness to learn and readiness for school" (p. 1).

The implications of this distinction are far-reaching for children of families from different cultures to the culture of the school for two reasons. Firstly, it is only for children who grow up within families in the Western school culture, that their early experiences within their family can be expected to translate to readiness for school, at school entry age, because schooling is part of the valued goals within their family and culture (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Secondly, as children's early experiences within their family are within the culture of their family (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), their experiences are on the trajectory of child development within their own culture, not the Western culture of the school, and for these children, their readiness to learn experiences within their child-rearing years cannot be expected to lead to readiness for school, in the different cultural setting of school. Therefore, the challenge was how families of a different culture to the culture of the school can prepare their children for school when it is the early

experiences during child-rearing years that are the preparation for children's learning at a Western school. Interestingly, McTurk et al., (2008) noted that school readiness for Indigenous children is "often misunderstood [because of the] tendency to confound readiness to learn…with readiness for school" (p. 3). However, addressing this challenge in the context of the Ngaanyatjarra families, living in a different culture to that of the Western culture of the school, was the reason the families requested the development of their '*learning for school'* program, so that they could successfully prepare their children for the experiences of the different cultural setting of school.

2.1.3 Young Children's Development Within a Sociocultural Theory Framework

This program study was necessarily a study of a cross-cultural learning program, therefore the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) became a helpful framework. Rogoff (2003) stated that the sociocultural theory assumed that "individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context" (p. 50). Prior to the development of this theory, the earlier theories of child development that reflected an emphasis on nature or nurture as the driving force in children's development subsumed the role of culture in children's development (Cole, 1998). However, Rogoff (2003) reported that investigations of people's engagement with tasks based on Piaget's theory of the universal stages of children's development, revealed that "people from different cultural backgrounds performed differently" (p. 238), and that these differences were linked to people's "experience with school [and] familiarity of use of particular materials for a particular process" (p. 238). Consequently, these results brought into question the universality of child development across cultures and led to the recognition of the socio-cultural context of children's learning and development (Cole, 1998; Rogoff, 2003; Seagrim & Lendon, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978).

Recently, Nyland (2019) in the introductory editorial to an Australian early childhood journal, pointed out that "Vygotsky, or his legacy, provides the most prevalent theoretical approaches to early childhood research" (p. 4). For the Indigenous children in this program their learning and development occurred through shared participation with their family adults, in the socially and culturally constructed activities and routines of a program guided, in collaboration with the families, by a person experienced in the program's content and purpose. Further discussion of the sociocultural processes of learning and development in the program will occur within chapter 5, but a brief overview of four relevant aspects follows.

Firstly, learning, and development, happen within an activity, as Rogoff and Morelli (1989) stated that "human functioning cannot be separated from the context of their activities" (p. 12).

These activities are themselves socially and culturally constructed, and Rogoff et al. (1998) wrote of the importance of "the analytical unit of activity" within the sociocultural approach (p. 227). In this cross-cultural program study, the learning of the activity, and the learning of the cultural setting of the activity is simultaneous, providing another perspective to Rogoff's (1990) statement, that "interactions in the zone of proximal development are the crucible of development *and* of culture" (p. 16).

Secondly, learning is through shared interaction with more experienced others. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that "an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment" (p. 90). In the study program I could have described each activity as such a zone of learning, and the daily program as a wider zone of shared learning. Originally, Vygotsky's theory was set within the context of language and the cognition of school (Rogoff, 1990), but Rogoff (2003) explained that this concept of the zone of proximal development could be expanded to assist in understanding young children's development, where "development is enhanced through the guided participation of a more skilled participant, who could bring the intellectual tools of society within reach of children, in the 'zone of proximal development'" (p. 229).

Thirdly, Rogoff, (2003) explained that there are two processes of guided participation, within families, which are observable across all cultures, the processes of "mutually bridging of meanings and mutually structuring children's opportunities to learn" (p. 299), and that these processes are constructed differently within the child-rearing practices of families within different cultures.

Fourthly, the concept of the guided participation of more skilled participants, for children's learning within the zone of proximal development, was revised by Rogoff et al. (1998) "to include the developmental goals and means of communication of cultures other than those stressing literacy" (p. 228), so that it "allows us to examine development in the early years when words are not the primary currency of communication" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 16). This program is in a bilingual context, and with children who are learning their first language within their family, and so the culturally constructed guided participation by the family adults is likely to include the mutual bridging of meaning across languages, while the structuring of the learning is likely to be within the interaction between family adults, the children, and the program facilitator. Therefore, the framework of the sociocultural theory of learning helpfully situated the guidance of the family adults of their young children's development, within the culturally constructed ways of their family, in the context of the requested experiences of their cross-cultural program.

2.1.4 Summary of Section 2.1

Young children's development is within their family, and the culture of their family, with the valued goals within the family's culture underpinning the child-rearing practices of the family. Therefore, the early experiences of children within the Ngaanyatjarra families are consistent with the cultural ways of their family, and the early experiences of children within families of the Western school culture are consistent with the cultural ways of their family. However, because schooling is a valued goal within Western culture, it is only for the children of Western families that their readiness to learn experiences are expected to translate into their readiness for school at school entry age.

The sociocultural theory of children's learning and development underpinning this program, supported the notion that within their family, young children develop and learn through interaction in socially and culturally constructed activities, with more experienced others, such as their family adults, guiding their participation in the everyday experiences of culturally constructed family and community life (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003).

Though the Ngaanyatjarra families live in a different culture to that of the Western culture of the school, yet, similar to many families of non-Western cultures across the world, their children have to attend the Western culture schools within their community. In 1994, the Ngaanyatjarra families recognised that they needed a program so that they could prepare their children for school asking for assistance to develop such a program.

The next section, 2.2, reviews literature discussing how children are prepared to participate in the activities and routines of learning at school, a topic commonly discussed as readiness for school.

2.2 School Readiness/Readiness for School

In this section, I situated literature on school readiness within the context of the interventional Head Start program, before considering the differing views of the purpose and practice of school readiness within the literature. As the literature positioned itself within the Western culture of the school, I then examined concerns addressed within the literature as to how the Western culture schooling idea of school readiness impacted children and families from a non-Western culture such as the Ngaanyatjarra family participants.

2.2.1 Cultural/Historical Links to School Readiness

In the early 1900s, formal school education within the Western culture was for middle-class families, with the children of these families growing into the formal school education through their early child-rearing experiences within their families (Bloch, 1991; Brown, 2017; Graue, 1993; Snow 2006). Therefore, in the United States, when education became available for all children in the 1980s (Brown, 2017), it was the development and experiences of young children in Western middle-class cultures that became the expected norm for children's development so that they could succeed at school (Bloch, 1991; Bloch & Kim, 2015; Brown, 2017). But, in this movement to education for all, children not from the Western middle-class culture had not had the early experiences within their family that would make them ready for school. Therefore, as Snow (2006) explained, "much of the literature on children's school readiness comes from the literature that has been concerned with risk, especially due to poverty, in the context of the Head Start program" (p. 9).

Brown (2017) concurred, noting that this conception of school readiness, that of helping children "to develop a set of skills and knowledge so that they would be ready for school", has moved from a specific response to addressing poverty within a defined population, to the response of developing "the readiness of all children for school", and has continued "to pervade the politics and policy" (p. 290) of early childhood development. For the later discussion of this cross-cultural program I considered it helpful to know where some of the concerns expressed in the literature were likely to have had their foundations, within the practices and cultural context of school readiness for school education in the West.

2.2.2 Views of School Readiness

In the literature, school readiness is described as a "complex construct, [but there is] no consensus… on what it means for children to be ready for school" (Brown, 2017, p. 288). However, there did seem to be general agreement about the need for all children to be ready for school, and that "to improve educational outcomes downstream, one must enhance children's preparation for school in the early years" (Snow, 2006, p. 8). There are various views of school readiness, with Boethel (2004) concluding that "school readiness has been variously theorized as a particular chronological age, as a stage or level of development in children, as a set of skills and competencies, as a process, and as a set of relationships" (p. 13). In the literature, these different views linked to theories of children's development, and different expectations of how children become ready for school, how to measure this readiness, and how children could be assisted to become ready for school.

Meisels (1998) presented four "conceptions" (p. 12) of readiness. The first view was the idealist, nativist, or maturational view, which is centred on children's age, so that "children are ready to start school when they reach a level of maturity" (Meisels, 1998, p. 12). This view was linked to Gesells' maturationist theory that links children's age with their stages of development, and the belief that "children are ready to learn when they are ready" (Meisels, 1998, p. 12). In practice, as reflected in the common use of the term *school entry age* across locations, a child's age is the entry ticket to school.

Secondly, the empiricist/environmental/interventionist view defined "readiness entirely in terms of the practical characteristics of the child's behaviors…what the child can do and how the child behaves… that children can acquire these skills and information through external guidance or teaching" (Meisels, 1998, p. 13, 14). Snow (2006) suggested that this view of readiness referred "to the state of child competencies at the time of school entry that is important for later success" (p. 9). This view of readiness is foundational for the later literature about interventions within early years programs, and the widespread linking of a child's lack of expected experience at school entry age with some disadvantage, or deficit, within the family, which limited the development of this experience (Eisenhart & Graue, 1990; Rogoff et al., 2017, Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). But, within this program study, this view of readiness reflected the intention of the families to prepare their children for the activities and routines of school through engaging with their requested program, because their children had not had the opportunity to learn these experiences from child-rearing practices of their culture.

Thirdly, the social constructivist view of readiness recognized the relativity of readiness among children in social and cultural terms, that "a child who may be ready in one community or even in one school in the same community may not be ready in another school or community [that this view] looks to the setting for its definition of school readiness" (Meisels, 1998, p. 15). This view moved away from the previous views of readiness as "residing in the child", as in the nativist or idealist view, or as "something absolute and external to the child which must be evaluated" as in the empiricist view (Meisels, 1998, p. 14) to a view of readiness in which the meaning of readiness is constructed socially and culturally within the context of the family and their environment (Graue, 1993, 2006).

Fourthly, the interactionist view of readiness is that it "incorporates information about the child as well as information about the milieu in which the child is reared and is taught", so school readiness is "a bi-directional concept [as it has a] dual focus on the child and the environment in which the child is taught" (Meisels, 1998, p. 15). Kagan and Rigby (2003) noted that in this view,

"readiness is understood as the match between the readiness of the child and the readiness of the environments that serve young children" (p. 3). This view also reflected the literature on school readiness as "three interlinked dimensions: a) ready children; b) ready schools; and c) ready families" (Britto, 2012b, p. 3).

These various views of school readiness from the literature present a number of statements to be referred to within the discussion in Chapter 5. But Graue (1992) highlighted a significant divergence from the literature, more aligned with this program study, writing that the audience for the "popular notion of readiness [was among] practitioners and academics, theorists, and test developers" (p. 237). It is the absence of parents, or family adults, in this list that reflected the contrasting situation for the Ngaanyatjarra families, an absence also reflected within the third and fourth views of school readiness, in the move away from the role of family adults in their preparation of their children for school within their family. In Chapter 5, I considered aspects of this literature through a lens of *famil*y or *family of a different culture*.

In relation to this study, I believe that the complexity of school readiness within the literature defining, measuring, promoting, and encouraging school readiness across children, families, environments, and cultures was insightfully captured by Graue (2006) when writing "I wonder what readiness can be if it encompasses children who have never held scissors or crayons, children with autism, children who translate between English and Hmong for both their parents and classmates" (p. 54). In an earlier study, Graue (1992), exploring the meanings of readiness for kindergarten for children within families of diverse socio-cultural communities of families who were living within one location, suggested that the answer would be "It depends" (p. 237). Returning to the literature featured in Section 2.1, which concluded that family adults guide their young children's development within their family's cultural ways, one might speculate on what the requested program of this study depends upon to meet the purpose of the families in preparing their children for school.

2.2.3 School Readiness for Families of Cultures that are Different from that of the School

In the conclusion of Section 2.1 of this review, I reiterated that because children's development during their child-rearing years occurred within their family and the culture of their family, it was only the early experiences of children within families of the Western culture that were expected to lead to readiness for school, because schooling is a valued goal within their culture (Rogoff, 2003, Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Consequently, for children not from the Western school

culture, their vastly different early child-rearing experiences did not prepare them for learning in the Western culture of the school (see Section 2.1.2). However, as already noted, school readiness programs, such as Head Start, were developed to help children who could not gain the skills for success in school within their family to "develop a specific set of skills and knowledge to that they would be ready for school" (Brown, 2017, p. 290). Additionally, Bloch (1991), linking literature about children's development with early childhood teacher training, explains that the "concept of 'normal' development based on scientific knowledge embodied class and culture biases" (p. 18). Bloch (1991) added that "child development knowledge, continually based on research with largely middle class European-American samples, was a principal source of knowledge about what to do in the curriculum, what normal children do and how they develop" (p. 15). Spodek and Saracho (1996) wrote, "early childhood programs, while essentially Western in origin, have been transported throughout the world" (p. 5). Importantly though, that practice involved transporting both the content and culture of these programs.

Consequently, within the literature, there are concerns about the appropriateness of the foundations, values, and practices of these programs, for increasing numbers of families of cultures that are different from the Western school culture, particularly for families from Indigenous cultures (Arnold et al., 2006; Ball, 2010; Spodek & Saracho, 1996). Interestingly, three of the most frequently raised concerns in the literature arise from one common source, the set of markers of school readiness of children that reflect the development of children within the school's Western culture (Brown, 2017; Snow, 2006), are the same set of markers of school readiness also expected of children at school entry age from families of different cultures.

The first concern is that other cultures "may have different conceptions of knowledge, different conceptions of development, and different cultural values" (Spodek & Saracho, 1996, p. 5). Secondly, the expectation of all children meeting this set of markers of school readiness does not value the diversity of children's early experiences within their families across cultures (Brown, 2017; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Meisels (1998) drew attention to the inconsistency of the goal that "all children in America will start school ready to learn, [with the understanding that] all children are born ready to learn" (p. 8), while Shallwani (2009) added the reminder that child development at certain stages is not universal "but socially constructed and inextricably linked to children's contexts" (p. 4).

The third concern questioned the appropriateness of measuring children's development through the set of markers of school readiness designed for Western culture for children of non-Western culture families (Arnold et al., 2006; Ball, 2010). These assessments are within the

community-level measurement processes, including the Early Developmental Index of Canada (Janus & Offord, 2007) and the Australian Early Developmental Census (AEDC) (Australian Government. Department of Education and Training, 2018). Such measurements identify children as demonstrating or not demonstrating readiness skills at the end of their first year of school. However, approaches that deem children as not ready for school "leads to many children [being] labelled as …in some way 'deficient"(Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p. 5).

The common source of these three concerns is the recognition that young children of a different culture to the school's Western culture have a different set of experiences at school entry age to those of children growing up within the school's Western culture. Ball (2010), working with families within Indigenous communities in Canada, discerningly proposed that the response to a recognition that "culture is embodied in the ways that children are raised, and the environments where they grow and develop has more 'rhetoric' than 'evidence'" (p. 1). This statement held the potential for shedding light on some of the factors discussed in Chapter 5, as it made the distinction between the *recognition* of the families' cultural difference and the *response* to this recognition and then, even more usefully, further separated any response into a response of *rhetoric* or a response of *evidence*. In this study, the family adults requested assistance with preparing their children for school, in response to their recognition that their children's experiences within their culture differed from the children's experiences within the Western school culture.

2.2.4 Summary of Section 2.2

The literature generally agreed that school readiness meant that children are ready for learning at school (Arnold et al., 2006), with more recent views in agreement with Meisels (1998) and Kagan and Rigby (2003) linked to the child's readiness within the context of their environment, rather than within the child. The literature described a pathway along which children who did not have the experiences required for school could gain these experiences within school readiness programs, but with the importation of these programs across the world, concerns were raised regarding the appropriateness of the set of school readiness markers, that reflected young children's development within Western culture families, being used to measure school readiness for children from families within different cultures to the school's culture (Spodek & Saracho, 1996). Within the program of this study, as in many cultures and locations across the world, the Ngaanyatjarra family adults knew that their children's "involvement in schooling [was] practically inevitable" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 356). Therefore, the study program responded to the families' request for assistance so that they could get their children ready for school.

Section 2.3 in this review considers early years programs as interventions to prepare children for school, and then the following section 2.4, is set within the literature and practice of early years programs specifically for Indigenous children and families in remote communities in Australia.

2.3 Early Years Programs as Interventions to Prepare Children for School

Improving children's school readiness has become one of the aims of early years programs and is captured in Australia's national curriculum for early years stating, "This is Australia's first national *Early Years Learning Framework* for early childhood education. The aim of this document is to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years through the transition to school" (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009, p. 5). In this section, I examined the literature about the development of early years programs and argued that they can be largely categorized as interventions for children. In particular, I illuminate how many of these programs position children whose family culture is different from that of the Western school culture as being at risk, or vulnerable, and therefore, in need of intervention. In this section, five aspects of this literature are presented as part of the literary mosaic that is the background to this study of children's preparation for school. I then move within the literature from a focus on the program to a focus on the family adults within the program, particularly families within the context of disadvantage and families from different cultures to the school culture. Although much of the literature in this section was internationally based, it was concerning how frequently this literature was used to position early years programs for Indigenous families living in remote communities in Australia as interventional programs.

2.3.1 The Development of Early Years Programs as Interventions to Prepare Children for School

2.3.1.1 An Example—Head Start Program. Head Start an early childhood program designed as an intervention to prepare children for school, began in the 1960s. The program was developed using school readiness research and was specifically targeted for children linked to families in the context of disadvantage (Brown, 2017). Describing the beginning of the Head Start program as part of the government's *War on Poverty*, Brown (2017) reported that "policymakers designed Head Start to address the issue of poverty through a two-generation approach that would

remedy “the educational inequalities borne by impoverished children (Zigler, Marsland, & Lord, 2009, p. 23)” (as cited in Brown, 2017, p. 289).

Because school is a Western cultural construction (Rogoff, 2003), children’s early development as readiness for school was demonstrated in Western cultural ways. Shonkoff and Meisels (1990) made this point clearly, in the literature about the beginnings of the Head Start program:

> Based on its belief that education was the key to breaking this cycle [of poverty], the panel recommended the widespread establishment in economically disadvantaged communities of preschool programs designed to foster ‘the specific development of the attitudes and aptitudes which middle-class culture characteristically develops in children, and which contributes in large measure to the academic and vocational success of such children’. (p. 16)

Clearly, school readiness programs, as early years interventions for disadvantaged children, were meant to make up for the fact that within their family, poorer children did not have the experiences of middle-class children within the Western culture. Many other programs have followed since such as *Sure Start* in the UK (https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/sure-start), *Home Instruction for Parents of Young Children* [HIPPY] (Connelly & Mallet, 2020) and *Effective Provision of Preschool Education* [EPPE] (https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10005309/.

However, the Head Start literature suggested caution with expectations from early years programs as interventions, with Shonkoff and Meisels (1990) noting that “the Head Start program has not resulted in the complete elimination of school failure, welfare dependency…or any other social consequences of poverty” (p. 17). Edward Zigler stated in Brooks-Gunn (2003) that “the point of school readiness programs like Head Start… is to narrow [the] gap” (p. 10). While Janet Currie suggested that although one of the goals in Head Start was to diminish socioeconomic disparities, so that all children would begin school on a more equal footing, any gains made through the program were dependent on the children attending quality schools. However, Robert Emde noted that this was not always the case, as “after an early childhood intervention program ends, poor children are very likely to go to schools that are not conducive to learning”(Brooks-Gunn, 2003, p. 9)

2.3.1.2 Neurological Research. Around the same time as the Head Start program was developing, research within neurobiological, behavioural, and social sciences established the importance of the early years of a child’s life. McCain and Mustard (1999) observed that this research explained “how good nurturing creates the foundation of brain development [and that] the

effects of early experience, particularly during the first three years… last a lifetime" (p. 6). Shonkoff and Meisels (1990) added that "Head Start was based on a belief in the crucial impact of early childhood experiences on later development" (p. 16). This suite of timely research provided an evidence base for the development of school readiness programs such as Head Start, and indeed this study's program, with the focus on quality experiences for young children in their early years of life.

2.3.1.3 The Predictive Nature of Children's Experiences at School Entry Age. Adding to the understanding of the importance of the experiences for children's development in their preschool years, was the multidisciplinary research that demonstrated the predictive nature of children's experiences at school entry age and their success at school and in later life outcomes (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Firstly, from investigations into why children within families in Western cultures fail at school, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) reported that school entry age was identified as the "critical transition point at which individual differences in what children know and can do, begin to be predictive of longer-term patterns of learning and achievement" (p. 386). Secondly, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), re-counted that through research into the conditions that "influence whether children get off to a promising or worrisome start in life" (p. 1), it was found that "striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten [and that] these differences are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances" (p. 5). Heckman and Masterov, (2007) explained how "adverse environments place children at risk for social and economic failure" (p. 2) by reducing the opportunity for an enriching environment within the family, which then reduces the experiences available to a child that would lead to a promising start in life (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Council of Australian Governments [COAG], 2009; Cunha & Heckman, 2007).

This conclusion reflected the Head Start literature, that "the root cause of academic failure, which leads to economic failure, [is] the result of impoverished development and learning experience[s] in the child's home environment" (Brown, 2017, p. 289). Within the literature, this conclusion also locates the problem of children not being ready for school within their families.

2.3.1.4 Changing the Course of Outcomes for Children, Through Effective Interventions. From a different time, but reflecting a similar observation, that young children's early learning affects their future learning, Vygotsky (1978) wrote that "Any learning a child encounters in school always has a previous history" (p. 84). Research revealing the "cumulative nature" of children's early experiences, that "all capabilities are built on the foundation of capacities that are developed earlier", has had important implications for enhancing children's learning experiences before school entry age (Knudsen et al., 2006, p. 5). Because children's experiences in their early years of life are

cumulative, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) explained that, for children whose development is not optimal, "the course of development can be altered in early childhood by effective interventions that change the balance between risk and protection, thereby shifting the odds in favour of more adaptive outcomes" (p. 4). Therefore, with the research demonstrating the importance of children's experiences to support their brain development in their early years of life (see Section 2.3.1.2), the research identifying the predictive nature of children's experiences at school entry age (Section 2.3.1.3) and the research revealing that experiences in children's early years of life are cumulative (Section 2.3.1.4), the stage was set for school readiness programs as interventions, a set of experiences that is purposed to change the course of development of children in their early years of life, so to improve both their school outcomes and their later life outcomes.

Heckman and Masterov (2007) pointed out that improving the environments of young children before they go to school is an effective strategy to avert failure in school, as "schooling comes too late in the life cycle of the child to be the main locus of remediation for the disadvantaged" (p. 34). But there were contrasting views presented in the literature regarding the appropriate timing of these interventions. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) wrote that the "pre-school" [time frame] begins too late and ends too soon" (p. 2), while Knudsen et al., (2006) explained that waiting until children are 3 or 4 years of age to commence a school-readiness program was too late, because, as experiences build on earlier experiences, beginning a program at 3 missed out on enhancing a child's experiences during their first 3 years of life. However, notwithstanding the ages of children in these programs, the effectiveness of early years programs as planned interventions that enrich the nurturing environment for children from adverse family situations, before they commence school, was commonly agreed (Harrison et al., 2012; Heckman & Masterov., 2007; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Mildon & Polmeni, 2012; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Sims, 2011). This agreement around interventions as an effective strategy to alter the course of development was also a reflection of Head Start literature, albeit, with a reference to poverty, that "to help stop poverty from being passed on from one generation to the next, the government needed to intervene and provide publicly funded early intervention programs that would ready poor children for school" (Brown, 2017, p. 289, 290).

2.3.1.5 Early Years Programs as Interventions. Programmed interventions, for children at risk of failure at school, are often called early years programs, because they seek to enrich the child's development in their early years of life so to enable children to be more ready to learn successfully at school (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). Britto, (2012a) wrote that "Globally, school readiness is gaining currency as a viable strategy to close the learning gap and

improve equity in achieving lifelong learning and full developmental potential among young children" (p. 4). The dual-purpose for these interventional programs of school readiness reflected the dual purposes of policymakers within the Head Start program as

> they did this not only to ensure that poor children were just as ready as their more affluent peers when they started elementary school, but it would also put children on a trajectory where this school success would help them rise out of poverty. (Brown, 2017, p. 290)

Around the world, early childhood development programs are viewed as "an important strategy for addressing the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized children and families" (Arnold et al., 2008, p. 29). Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), stated that early year's programs, as interventions, are designed to affect children "directly", as in structured school readiness programs, or to affect children "indirectly", through programs that support their parents/family adults in their caregiving role (p. 341). Early years programs as direct interventions are usually centre-based, or school-based programs, during the year or two before formal schooling, with these programs facilitated by qualified educators, where family adults are not with their children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Within the literature, it was frequently stated that "high-quality early childhood education programs enrich the learning and nurturing environments of disadvantaged children" (Elango et al., 2015, p.7). Follow-up studies of adults who participated as children in early years programs such as Head Start, the Carolina Abecedarian Project, and the Perry Pre-school project, over 40 years ago demonstrated that the adults were more likely to achieve the better outcomes later in life that were predicted from their improved readiness for school gained through these programs (Heckman, 2008a; Heckman & Masterov, 2007).

An interesting tangent from the improved outcomes later in life, arising from early years programs as interventions, was described in the literature focused on the investment and the cost-effectiveness of early childhood intervention, at a governmental level (Heckman, 2008a; Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Heckman (2008b) in presenting the "case for investing in disadvantaged children", reported that "early interventions promote economic efficiency and reduce lifetime inequality" (p. 53). But Brown (2017) cautioned that this "framing of early childhood as a return on investment" can make a subtle shift in purpose for funding early childhood interventions, from the purposes of getting children ready for school and breaking the poverty cycle, to funding early interventions to "save taxpayers money in the long run" (p. 294).

To conclude this section, it is noteworthy that many aspects of this mosaic of literature about early years programs as interventions, was frequently referred to in the review of the

literature around the implementation of early years programs for Indigenous children in remote communities in Australia even though the context of the programs with the Indigenous families is within a different culture to that of the Western culture.

2.3.2 The Place of Parents/Family Adults in Early Years Programs as Interventions

Consistent with the literature about the importance of the role of parents/family adults in their young children's development reviewed in Section 2.1 (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), it was expected that literature about early childhood programs as interventions would also reflect the importance of the role of the family adults with their children in these programs. But this is not the case, as it is only with "indirect" interventional programs (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 346) that family adults are with the child in the program. There are two broad sets of indirect interventional programs, firstly the *parents as teachers* programs, where the purpose of the program is to improve children's readiness for school indirectly through qualified assistance to the parents, so that the parents can then teach their children the skills, and activities, required for school (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Secondly, there is the set of indirect interventional programs that addressed the needs of the family adults, as "children's early development depends on the health and well-being of their parents" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 390). In these programs, the family adults and children participated in the activities together, and the role of the family adults within the program is dependent on the structure and purpose of the program. For example, in the supported playgroup program, parents and children participate together, but as these programs are often funded as "parenting interventions" (Williams et al., 2015, p. 5), the program focused on supporting the parents within the context of the program, rather than to assist parents in their role with their children during these programs (Commerford & Robinson, 2016; Williams et al., 2015). In Section 2.4.3, I have further reviewed supported playgroups and parents as teachers programs, as implemented with Indigenous families in remote communities in Australia.

However, there are cautionary conclusions within the literature about the efficacy of family adult/child early intervention programs in terms of setting and measuring goals for the programs. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) noted that "services that are based on generic family support…appear to be less effective [than programs with] well-defined objectives" (p. 11), and Brooks-Gunn et al. (2000) advised that while "integration of child, family and adult components into a single program will continue….it is extremely difficult to offer these components simultaneously" (p. 570). Chapter 5

also addresses this literature within the context of the shared family adult and child program of this study.

2.3.2.1 When 'Poverty or Disadvantage' Define the 'Family' Populations. Poverty, or disadvantage, is one of the defined populations of families linked to children's non-readiness for school (Brown, 2017; Heckman, 2008b; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). In the earlier consideration of the Head Start literature and school readiness, Brown (2017) stated that it was the "set of knowledge and skills" of children whose development within the Western culture made them ready for school, that "became the marker[s] [used to] define particular populations of students and their families, [whose children were] at risk for school success" (p. 290). Bloch and Kim (2015) suggested that early year's programs as interventions are "tied to certain constructions of groups as 'lacking' in relation to others more likely to succeed in school and life" (p. 4). Graue, (2006) expanded this view further, noting that

> the deficit model works from the assumption that the home and community are unable to provide the resources to produce readiness. … Targeting resources … to particular subgroups is a response to scarce resources, but it also belies a deep distrust in the ability of certain families to support their children. (p. 48, 49)

An unintended outcome of defining populations of families who are deemed at risk, and consequently in need of early childhood programs as interventions, is that the use of the term *disadvantage* as an identifier personalizes the disadvantage to the parent or family adult. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) warned that for some families, the "stigma associated with labelling" may inhibit their participation in the program "even if their family would benefit from the program" (p. 367). This quandary led some writers to question the ethics of targeting a defined population for these programs, such as disadvantaged children when programs for early childhood development should be the entitlement of all children (Brown, 2017; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Mustard, 2007). To address this problem, place-based interventions with open access to everyone within the disadvantaged community, rather than targeted programs which limit access to a defined population, have proved beneficial in allocating resources (Jha, 2016), although McCain and Mustard (1999) recommended that "programs should be available and accessible to all families who choose to take part" (p. 10).

With the increased use of population measures of children's development as an indication of children's school readiness such as the Early Developmental Index (Janus & Offord, 2007), researchers raised further reasons for questioning the link between family disadvantage and

children's requirements for school readiness programs. Mustard (2007), referring to Canadian studies stated that these studies "refute the stereotype that the majority of children with developmental problems are from poor families" (p. 14). McCain and Mustard (1999) reported that "there is no economic cut-off point above which all children do well" (p. 9), while Heckman (2008b) also queried the causal link between poverty, disadvantage, and children's non-readiness for school, writing that "the available evidence suggest[ed] that the quality of parenting is the important scarce resource" (p. 55). Focusing more on the intentions of the families, Arnold et al. (2008), cited studies that included the EPPE research (Sylva et al., 2004), writing that "even in the context of poverty and disadvantage, parents and other caregivers can find ways to give their children a healthy and good start in their early years" (p. 29).

Therefore, although the family is the context for children's early experiences that are later expected to meet school readiness markers, within the literature, there are situational complexities additional to disadvantage or poverty within the family, regarding both the program and the families' access to these programs that need to be considered, as these complexities will have an effect on the participation, or non-participation, of the family and child in the program, with possible longer-term consequences.

2.3.2.2 When 'Cultural Difference' Defines the 'Family' Populations. Spodek and Saracho (1996) wrote that "the content of all education is culturally defined" (p. 4), just as child-rearing practices within families are culturally defined (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, as explained in Section 2.1, it is only young children within families of the Western school culture for whom their early experiences within the child-rearing of their family will match this set of markers of school readiness developed within Western culture (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). For children of a different culture, their early experiences are defined within the culture of their family, and so their experiences at school entry age will necessarily be different from this set of markers reflecting children's experiences within Western families. Within the literature and practice, a child's school readiness, or not, comes down to the child's demonstration of experiences at school entry age with reference to this set of markers. But, as explained in Section 2.1.2, for children of families of different cultures to that of the Western school culture, their early experiences within their family were firstly defined by the cultural child-rearing practices of their family, not the socioeconomic status of their family.

Consequently, for children of families living within a different culture to that of their school culture, an assumption of a family disadvantage as the reason for children displaying different experiences at school entry age, is very likely to be incorrect, as the demonstrated experiences may

instead, be a natural reflection of the difference of a family's culture to the Western culture of the school (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002; Heath, 1983; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The writings of Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000), using the example of the Head Start program, assisted in explaining why these assumptions of disadvantage may be made for children and families of cultures that are different from the Western school culture. They suggested that it is "the way in which cultural differences in the US are confounded with ethnicity, minority status and poverty" that has led, therefore, to the "historical construction of culture as a risk factor", with the resulting view that "minority cultural differences are deficits within individual families that need to be remedied or fixed" (p. 96). In practice, I would suggest, at the school classroom door on school entry day, the confounding of disadvantage and cultural difference is not unexpected, because children from both the Western culture and from cultures different to the Western school culture, could well demonstrate a similar lack of experience against the set of markers from the Western school culture, which would predict the need for an interventional program, although the reasons for their demonstrated experiences would be very distinctive.

Returning to the place of family adults from different cultures to that of the school culture, in early years programs as *indirect* interventions, it seems that for these family adults, because of the confounding of disadvantage and cultural difference within families, they could be positioned in both defined populations, that of disadvantage, and cultural difference, in relation to their children's lack of experience at school entry age. There were concerns within the literature, that this confounding of reasons, could implicitly de-value the cultural practices of the family (Arnold et al., 2006; Brown, 2017; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Spodek & Saracho, 1996). Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) recommended that "traditional program formats and strategies…need to be reconciled with the values and cultural practices of an increasingly diverse population" (p. 401). Significantly, in this study, the strong family and cultural values of the Indigenous families within this program, led to their request for assistance to help them develop a program in which they could prepare their own children, using the ways of their cultural practices, for the different cultural practices of the school.

2.3.3 Summary of Section 2.3

The structure of schooling, and the interpretation of the school readiness set of markers illustrated in children's development, are constructed within Western culture, therefore, these experiences of readiness will necessarily be different from the experiences of children in families of cultures other than the Western school culture, because young children develop within the child-rearing practices of the culture of their family (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Section 2.3 reviewed literature describing how this set of markers of school readiness, defined populations of families at risk for success at school and led to the development of early childhood programs as interventions, so that, with this intervention, children were more prepared for learning at school. Section 2.3.1.1 described how this process was developed within the Head Start literature, and, interestingly, as a mosaic of relevant literature, the sequence from sections 2.3.1.2 through to 2.3.1.5 created the same outcome, but from a research perspective.

Within section 2.3.2.2, the suggestion was made that it is not the set of markers of school readiness, from the Western culture of the school, which are problematic in themselves, but that it is the reason for which these markers of school readiness are different to the child's experiences at school entry age that is the significant factor, in terms of addressing children's school readiness. For children of families of a different culture to that of the Western culture of the school, the reason for their different experiences at school entry age was likely to be their culture, as expressed in their culturally defined child-rearing experiences within their family, and these will necessarily be different to the experiences of children within the Western school culture, and therefore different at school entry age.

Once again, this set of literature seems to circle back to the same conclusion as in the previous two sections, that, because children's early experiences, within their child-rearing years are within the culture of their family, there will need to be an opportunity for them to experience the additional set of experiences within their family, that children learn in their early years of life within the Western school culture, prior to school. In this study, the Ngaanyatjarra families asked for assistance to develop a program that enabled shared participation with their children, thus empowering them to prepare their children for school.

The next section of this review, section 2.4, focused on early childhood programs, as interventions for Indigenous children and families living within their cultural ways in remote communities in Australia.

2.4 Early Years Programs for Indigenous Families in Remote Communities

In this section I examined the literature on early years programs for Indigenous children and families living in remote communities in Australia, recognizing that much of the literature of these imported programs were positioned within the prevailing discourse of interventional programs for populations defined as disadvantaged. I then consider the literature on school readiness within programs for these families finding that the majority of the literature was school-based, in contrast

to the family-based principles of the Ngaanyatjarra program. Programs with an indirect focus on children, such as parents as teachers programs and supported playgroups, feature in the early childhood landscape of remote communities, and these are reviewed as a background for the study findings. Finally, as the literature called for strategies to improve the effectiveness of early years programs for Indigenous children in remote communities, this review offered the suggestion that placing the culture of the family, and the cultural place of the family adults, as priorities within these programs, would contribute to re-positioning them to enable the family adults to prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of the school.

2.4.1 Early Years Programs as Imported, Interventional Programs for Indigenous Families

The movement of school education from Western culture to other parts of the world "while essentially Western in origin" included early childhood programs (Spodek & Saracho, 1996, p. 5). As these programs were imported for increasing numbers of families in non-Western cultures, concerns emerged within the literature about the appropriateness of these programs for families from different cultures particularly for families from Indigenous cultures (Arnold et al., 2006; Ball, 2010; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Fleer, 2003, Spodek & Saracho, 1996). Prochner (2004), compared Indigenous early childhood education programs in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, highlighting the trend of "cross-national borrowing", that of replicating programs in places "far-removed from their place of origin" and cited examples of the compensatory programs of the 1960s, such as the Head Start program from America, and other programs with a national place of origin, such as the Reggio Emilia approach from Italy and the Kohanga Reo approach from New Zealand (p. 13).

Martin (2016) wrote that "compensatory education was imported to Australia, and especially to Aboriginal early childhood programs. It believed that it would achieve the same outcomes as those in America…but it failed to factor in the complex centuries of exclusion, marginalization, racism, and ethnocentrism directed at Aboriginal Australians" (p. 16). A brief look at the socio-cultural and historical context of these early childhood programs during this review shed light, and awareness, on both school readiness literature, and the discussion later in this thesis. Prochner (2004), reported that developments broadly in Indigenous education prior to the 1950s "were limited by shifting colonial policies that promoted the aims of protection, assimilation, and segregation in different proportions" (p. 10). Within Australia, the research project report of McConnochie & Russell (1982), on the history, situation and literature about Aboriginal early childhood education at that time for children aged 0–5 years, reported that "The compensatory /

deficit programs developed in North America were transferred intact to Australia, providing a central theme in the development of many programs for Aboriginal children", and that this transfer involved both "the body of research literature on Aboriginal children which utilized deficit models to identify inadequacies in Aboriginal children, and secondly, the emergence of a proliferation of compensatory education programs, designed to solve the problems of Aboriginal education" (p. 33). McConnochie and Russell (1982), in referring to the Watts Report (Watts, B. H. & Australia. Education Research and Development Committee, 1981) stated that in the "research data on what has been called 'culturally deprived' children… the feature of greatest educational significance is not that these children are Aborigines, but that they have been reared under particular circumstances which are not conducive to school learning" (p. 34). Within this part of the report, McConnochie and Russell, (1982) concluded that "the cultural deprivation model, was then transferred to Australia intact" (p. 34).

Martin (2016) wrote that "an underlying premise of compensatory education was that children lacked essential knowledge, skills, and values because of their family circumstances" (p. 16). McConnochie and Russell (1982) defined compensatory education within schools for Indigenous children in Australia as "a strategy for achieving educational and social equality for disadvantaged children" (p.24). However, they explained that in the 1950s and 1960s, when it "became apparent… that Aboriginal children were not developing skills or attitudes which the prevailing policies demanded" within school education, attention was re-focused on "early childhood, arguing that the problems lay in the inadequate pre-school experiences of the children and that strategies for overcoming these problems could be provided" (p. 12).

However, educators increasingly doubted the compensatory approach, with Teasdale and Whitelaw (1981) reporting that "By the early 1970s, psychologists were questioning seriously many of the assumptions underlying the compensatory approach, and there was a strong backlash to the notions of cultural deprivation and linguistic deficit. Correspondingly there was a new emphasis on the cultural integrity of ethnic minority groups and notions of cultural pluralism, replacing cultural disadvantage" (p. 155). In the following decades, Prochner (2004) observed that early childhood education developed among Indigenous people groups "in the context of an indigenous cultural renaissance" (p. 12), while Martin (2016) wrote that Aboriginal early childhood education only changed "in the late 1980s and early 1990s when wider political contexts changed" (p. 14)

Developing within that historical background, it is not surprising that early childhood programs for Indigenous families in Australia often reflected the "principles of compensatory education [and were] delivered to children from families who were impoverished" (Martin, 2016, p.

15). The purposes of early childhood programs for Indigenous families, particularly in remote areas, where impoverished equated with the defined population of families at risk in these communities, were usually framed in the language of intervention (Section 2.3.2.2). These purposes included "improving outcomes for Australian Indigenous children in their early years" (Bowes & Grace, 2014, p. 2), "closing the gap in outcomes" (Sims, 2011, p. 1), "reducing inequalities in outcomes between groups of children…especially for some Indigenous children" (COAG, 2009, p. 4), and "to overcome generational disadvantage" (Mason-White, 2013, p. 3) while addressing the "intractable social problems (of families, e.g. poverty, welfare dependence) early in the life course'' (Jha, 2016, p. 4).

Positioning these programs in the Australian early childhood program landscape, the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) placed early years programs as interventions, within the diversity of early childhood settings across Australia, which included "long day care, occasional care, family daycare, Multi-purpose Aboriginal Children's Services, preschools and kindergartens, playgroups, creches, early intervention settings, and similar services" (p. 8). Jha (2016) declared that these programs as interventions are "concentrated in particular disadvantaged communities" and that the purpose of these programs is to "effect change through a range of means, of which centre-based early learning, home visiting, playgroups, and parental counselling are just a few" (p. 4). Similar to the international literature (Section 2.3.1), these programs may have been direct interventions for the child, such as centre-based early learning, or indirect interventions through the family, so that the child could be better prepared for school. But, for the purposes of this study, early years programs that provided direct support to children fall outside the brief for this literature review, as these programs were usually centre-based programs for 3–4 year old children, were more likely to be in regional towns or cities rather than remote communities, and the family adults were not with their children in the program, as qualified educators guided the children's participation (Dockett et al., 2010; Mason-White, 2013, 2014). The programs that offered indirect support to children, usually in the context of play-based programs for Indigenous family adults and children together (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Commerford & Robinson, 2016; Harrison et al., 2012; Mildon & Polimeni, 2012), will be reviewed in Section 2.4.2.

In summarising the literature of this section, interventional early childhood programs are described globally as "an important strategy for addressing the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized children and families" (Arnold et al., 2008, p. 29), while Sydenham (2019) reported that, for Indigenous families and communities in Australia, "participation in quality early learning also represents a particularly powerful means of transcending disadvantage" (p. 5).

However, it seems that, along with these programs, the reasons for these programs have also been imported, leading to a double confounding of these programs for Indigenous children and families in remote areas. Garcia Coll and Magnuson (2000), explained how the way in which "cultural differences in the US are confounded with ethnicity, minority status and poverty" (p. 96), can lead to the confounding of family disadvantage with cultural difference, for children and families from cultures that are different to the school culture. In Section 2.1.2, Kagan and Rigby (2003) commenting on the literature on school readiness, made the point that much of it is "confounding these two distinct concepts: readiness to learn and readiness for school" (p. 1). But interestingly, this latter confounding of readiness to learn and readiness for school can only be clarified if the first confounding of cultural difference and disadvantage is dealt with, as it is the recognition of cultural difference, within children's child-rearing experiences, that creates the necessary distinction for children of different cultures to that of the school culture so that their readiness for school will be positioned as additional to their readiness to learn experiences within their family.

Such recognition of these two 'confounding' matters is rarely evident within the interventional focus of these programs as a way of addressing disadvantage for Indigenous children and families, particularly within remote areas. However, in this study's program, the families requested additional new experiences so that they, as family adults, could prepare their own children for the practices of the different school culture.

2.4.2 Literature About 'School Readiness' for Indigenous Children in Remote Communities

The need for children to be ready for school led to the development of early years programs as interventions in which young children could learn the "set of skills and knowledge of school readiness" (Brown, 2017, p. 290) that they were unable to learn within their early experiences in their family. The literature about school readiness for Indigenous children in remote locations in Australia echoed the four views of school readiness as presented in Section 2.2.1.2. Reflecting the nativist/maturationist view of school readiness, McTurk et al. (2008) reported that "the major criterion for children starting school is age…despite age not being an absolute predictor of success in school" (p. 3). The interventionist view of school readiness, "what children can do and how a child behaves" (Meisels, 1998, p. 13), is commonly referred to within the literature, because this view reflects the concern of family adults about the practicalities of readiness for children, preparing their children for what they will need to do at school (Carbines et al., 2008; McTurk et al., 2008). As noted in Section 2.3, because these skills can be taught, this view of school readiness is foundational to

early years programs as interventions (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) since children's experiences can be developed, and outcomes changed, assisting children to be ready for school (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). This view has some similarities to the practice of this study's program, as within their program, the children experience the activities of the different culture of the school.

The next two views, the sociocultural and interactionist views of school readiness, have moved the concept of readiness away from the view of the readiness within the child, with Dockett and Perry (2009) describing readiness "as a relational concept... a characteristic of child, school, family, and community supports and interactions" (p. 25). Consequently, within programs for Indigenous families, this literature on school readiness, is often combined with literature about the transition to school, through programs addressing readiness to support transition and transition programs intended to increase children's readiness for learning at school (Mason-White, 2013, 2014). However, in contrast to these views of school readiness as a school, community, and family partnership, the Ngaanyatjarra program is about families preparing their children, within the context of their family, for the practices of learning at school, a dissimilarity discussed in Chapter 5. But, as Arnold et al. (2006) explained, "readiness and transition are closely related. For transition to be smooth children need to be ready for school" (p. 6). In the study program, the intended purpose for the family adults was that they could prepare their children so that they would be ready for school.

The measurement of the school readiness of Indigenous children in remote communities was frequently identified as a concern within the literature, because the set of markers for readiness for school, the early experiences of children within the Western culture, were different from those of Indigenous children within their Indigenous culture (Armstrong et al., 2012; Carbines et al., 2008; Dockett et al., 2010). These concerns collided within the Australian literature, in regard to the use of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (Australian Government. Department of Education and Training, 2018), for Indigenous children, because the items within this measure are predicated on Western cultural knowledge and experience (Mason-White, 2013). Taylor (2011) wrote that the "AEDI [AEDC] has been criticised for its contextual bias… for its lack of attention to cultural factors" (p. 151), whilst Agbenyega (2009) explained that "vulnerability, which is used to describe communities of children who fall short of the normative developmental milestones on the key AEDI [AEDC] variables" (p. 34) positioned Indigenous children as "vulnerable, [rather than] competent" (p. 36), as the set of markers does not consider the different experiences of children from different cultures. Dockett et al. (2010) stated that "assessment of Indigenous children through tests based in non-Indigenous culture can reinforce 'gaps' in knowledge and skills" (p. 1), while Armstrong et al. (2012) added that the skills encouraged within the culture and families of Indigenous children "rarely

appear on early childhood education checklists or school reports" (p. 7). However, McTurk et al. (2008), in a review of school readiness literature for Indigenous children in Australia, concluded that there is "limited empirical evidence" to support the "perception that these mainstream assessment tools are not effective and undervalue Indigenous skills" (p. 36).

However, as noted in Section 2.1.2, measurements of children's readiness for school must necessarily be constructed within the same culture as that of the school, which is the Western culture and based on children's development within that same culture (Bloch, 1991; Rogoff, 2003). Furthermore, as also explained in that section because children's early experiences in their child-rearing years can only be aligned to the culture of their family, there will always be differences in the early experiences of children from diverse cultures to the experiences of children from the culture of the school (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

It is the response to these culturally different children's experiences when the two worlds of the Indigenous child collide at the point of school entry, which is the continuing point of struggle within both international and Australian literature about children from a different culture's readiness for school. There are ways of responding to this situation from a cultural difference perspective, rather than a cultural deficit perspective, the latter which seems to be an unspoken thread within this literature about the school readiness for Indigenous children. For families of different cultures, a different response could then lead to another way of addressing families' preparation of their children for the different cultural practices of the school. Within similar intention, Fleer (2003) recommended that the literature and practice around the "institution of early childhood, [with its] taken for granted views and beliefs" (p. 65) be reconsidered for children of families from different cultures to that of the school, as the foundations of early childhood within the literature are "essentially a Western view of childhood" (p. 64).

Therefore, before leaving this section of the review, it is important to note that, for Indigenous children living within their Indigenous culture, it is not possible for them to gain this set of skills and knowledge within their families during their early years, as their early experiences will be within the child-rearing practices of their Indigenous culture (Hamilton, 1981; Rogoff, 2003). Interestingly, this fact was implicitly within the statement by McTurk et al. (2008), that school readiness for Indigenous children is often misunderstood "because of a tendency to confound readiness to learn…with readiness for school" (p. 3). Additionally, the need for the Ngaanyatjarra families to prepare their children for school is recent, as, locally, schools have only been in the communities since 1950, for the largest community, and 1980s for the smaller communities. Yet, in the socio-cultural-historical context of these families and these communities, the Ngaanyatjarra

families involved in this study, requested this program so that they could purposefully prepare their young children for the different cultural practices of the school, practices which were necessarily the set of markers of school readiness that children within the families of the Western school culture developed through shared experiences within their families in their child-rearing years.

2.4.3 Early Childhood Programs, for Family Adults and Children, in Remote Indigenous Communities

2.4.3.1 'Parents as Teacher' Programs. The common purpose of these early childhood programs is to empower these parents to prepare their children for school. Higgins and Morley (2014) pointed out that "supporting parents in their roles as their child's first teacher is a primary goal of many programs developed for, adapted for, or implemented with Indigenous families" (p. 10). The three examples of this program model to be described in this review are the *Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters* (HIPPY) (Connelly & Mallet, 2020), the *(Parents and Learning) PaL* program (Hanrahan, 2004), and *Families as First Teachers* (FaFT) program (Australian Institute of Family Studies [AIFS], 2016). I have outlined these programs briefly, in terms of their purpose and setting, the roles of participants in the program, and relevant comments about the implementation of these programs with Indigenous families in remote communities, providing a background for the discussion of the Ngaanyatjarra program in chapter 5.

2.4.3.1.1 HIPPY. HIPPY is a two-year home-based program, an "integrated parenting support and early learning program" targeted to disadvantaged children, non-Indigenous and Indigenous, in their year before school and during their first year of school (Connelly & Mallet, 2020, p. 6). This program is operated by a non-government provider, with the program in more than 100 locations in Australia, including rural and regional areas (Connelly & Mallet, 2020). The purpose of the program is to "improve children's development by working with parents to improve the home learning environment and assist in the transition to school" (Jha, 2016, p. 12). The program is delivered by "home tutors…recruited from the local community…and in most cases have been participants in the program as parents…work as paid paraprofessionals, trained, and supported by an appropriately qualified" professional (Barnett et al., 2012, p. 28).

Through the delivery of weekly books, resources and learning activities, and instruction by the visiting home tutor, family adults are taught how to use the pre-school activities with their children, often at home, so that the children will be prepared for these at school, with the added expectation that these experiences become part of daily family routines. In a recent report, Connelly and Mallet (2020) concluded that, for families, this program assists them with "their aspirations for

their child" (p. 82), and for the program, that 'HIPPY is unique in working to recalibrate the home learning environment in Australia" (p. 83). Although there are a number of HIPPY programs in Indigenous locations, Connelly and Mallet (2020) noted that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children…do not achieve the same level of improvement as their non-Indigenous peers" (p. 8). Higgins and Morley (2014) reported that although there is a "general lack of knowledge of the appropriateness and acceptability of HIPPY with Indigenous communities, particularly in regional or relatively remote locations…the program holds significant promise" (p. 12). The HIPPY program has similarities to the Ngaanyatjarra program with the content of school-like books, resources, and activities within the program, and the modelling of the use of the materials with the parents, so that they can then be the teachers for their children with these new experiences. A significant difference in this program is that it is a home-based program, whilst the families in this study requested an *out of home yet within family* program, to maintain the separation of these new experiences of the culture of school, from the expectations and activities within their family, home, and cultural life.

2.4.3.1.2 'Parents and Learning' (PaL). The *Parents and Learning* (PaL) program began in 2000, in an Indigenous community in northern Queensland, and is based on the HIPPY program, using the same home visiting model, but the facilitators have developed their own weekly resource packs for the family visits, based on storybooks, in consultation with their community. Hanrahan (2004) wrote that the program developed in response to "parents requests for help in preparing their children for the rigours of formal schooling" (p. iv), and noted that, after three years of the program, the "parents feel like they are doing something for their child…and discovering how skilled and competent their children are" (p. 119). Hanrahan (2004) explained that through the regular activities with the families, "the program has begun to unlock some of the mystery of schooling for parents and children" in the community (p. 118), while Shepherd and Walker (2008) reported that this program "confirms the importance of programs that support parents and families to understand the processes and requirements of the education system" (p. 37).

Indigenous families' desire to both learn about school-like activities, and how they can support their children within these activities, is noted by Higgins and Morley (2014) as the introduction to this section, and this is also noted by Shepherd and Walker (2008), that although Indigenous parents "know that school is important, they are unsure how to translate that importance in practical ways within the home environment" (p. 37). In relation to the Ngaanyatjarra program the process of "unlocking some of the mystery of schooling" (Hanrahan, 2004, p. 59) has many similarities, particularly as this process develops gradually through participation in shared learning activities, with the role of the tutor being similar in teaching the family adults so that they

can teach their children the different school-like activities. The differences of the PaL program, are again, that it is home-based, and within a family group, in contrast to the Ngaanyatjarra program, which is out-of-home, and within a larger across-family group.

2.4.3.1.3 FAFT. The Families as First Teachers (FaFT) programs began in Indigenous communities in Queensland, to support Indigenous family adults in their teaching of school-like experiences with their children, as a result of "collaborating with local communities in identifying specific family and community needs" (AIFS, 2016, p. 1). In 2009, this program launched in the Northern Territory, based within schools in communities, as an "early childhood and family support initiative… [that provided] early learning playgroups and parenting programs" (Australian Early Development Census, 2014, p. 1). The program is staffed by an early childhood teacher and a local family liaison officer, it is facilitated for the family adults and their children from birth to school entry age and provides links with the families to support services within the communities as required (AIFS, 2016). Over the last decade, FaFT programs have incorporated the evidence-based early literacy program, the Abecedarian Approach Australia (3A), as the early literacy program within their daily activities. Goveas and Gapany (2017) explained that, within the playgroup model, "the program actively coaches parents to take on the role of 'teachers' of their child', using their first language" (p. 15), while Page et al. (2019) reported that "embedding culture and local language into the 3*a* program was an essential component of its success" (p. 246).

In relation to the Ngaanyatjarra program, the FaFT program is similar in its focus on the learning content of school-like activities, particularly early literacy, and in its focus on empowering family adults as the first teachers of their children, using their home language. Other similarities include that this program is funded, and implemented, within a government-funded supported playgroup model, with its development responsive to the needs of Indigenous families within the communities, facts that categorise it as a 'parents as teachers' program, while it remained within the supported playgroup interventional model. But the implementation of a family learning program, within a parenting interventional program model, has its own challenges, as did the Ngaanyatjarra program, a topic discussed further in Chapter 5. Another difference with this program, and this study's program, is its setting within a school, which can present its own challenges, as a school is not a neutral family space in terms of family or cultural expectations. However, a schoolroom is often the only venue available for such a program within a remote community, and in the Northern Territory, these FaFT programs are now part of the school education within the communities.

2.4.3.2 Supported Playgroups. In Australia, playgroups have been part of the activity landscape for family adults and their young children for decades, with two main types of playgroups,

those that are *self-managed* such as community playgroups, and those that are *supported* (Commerford & Robinson, 2016, p. 2). Supported playgroups developed from about the 1990s, and Williams et al. (2015), described them as "community-based services that provide a low-intensity parenting intervention for parent-child dyads, [they are] targeted to vulnerable families who may benefit from parenting support, [and have] common goals to enhance children's early learning and parental wellbeing" (p. 5). Jackson (2009) noted that supported playgroups are a "two-generational model… facilitated by early childhood teachers, community workers, or allied health professionals" (p. 6). The setting for supported playgroups is varied, but in remote communities, they are often located in schools. As mentioned by McArthur and Butler (2012) supported playgroups are an example of the recommendation by Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) that "programs that combine child-focused educational activities with explicit attention to parent-child interaction patterns and relationship building appear to have the greatest impact" (p. 11).

The role of the facilitator within supported playgroups seems to be commonly agreed as "critical to the success of supported playgroups" (Commerford & Robinson, 2016, p. 2). Williams et al. (2015) described the facilitator's role as "a complex and multi-dimensional task, [within which the expectation is] to plan and deliver a range of activities for each playgroup session that engage children and parents, as well as to provide parenting support and information" (p. 33). In a case study of three supported playgroups, Jackson (2013) identified four characteristics of a program facilitator that encouraged the participation of families within the program, that of having "a family centred approach", an attitude of "trust and engagement" towards the families, the ability to "create a space… a responsive and reflective environment", and a "knowledge of the local service system" that allows them to support the families' concerns (p. 86, 87). Particularly in programs in more remote locations, it was documented that the "facilitator's knowledge of early childhood education is noted to be important, considering that children do not always have equal access to, or utilization of, preschool or preschool programs (Rosier & McDonald, 2011)" (Commerford & Robinson, 2016, p. 17).

With widespread use in Australia, the supported playgroup model is of particular interest to this study, because the Ngaanyatjarra early years program has been funded within a Locational Supported Playgroup model since 2009. The stated purpose of this program model was to provide "Indigenous families with a safe and supportive environment to come together in their communities, giving children the opportunity to engage in play-based early learning activities and giving parents and carers access to parenting support" (Commerford & Robinson, 2016, p. 3). This program model provided scope for responding to community needs, as remarked similarly in the review of the FaFT

program (Section 2.4.3.1). However, flexibility is not necessarily built into these programs, but is an outcome of an indefinite program model, with Pourliakis et al. (2016) adding that "a consistent definition of supported playgroups is needed…for parents and carers, policymakers, and practitioners, to know what to expect from a supported playgroup and to know what works best" (p. 1). Similarly, Commerford and Robinson (2016) observed that "the type and frequency of activities may change according to the needs of the group… the skill of the playgroup facilitator and the set of principles that guide the work of the playgroup" (p. 18).

In terms of participation by Indigenous families in supported playgroups, Commerford and Hunter (2018) suggested that their participation is more likely in programs that are "run over a long time to build trust and engagement within the local community' [and within programs that are] physically and culturally accessible…that focus on the whole family and have a flexible, relationship-focused approach" (p. 9).

This literature about supported playgroups will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, but one point of an essential difference between this literature and the program in this study is reflected in the frequent reference to the *parent support* aspect of supported playgroups, both support towards the family adults and support by the program facilitator. In the cross-cultural Ngaanyatjarra program the families requested a facilitated program in which they could learn how to prepare their children for school. The tensions that arose from the diverse program purposes of the families, with those of the program model, contributed to the shape of this program. These will be discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to the study findings.

2.4.4 A 'Re-Positioning' Indicated for Programs for Indigenous Families in Remote Communities

2.4.4.1 A Sense of Urgency for these Programs. The Australian Early Development Census in 2018, reported that "children living in Very Remote Australia were more than five times likely to be developmenally vulnerable on the language and cognitive skills domain than children living in Major Cities… a gap that has been steadily increasing since 2012"(Australian Government. Department of Education and Training, 2018, p. 31). Within Western Australia it was reported that from 2009–2018 "the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in the percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains has continued to widen in each AEDC cycle (Commonwealth of Australia & WA Department of Education, 2019, p. 28). Noting the AEDC results, the Overcoming Disadvantage Report 2020 stated that for Indigenous children, "there remains a substantial gap with non-Indigenous children … And this gap widens as remoteness

increases" (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP], 2020, p. 6.66). These reports do not bode well for Indigenous children living in very remote locations in Australia. Interestingly, McConnochie and Russell (1982), writing about the early education for Indigenous children in the 1970's, arrived at a similar conclusion, that "there is no evidence at the moment to indicate that after 10 years of fairly widespread preschool programs that achievement of Aboriginal children in school has shown any marked improvement" (p. 14). In addition, Teasdale and Whitelaw (1981), reflecting on the efficacy of Indigenous early years programs of the 1960s and early '70s, concluded that "Aboriginal children are still not succeeding in the Australian school system" (p. 165).

The same conclusion is drawn within this literature review, with Harrison et al. (2012) stating that "the educational gap widens over time" (p. 10), and Bowes and Grace (2014) remarking that because "the majority of recent research focuses on identifying and describing the 'gaps', the collective research story is one of deficits within the Indigenous community" (p. 5). Consequently, there is a sense of urgency about the need to find an effective way to prepare Indigenous children, in remote communities, for school.

2.4.4.2 Questioning the Foundations of Remote Community Early Years Programs.

Within the literature, there are two strategies suggested to address the lack of effectiveness of early years programs for Indigenous children in remote communities. Firstly, to consider the culture of the child as the possible foundation for their experiences at school entry age, and secondly, to consider whether the implementation of the program is appropriate for the families within the program, reviewed in Section 2.4.4.3 (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

As explained in Section 2.3.2.2, for children of a different culture, the assumption of disadvantage within the family environment as the causal factor for children's different experiences at school entry, in relation to the set of markers of school readiness, is quite likely to be incorrect, because children's early experiences by necessity align with the culture of their family (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Therefore, for Indigenous families in remote locations, a child's different experiences at school entry age reflect the cultural difference of the child's family to the culture of the school, and any perceived link to family disadvantage, as the causal factor, would be incorrect. (Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002; Rogoff, 2003). Although Indigenous children and families in remote locations often do live in the context of identified economic disadvantage (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP], 2016). The assumption that this disadvantage is the reason for their non- readiness for school is questionable, particularly as assumptions about

children's experiences that are foundational to early years programs affect the program's value to the families (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The importance of correctly identifying the reason for the different experiences of Indigenous children in remote communities at school entry age is highly relevant to this study. Carbines et al. (2008) echoed this call, explaining that the differences in Indigenous children's experiences at school entry age could reflect that the "children are coming from a different cultural and social base, in which they learn differently, relate to others differently" (p. 22). From this point of view, Carbines et al. (2008) warned that "assuming that Indigenous children have a deficit that needs to be overcome is a counter-productive approach" (p. 22). However, as cited in Section 2.2, Ball (2010) pointed out that the response to the recognition that "culture is embodied in the ways that children are raised and the environments where they grow and develop" has more "rhetoric" than "evidence'' (p. 1). Therefore, within a re-positioning of early years programs for Indigenous children and families in remote communities it may not be the recognition of cultural difference that is required, but a response to this recognition, that becomes foundational to the development of an early years' program through which Indigenous families prepare their children for school.

2.4.4.3 Questioning the Implementation of Remote Community Early Years Programs.

The second strategy in the literature suggested considering whether the program's implementation is appropriate for the families within the program. From a wider cross-cultural base, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) wrote that the implementation of a program must be connected to the cultural practices of the families within the program, that "If this challenge is not addressed…program effectiveness will be compromised" (p. 401). In Australia, Bowes and Grace (2014) stated that appropriate program implementation is "a key element of success in early intervention programs in education, [and for] health and parenting for Indigenous families and children" (p. 2). They continued strongly with the counsel that "implementation within Indigenous communities cannot be approached in the same way program implementation is approached in mainstream communities" (p. 18).

Within the literature, writers link program implementation with working with families, with Moore and McDonald (2013) recommending that "how programs are delivered…is as important as what programs are delivered" (p. 22), and Sims (2011) advising that "irrespective of the type of program offered, the way in which services work with families is a key determinant of success" (p. 7). Within the frequent references in the literature about the importance of appropriate program implementation, four factors of program implementation commonly appear as needing to be done

differently, particularly in early childhood programs for Indigenous children and families living in remote locations.

The first factor to be done differently is relationships, with Carbines et al. (2008) explaining that "for Indigenous families, relationships are of particular importance" (p. 20). However, although there is an agreement on this recognition within the literature, writers question how this might be achieved, because, as Bowes and Grace (2014) observed, "the relationships–based approach required for successful implementation of programs in Indigenous communities takes some time to develop" (p. 22). Additionally, they pointed out that the extra time required for this relationship-based approach "requires a level of flexibility and reciprocity that are generally not required in mainstream settings" (p. 22). In support Sims, (2011) added that "even a four year program was too short for services to establish effective partnerships, in the absence of pre-existing relationships, particularly in remote areas" (p. 7).

The second factor to be recognised is the Indigenous family structure and child-rearing practices, as these are likely to be different from the expected family practices within the Western culture oriented program (Borg & Paul, 2004; Lohoar et al., 2014; Sims, 2011; Warrki Jarrinjaku ACRS Project Team, 2002). Mildon and Polimeni (2012) elaborated that with Indigenous families "programs must take into account the cultural norm in Indigenous communities of extended family, relatives and community being involved in raising children" (p. 12).

The third factor to consider is the implications of the Indigenous family's history, that "issues of early childhood health, education, and parenting, cannot be separated from the history of disempowerment and separation from land, family and culture experienced by the Australian Indigenous people" (Bowes & Grace, 2014, p. 17). However, this consideration must always be at a local family level because families' histories are very diverse. For example, some families mistrust education, the "generational cycles of parent and family distrust of, and anxiety around, engaging with educational institutions" (Mason-White, 2014, p. 30). However, Carbine et al. (2008), while noting this anxiety in some families, added that "the evidence is also clear that many Indigenous people want their children to succeed in school" (p. 20). Similarly, Chenhall et al. (2011) in talking with Indigenous families in Northern Territory, found that they dismissed any harbouring of "dreadful experiences of their own schooling, [and that they] recalled their own schooling with laughter and fond delight" (p. 53).

The fourth factor to be viewed differently from mainstream ways within the Western culture is the recognition of the communal nature of the program and the importance of valuing the place of

the whole community in the context of program implementation (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Dockett et al., 2010; Wise, 2013). Harrison et al. (2012) acknowledged that "community partnerships are essential" (p. 8), Mildon and Polimeni (2012) added that "community involvement may include community consultation in the development of programs and services" (p. 12), and Wise (2013) suggested a "localised" approach to early childhood development, at the community level (p. 19). Sims (2011) linked "valuing the community [with] working holistically, [by] recognizing that families live in communities that shape learning opportunities available to children" (p. 7).

Within these four factors of program implementation, there is a consistent recognition that a different approach is required when implementing early childhood programs for families in remote Indigenous communities, in contrast to implementing similar programs with families of the Western school culture. However, although the literature identified what should be done differently, there was minimal advice on the application of these suggestions or even the underpinning reasons for these suggestions. Within a re-positioning of early years programs for Indigenous children and families in remote communities, I propose that program implementation must connect with the families' cultural practices within the program (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). I would also suggest that just adding different ways of implementing the program may not always have the desired effect (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) because "cultural practices fit together and are connected" (Rogoff, 2003, p.368). How the program implementation relates to the families' cultural practices in the Ngaanyatjarra program will be considered in the discussion of the findings in Chapter 5.

2.4.5 Summary of Section 2.4

The concerns of writers about early childhood programs for Indigenous children and families in remote communities in Australia reflect the international concerns that the difference of culture between the Western culture of the school and the Indigenous families' culture is foundational to the challenges for Indigenous families, who live within their cultural ways, in trying to prepare their children for the different culture of the school.

Because the set of markers of school readiness relate to children's development within families of the Western school culture, and because school is within the Western school culture, children of different cultures will have different experiences at school entry age and may not be perceived as ready for school. However, when these different experiences at school entry age, are viewed within the Western cultural lens, the experiences are often presumed to be linked to family disadvantage, rather than a cultural difference. Within the literature about Indigenous children's preparedness for school, the data concluded that the gap in outcomes for Indigenous children

"widens as remoteness increases" (SCRGSP, 2020, p. 6.66). The suggested strategies to address this within early childhood programs are firstly, to consider the culture of the child as the possible foundation for their experiences at school entry age and secondly, to consider whether the implementation of the program is appropriate for the families within the program. Further discussion of the literature within this section in relation to the study program will occur in Chapter 5.

2.5 Conclusion: Situating This Study Within the Literature

The literature recognised that early years programs for Indigenous children and families in remote areas must be done differently from early years programs in mainstream Western cultures (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Harrison et al., 2012; Mason-White, 2013). This recognition of the need for a different perspective about early years programs for Indigenous families underpinned the dilemmas of implementing a program from one culture with families living in a different culture, with Shonkoff & Phillips (2000) suggesting the use of a "cultural lens" to view the development of early years programs with the families of different cultures to the culture of the school (p. 369).

This perspective closely aligned with Rogoff's (2003) discussion of development for everyone as a cultural process, that "what is done one way in one community may be done another way in another community, with the same effect, and a practice done in the same way in both communities may serve different ends" (p. 368). Heath (1983), and Fleer and Williams-Kennedy (2002), both investigating literacy practices amongst different cultural groups, offered a similar perspective that the purposes and process of activities must be viewed through the eyes of the participants within their culture to facilitate the shared learning and development of children.

As a result of this literature review, this study situates itself within two emergent gaps that the researcher proposes the study findings address. Firstly, although there is frequent recognition that the culture of the Indigenous families is different from the Western culture of the school, as it relates to their children's preparation for school, there is little practical response to this recognition in the literature. In exploring the Ngaanyatjarra program, fresh perspectives about the principles, design, and development of a learning for school program emerged, recognising the significance of the difference between the families' culture and the school culture. The second gap resulted from the first with the family culture positioning the place of family adults as learning together with their young children through their shared experiences of the child-rearing years. In choosing to maintain their responsibility for preparing their children for the new experiences of the different school culture, the Indigenous family adults provided valuable perspectives on their role as they guided

their children's participation in this program, within their cultural ways, to achieve their desired outcome of preparing their children for school.

In conclusion, this review provided the literary context for exploring the research question of this study, which is, 'How does this program enable the family adults to prepare their children for school?'. In the next chapter, the design of this study, and the methodology for collecting the data for this case study, often in ways specifically aligned with the Indigenous cultural ways of the families within this study, will be explained.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research explored how the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled families to prepare their children for school. The literature review highlighted gaps around the place of the culture of the family in the development of learning for school programs for their children, where the families' culture is different from the culture of the program and the school. Therefore, an in-depth description of this program would provide insights into how families of one culture can prepare their children for schooling within a different culture yet still within the context of their family and the cultural ways of their families.

The research question for this study is:

How does the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enable the family adults to prepare their children for school?

Sub-questions to guide the data collection and analysis are:

- How has the program developed over the years?
- How do the roles and interactions of the family adults and children support their shared participation in the program?
- How does the facilitation of this cross-cultural program affect the participation of the families within this program?

In this chapter, I outline my selection of research approach and research design for this study, my place as a researcher within my ongoing role within the program, ethical considerations for Indigenous families in remote communities, the methods of data collection and analysis, and finally, the validity of this study.

3.1 Situating This Study Within Research Methodologies

3.1.1 Qualitative Approach to the Inquiry Within an Interpretative Worldview

Within this research, from my philosophical position within a constructivist, interpretivist worldview, which recognises the "relativism" of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111), knowledge is constructed through "lived experiences and interactions with others" (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). The story of the events and experiences of the families within this program have been their lived reality, subjectively and collaboratively constructed by both the families and the researcher (Creswell, 2013;

Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and therefore I selected a qualitative approach to inquiry to fulfil the purpose of this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Stake (1995) identified "knowledge constructed", in contrast to "knowledge discovered", as one of the major differences between the two broad research traditions of qualitative and quantitative research, noting that other major differences are between "understanding and explanation as the purpose of inquiry" and "a personal and impersonal role for the researcher" (p. 37). In relation to this study, there are five characteristics of qualitative research supporting it.

Most importantly, my role as a researcher is reflected in both the position of this research as a 'situated activity' within this program and my position as the co-developer of this program together with Ngaanyatjarra family members. More recently, undertaking my PhD I also became a "researcher" as an "observer in the world" of the program (Denzin &Lincoln, 2013 as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 14) Within a qualitative approach to inquiry, the researcher is "the orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114) and the "primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). Consequently, the "axiomatic assumption that characterises qualitative research" is that researchers will make their values known within the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20) as the researcher's values may shape both "the collection [as well as] "the interpretation of data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). My place as researcher and participant, together with my local experience that underpinned my interpretation of the data, contributed significantly to my selection of a qualitative approach combined with a case study methodology for this research.

Qualitative research is about constructing meaning (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995), and this study aims to understand how my role and our co-creation of this program enabled the families to prepare their children for school. Because qualitative research is carried out within the "natural setting" of the participants (Creswell, 2014, p. 185), and is a "situated activity" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 14), my constructed knowledge of this playgroup involving participating families in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands is specific to this place, time and purpose. I had multiple sources of data available to construct the meaning of this study, including my program documents, my presentations over an extensive period, and the family stories shared with me of both memories and contemporary events. I utilized these multiple sources of data to construct meaning, as these qualitative methods are appropriate to construct understanding of the program, my role, and the role of the families within the program (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Importantly to this study, because of the timespan involved, the inductive process of a qualitative approach to research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowed the consideration of "emerging

questions and procedures" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4) alongside the collection and analysis of these data. Guba and Lincoln (1994) noted that this inductive process allowed for the construction of meaning at a point in time, and yet, within this study of the program development with the families is "open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve" (p. 113). Additionally, inductive qualitative research has been frequently used for studies of social interaction and cultural complexity because the "emergent and flexible" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 18) processes of the qualitative approach to research can be responsive to unexpected changes for the participants throughout the study (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). For studies with Indigenous people, Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) explained that this "flexibility in design demonstrates the extent to which the researcher is prepared to show respect and responsibility to understand that research is not a priority in times of crisis, grieving, celebration, ritual" (p. 14). Such situations occurred within this program, yet the flexible design of this inductive study enabled me to be responsive to community circumstances that affected both the program and the families by modifying the research process and timelines, where necessary.

3.1.2 Case Study Research as the Methodological Approach for This Study

Creswell (2017) described five research approaches within qualitative inquiry—"narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research" (p. 71). I selected case study research to explore the questions within this study, with Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defining case study as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37), noting that "the unit of analysis, *not* the topic of investigation, characterizes a case study" (p. 38), and that this focus on the "unit of analysis" (p. 39) differentiates this approach from other qualitative approaches (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

There are differences of opinion regarding the definition of case study research, indeed even whether it is an "identifiable method" (Wolcott, 2009, p. 85), as, similar to ethnographic research, the "'process' of conducting this research is often 'conflated' with the product of this type of investigation" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). Stake (2005) wrote that "a case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 443). However, for Creswell (2017) case study research is "a methodology: a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry." In this study, I adopted Creswell's (2017) definition of case study research:

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a *case* …) over time, through detailed, in-depth data

> collection involving '*multiple sources of information*' (italics in original) **…** and reports a case description and case themes. (p. 97)

I selected the case study approach because of the bilingual, bicultural context of the playgroup. One particularly important aspect of the context of this work was that there was minimal shared reflective language between me and the Ngaanyatjarra family adults in our shared participation in this program. Within this program, knowledge was predominantly co-constructed through the Ngaanyatjarra family adults watching me doing something, and sharing their experiences in Ngaanyatjarra language, rather than communicating with me verbally to any large extent (See Chapter 4). The family adults could understand my English, and we did have a shared communicative language, as most of them had been to school in the communities. Their use of English was functional but used sparingly, and I had minimal skill in conversing in Ngaanyatjarra, although I could read it fluently. Little of what we did over the 20 years was reflected on verbally, even as we co-created their requested playgroup program, through which they successfully prepared their children for school.

Case study method suited this context in a manner that narrative inquiry would not because it presumes both a shared language, with a "focus on individual stories told by participants" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76), or phenomenological research or grounded theory research, with the "focus on a process or action, leading to a theory" (Creswell, 2013, p. 85). Due to the bilingual, bicultural nature of this study, ethnographic research had much in common with case study research, with Creswell (2017) articulating that a focus on an "entire culture sharing group" could be a case (p. 90), and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) writing that "if your focus is on culture, ethnographic research makes sense" (p. 294). In this study, the focus within the program is definitely on culture. But as this study will only focus on one activity in the culture sharing group of the Ngaanyatjarra people, that of the case of the early years program, a case study research approach that included the ethnographic processes of fieldwork, observation, and descriptive strategies was selected for this study (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Geertz, 1973; Stake, 1995).

To some extent, this study also had elements of an autoethnographic study, as my position in this study was unique—no-one else had watched the development of the study's program so closely over the last 20 years. No-one else could situate the interpretation of the findings within first-hand experience of the complex interactions of multi-generational life within the changing bi-cultural, bi-linguistic contexts of very remote Indigenous communities. Wolcott (2008) described an autoethnography as "a reporting style dealing with the lived experiences of researchers themselves" (p. 211), while Creswell (2017), wrote that autoethnographies "contain the personal story of the

author as well as the larger cultural meaning of the individual's story" (p. 73). Holman Jones (2005) suggested that autoethnography "works to hold self and culture together … it creates charged moments of clarity, connection and change" (p. 764), and there have been many moments during these years when my "writing as a method of inquiry" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 959) has granted that *aha* moment that subsequently led to a change of action. But, although some journal excerpts reflect this autoethnographic reverie, this study will be more quietly aligned with the suggestion for writers from Wolcott (2008) in "acknowledging that their accounts take place in cultural settings and placing their accounts, and themselves, squarely in it" (p. 211). This study is of the Ngaanyatjarra program and the meaning of the program for the families, and therefore my place in the research as an actor and as a reflective researcher situated within the research approach of a case study with ethnographic processes enabled the voices of the families to be an integral part of the stories.

Building on the already mentioned characteristics of a qualitative approach to inquiry, five aspects of the case study research design also assisted the purpose of this study. Firstly, the unit of analysis for this case study is the bounded system of the early years program of the Ngaanyatjarra communities from 1995–2019, although Yin (2014) clarified the bounds of a case study in his explanation of case study research as investigating "a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16), which reflected the context of the case within this study. This case study is an intrinsic case study, reflecting my intrinsic interest in this case, and therefore the choice of this case for the case study is "no choice at all" because "the case is given" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). For cases such as this, where there has been little previous research, Creswell 2014, states that "a qualitative approach is merited … when the researcher does not know the important variables to consider" (p. 20), while Yin (2014) writes that "when the existing knowledge base is poor, the case study was likely to be an 'exploratory study'" (Yin, 2014, p. 39). Stake (1995) adds that for an intrinsic case, the uniqueness of the case is "expected to be critical to the understanding of the particular case" (Stake, 1995, p. 44). Interestingly, Seagrim and Lendon (1980) working with families in the Central Reserve, not too far from the Ngaanyatjarra communities, noted that "no other will have a chance of seeing again what I have here described" (p. 359) and the same could be said for the study of this program. Exploring this program through a case study was likely to be the only in-depth description and story of the development of this initial learning for school program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Therefore, it commanded considerable uniqueness justifying the choice of this research design. Consequently, the important variables of this program for these specific families emerged from the construction of meaning within this study.

Secondly, in case study research, the pre-requisite for the co-construction of the meaning of the case with the participants is an in-depth understanding of the context of the case, with Stake, (1995) revealing that "the more the case study is an intrinsic case study, the more attention needs to be paid to the context" (p. 64). In a similar way to the position of a researcher within ethnographic research, my living in the communities for more than 20 years has provided "a cross-cultural perspective based on first-hand experience [as my attention to context has always been] attention to sociocultural context" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 88, 251). Being embedded in this program for many years prior to the commencement of this research because of my work, my documented observations and field notes about the program provided in-depth "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) of settings and activities within this cross-cultural context, including features outside of the bounded system of the case as "some outside features are significant as context" (Stake, 2005, p. 444).

Thirdly, case study research enabled tracing of significant events within this program over time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). This recognition of time, and history, is important in this study of the Ngaanyatjarra program over 25 years, with Miles et al. (2014) noting from a research point of view that "events long ago in time have consequences for the present" (p. 194). However, this understanding of time also reflected the broad cultural understanding of time within Indigenous culture, described in National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC, 2003) as "the understanding that the present and future is bound up in the past and these cannot be separated from each other when discussing issues where key values are at stake" (p. 9). Within this study, the past and the present of this program become the holistic across time program, that is the focus of this case study, as demonstrated in the shared learning history (Lave & Wenger, 1991), through the collection of photo books of family participation within this program, which frequently provided the basis for family conversations about the present understanding of the program, which in turn guided the future development of the program.

Fourthly, qualitative case study research is "highly personal research" (Stake, 1995, p. 135), and, for me, orchestrating the study of this program, through the construction of the families' experiences within it over the years, writing the story of this program, was of great personal interest. Additionally, as I have spent extensive time with the families, both in this program and in the communities, I concurred with Stake, (1995) that "the way the case and the researcher interact is presumed unique and not necessarily reproducible for other cases and researcher" (p. 135), and that therefore, as within all case study research, "the researcher ultimately comes to offer a personal view" (Stake, 1995, p. 42). As previously mentioned, my position as a researcher in this study will be

further explained in Section 3.3. But, linked to this fourth aspect, the fifth, and final characteristic of case study research that assisted the purpose of this study, is that the product from this case study research will be the creation of the written report of our shared constructed meaning of the development of this program within the community and how the program has enabled these families to prepare their children for school (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Stake,1995; Yin, 2014).

3.2 Situating this Study Within Early Childhood Research

In early childhood research, Hatch (2007), wrote that the interpretive approach to inquiry "uncovers multiple realities as they are experienced" (p.223) through the construction of shared meaning between the researcher and the participants within "specific cultural and historically situated places and times" (p. 232). Within the two research traditions of quantitative and qualitative approaches to inquiry, Jarvie (2012) reported that, although quantitative research has "been fundamental to generating support for ECEC policy and reform [over the last few decades], qualitative research *complements* quantitative research, as it can "elucidate the 'how' of a quantitative result" (p.37), noting the example of the significant influence of the initial qualitative research that resulted in the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) studies.

In the literature, the methodologies of case study research, action research, and ethnographic research are frequently used to construct an understanding of the programs and activities of early childhood (Dadich & Spooner, 2008; Hatch, 2007). Stake (1995) observed that case study research is often used across the fields of education and social services for "inquiring about people and programs for both their uniqueness and their commonality" (p. 1). In this study, frequent reference is made to the qualitative case study research of Graue (1992), about the construction of the meaning of school readiness for children in three communities, and of Jackson (2009) about the purposes and the facilitation of three supported playgroups. Dadich and Spooner (2008) observed that "given the localised nature of playgroups, qualitative research methods are quite appropriate when studying the playgroup model … particularly … in exploratory studies" (p. 99).

When it comes to research about supported playgroups in Australia, although these programs are a frequently used early childhood program model, many writers mentioned the limited evidence of research on these programs (Commerford & Robinson, 2016; Jackson, 2009; Williams et al., 2015; Pourliakis et al., 2016). As supported playgroups have different purposes, use different models of implementation, and have had no 'established set of guidelines', Commerford and Robinson (2016) remarked that "these issues have contributed to a lack of cohesion in establishing an evidence-based for the supported playgroup model" (p. 5), but that "the limited evidence

suggests that supported playgroups may improve parent's social supports and increase parent's ability to care for young children" (p.7). The participatory role of parents in the program's stated goal of "enhancing their children's learning" was rarely mentioned in reports, but Commerford and Robinson (2016) noted that "supported playgroups may also improve children's sociability and create new opportunities for them to learn" (p. 2).

Within the context of early childhood research for Indigenous families in remote Australia, much of the literature is reporting on what works (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Carbines et al., 2008; Dockett et al., 2010; Harrison et al., 2012; Mason-White, 2013; Mildon & Polimeni, 2012). But as already noted in Section 2.3.2.2, the purpose of many of these early year's programs for Indigenous children and families is usually framed in the language of intervention from other countries (COAG, 2009; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Fleer, 2003). From an international perspective, Niles et al. (2007) questioned the relevance of "empirically-based best practice" and "evidence-based practice" for early years programs with Indigenous children and families, because the evidence was gathered with children of a different culture and about programs set within different cultures (p. 121). Therefore, situating this research within the wider research literature of early childhood programs for Indigenous children and families in remote locations is problematic when the research foundations of the literature differ from those within this study. This was referred to in section 2.4.1, with McConnochie and Russell (1982) stating that not only were the "compensatory / deficit programs developed in North America transferred intact to Australia', but that 'the body of research literature on Aboriginal children which utilises deficit models to identify inadequacies in Aboriginal children" was also transferred (p. 33).

There was minimal research on the effectiveness of early years programs for Indigenous families in remote areas, with some literature rarely differentiating the participation of Indigenous families from non-Indigenous families (ARTD Consultants, 2008; Berthelson et al., 2012) and others noting the need for program modification to better meet the needs of Indigenous families (Connelly & Mallet, 2020). There was also minimal literature directly applicable to this study, on how the development of this family-initiated program enabled these Indigenous family adults, from a different culture than that of the school, to prepare their children for school. It is proposed that this interpretative qualitative case study will contribute to addressing this gap within the literature.

3.3 My Research Position Within this Study

My position as a researcher for the study of this program began early in 2015, continuing alongside my ongoing coordination and facilitation role with the families in this program until 2019, enabling me to carry out this research with the minimum of disturbance to the participants of the program, with my research completed away from the communities from 2020. At around the twenty year mark of this program, this research seemed timely, to the playgroup families, to myself and to the community elders, who informed me that it was right that I take on the researcher role within this program, both to gather the information in collaboration with the families and to write the story of findings of this research about their community program. Having lived and worked among the Ngaanyatjarra families for almost twenty years, although our family is not Indigenous, the mutual respect and trust that is part of the relationship meant that my implementation of this research would be within relational understanding and expectations, as much as I understood. Martin and Mirraboopa (2003), writing about her research as an Indigenous person with Indigenous people, set the benchmark for me in this, explaining that "relatedness is core and permeates every aspect of every procedure of research" (p. 13). For me, this meant that my additional role of researcher would also be in the context of the relationship with families in the communities.

The researcher is the key instrument in qualitative approaches to inquiry (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). My shared experience with the participants over this time has continued to frame my observations and interpretation of the activities and interactions within the program (Stake, 1995; Van Maanen, 2011; Wolcott, 2008), with Guba and Lincoln (1994) describing the inquirer's voice within a constructivist inquiry as that of a "passionate participant" (p. 115). Stake (1995) noted that this positioning of the researcher in qualitative research reflected the call for the "persons most responsible for the interpretations, to be in the field" (p.41) and my "sustained and intensive experiences with participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 187), have continued to frame my observations and interpretation of collected data, in the context of the on-going activities and interactions within the program (Stake, 1995; Van Maanen, 2011; Wolcott, 2008).

I found aligning my researcher position in this study to that of the literature quite a challenge, as my position was clearly set within the relational nature of this Indigenous community, and therefore any distance in my role as a researcher was not possible. In the program, my research position was as a participant-observer, as an insider-participant coordinating and participating in the program with the families each day, and as an outsider-participant, reflecting regularly on the program's development through journals and field notes (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Historically the literature positioned researchers as distanced from their research, and there is much written about the tensions for researchers in a close researcher position, such as the participant-observer position (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). However, this view is changing, as increasingly, the participatory role is deemed essential to researchers in modern qualitative research studies (Creswell, 2013). Some authors now recommend owning a close researcher position and valuing the benefits of being an insider, rather than trying to create distance, with Yin (2014) writing that a close personal perspective "is invaluable in producing an accurate portrayal of a case study phenomenon" (p. 117). Merriam and Tisdell (2016), quoting Peshkin (1998), reminded researchers that the subjectivity of a participant researcher within qualitative research "can be seen as virtuous", as it is the basis of the "distinctive contribution [that] results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data that they have collected" (p. 17).

However, where there is a close association between the researcher, the context of the study, and participants of the study, Creswell (2014) stressed the need for researchers to position themselves clearly, as "the background of the researchers actually may shape the direction of the study" (p. 186). I acknowledge willingly, that as the researcher for this case study, my experience has continued to "shape the direction of this study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186), and that my interpretation of the findings of this study is the result of my "personal, cultural and historical experiences" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Because, for my position in this particular research, there can be no other way, and that will be my "distinctive contribution" to this case study research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17).

In this study, my viewpoints reflect my varied research positions, sometimes as more of an insider, sometimes as an outsider, depending on the context, the people, and the purpose of each situation. Though I am not Indigenous, I have lived for over twenty years in the Ngaanyatjarra communities, living and working alongside the families. Therefore, I have more of an insider view about matters within the community than newly arrived professionals to these communities, for example, particularly in ways to support family adults and children learning within their cultural ways of learning. However, in relation to the Ngaanyatjarra community, and even the local Indigenous families with whom I work in the program, I can only have an outsider view. These varied viewpoints, as insider or outsider within the research context, are reflected within the literature that considers the position of researchers who conduct research within their workplace, or within a cross-cultural context (Andrews, 2007; Fleming, 2018; Mercer, 2007; Milligan, 2016). Milligan (2016), quoting Merton (1972) agrees "that we all have multiple identities, which take precedence at

different times" (Merton, 1972 as cited in Milligan 2016, p. 241). Mercer (2007) suggested that rather than viewing a researcher's position as either an insider or an outsider, it could be more helpful viewing the positions as along "points on a continuum … recognizing their potential strengths and weaknesses, in all manner of contexts" (p. 13). Fleming (2018) held a related view, that for an insider researcher the place on that continuum "is dependent on the closeness of the researcher to the aspect being researched" (p. 311). I consider that my researcher position changed along the insider/outsider continuum, depending on the situation and the variations within the background of the researcher, for example, as a non-Indigenous researcher but with long term experience of living within Indigenous remote communities, or as a researcher in an Indigenous community but one who did not come to the communities just as a researcher.

My research position in this study is within my workplace, the playgroup program, and the cross-cultural context of this community. However, it seems that my insider position within my own culture has also become less clear over time, and although I have an insider view regarding Western cultural education by knowledge, I wonder if my view is less insider than it was twenty years ago, as I become more accustomed to using different cultural lenses (Fleming, 2018; Mercer, 2007; Merton, 1972; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Andrews (2007) framed this researcher situation as "living between cultural boundaries" (p.38). Within cross-cultural research, Milligan (2016) suggested the use of the term *inbetweeners*, rather than an insider or an outsider position, while Andrews (2007) proposed that the location of the researcher "at the intersection of different cultures" can be explained as the place where the researcher can "simultaneously occupy the contradictory positions of insider and outsider" (p. 38). These perceptions from the literature significantly underscore that my interpretation of this study's findings will result from my "unique configuration of … personal qualities joined to the data that [I] have collected" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17).

Another aspect of a close researcher position, frequently noted within the literature, is that it may pose risks to the rigour of the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I would intimate that the relevance of these risks is relative to the research situation. For example, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proffered that observation by long-term participants can be perceived as being "highly subjective [and written at a] moment in time" (p. 166), but Fleming (2018), considered that researchers as outsiders are "potentially at risk of not noticing interesting data" (p. 316) because they are unfamiliar with the environmental context of the data. Additionally, the risk to objectivity is noted, where a focus on mutual obligations and alignment of oneself to the needs of the participants may cloud the objectivity of research (Yin, 2014), but I would suggest that this risk is particularly relevant to researchers new to their community of research, but that this risk is in the

context of living in the community, as much as within the research. Furthermore, it is often perceived that the voluntary nature of a person's decision to participate in the research may be affected by the perception of unequal relations for researchers in close researcher positions (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). But, as explained in Section 3.4.4, the voluntary nature of such decisions can be viewed differently within collectivist people groups, and, in this study, the risk was subsumed within the broader consideration of cultural appropriateness of the individualistic research process with the families within a more collectivist culture.

Finally, Stake (1995) revealed that "the case researcher plays different roles and has options as to how they are played" (p. 91). Within my position as a researcher in this study, my voice reflected the various roles of a case study researcher, such as a teacher, an advocate, a storyteller. In this methodology chapter, it is the reflective voice of a researcher from the Western culture, having spent many years living within the Indigenous culture, trying to work out how to balance the cultural expectations from both cultures in this research process. Interestingly, within this research process, I did not change my way of interacting with the families, as we had shared stories about program events and community life for years, so gathering another set of stories was not that unusual, but I, myself, was aware of the pressure of the Western cultural expectations because I was increasingly aware of how different the underlying cultural expectations were to the Ngaanyatjarra families involved in this study.

In Chapter 4, part 1, my researcher's voice is as the storyteller, sometimes interpreter, for the chronological stories of the development of this program, and in Chapter 4, part 2, it is a reflective voice gathering the common themes across the stories, offering some interpretation, particularly highlighting the cross-cultural context of the program. In other chapters, my researcher's voice is often that of a reflective researcher, but it is also the voice of a parent and a program facilitator, a teacher, and an adult educator, and at times an advocate within this cross-cultural learning program. But, as Stake (1995) disclosed, "the role of interpreter, and gatherer of interpretations, is central" (p. 99), in the task of situating the findings, data and stories from this study, within the literature, in constructing the meaning of this program with the families.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

3.4.1 Selection of Data

The purpose of this case study was to explore the development of the Ngaanyatjarra Early Years' program (also known as the playgroup) from 1995–2019 from the point of view of myself as

the co-creator of this program and later as the researcher, examining how the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school. To ensure that the exploration of this case over this length of time was feasible, the bounding of the case data was linked to the research question and sub-questions (Miles et al., 2014), with the data gathered across multiple sources all linked firstly to the activities and events of the program and secondly to the participant's activities within the program (Yin, 2014). Within qualitative research, where the construction of knowledge and meaning is specific to the context of the case, in-depth descriptions of the setting, activities, and interactions within the program, informed by data from multiple sources, were essential to support the interpretation of documented observations (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Data sources for this study included –

- Documents, both current and historical, evidencing the *over time* and *day to day* development and operation of the program
- Observations, descriptions, and reflections about the program written in my program journal
- Semi-structured conversations with current participants of the program, held in 2017 and 2018

I also kept a research diary as a data source for this study since this research commenced in early 2015. Continuing my workplace, and personal, habit of frequently writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), I have used this diary to document personal observations, questions, and reflections along this research journey. Initially, I wrote reflections about literature, the possibilities for research questions, and the pros and cons of research designs. More recently I used it to consider my position within this study, the implications of methodological decisions, the cross-cultural processes within data collection and analysis, and emerging ideas about how this study could be positioned for readers (Miles et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 2009; Yin, 2014). My research diary reflects the view of Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), as, for me, my writings are "the structures through which I make sense of my world, locating my particular biographical experiences in larger historical and social [and cultural] contexts" (p. 966). Ortlipp (2008) described similar outcomes from this style of inquiry, "to work through implications of the chosen framework" (p. 700), "to integrate theoretical material from my reading and to use my research journal as a place for 'writing as a *method of inquiry'* (italics in original) *(*Richardson, 1994, p. 516)" (p. 699).

My research diary was the place for the interrogation of my role as a researcher within this cross-cultural research context, and the reflections on the subsequent community strategies developed for participants in the cross-cultural research process. During the years of this research, I reviewed my research diary every few months, summarising the current stage of the analysis of the data, and reflecting on the changes within the emerging themes of this inductive case study. Within qualitative research, the reflexivity of the researcher is essential, because, as Richards (2015) stated "a part of the data is the researcher" (p. 53), and my reflexivity in this research process has been within my written conversations with my previously written reflections. Within this thesis, I referred to excerpts from my research diary predominantly in late chapter 4 and in chapter 5, as data contributing to my discussion of the emerging findings within the program over the years.

3.4.2 Document Data Collection and Initial Analysis

Within case study research, Stake (1995) asserts that "there is no particular moment when data analysis begins" (p. 71), therefore I have chosen to describe each of the data collection processes along with the initial analysis of data from that source. During 2017, after being granted permission by the Shire Council (see Appendix C), as part of the ethics process for this study, to access all public and workplace documents related to the program for the purposes of this study, I began searching through the program archives to see what recorded information they held about the program. Many years earlier, when I resumed responsibility for this program in 2008, I had filled many of these archive boxes, gathering any program documents that appeared authentic and that could be helpful in reflecting upon the earlier development of the program and in shaping further development. Little did I know that ten years later these archived program documents would also form part of this research data. These archived program documents, although written for their own purpose, audience, and time, provided interesting facts and perspectives about significant events within the program (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). In this study, the program focused public documents formed the basis of the chronological development of the program. Yin (2014) proposed that these documents would "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 107) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that the documents would provide "a stimulus for paths of inquiry" (p.165) that could be followed up later, through direct observation and conversations with participants.

With numerous documents available, guided by the research questions for this study, I selected documents about the history and development of the program over the years, the activities, experiences, and roles of the program participants, and my activities as the program facilitator/educator. I found four distinct types of documents:

- Conference presentations, articles, photos, booklets, and DVDs related to specific events within the program
- Media releases relating to government initiatives impacting the program
- Program reports and workplace records – focused on the individual community level and the wider Ngaanyatjarra community level
- Program operational documents—particularly program plans for the period from 2005–2009 and from 2009–2018.

From the start of this research process, analysis went "hand in hand" with this search for meaningful data (Creswell, 2014, p. 195), as I selected documents and grouped them for further analysis. Yin (2014) affirmed the importance of initially "playing with the data", grouping it in useful formats and writing memos about aspects of the data (p. 135), and Stake (1995) suggested that research is a search for "patterns" and for "consistencies" (p. 44). Within case study research, especially cases spanning many years, data management remained essential due to the "tremendous amount of data" that can be gathered from documents, observations, and interviews about the case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 233). After much time spent playing with data and looking for patterns, I grouped the large number of documents into four tables for further analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

Miles et al., (2014) stated that for case studies, the use of chronology was helpful, as "events long ago have consequences for the present" (p. 194). Therefore, the first table was an overview of significant events and developments within the program from 1995–2019 and used a method of ordering data over time, an "event listing over time", in which the ordering would provide "foundations for determining sequences and hierarchies for further analytical work" (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 193–194). The resultant timeline also revealed the development of process clusters within the facilitation of the program, as well as indicating the precursors and outcomes of each cluster. The second table included media reports, conference presentations, articles, DVDs, booklets, and papers from 1995–2018, diverse examples of how information about the program, and the participation of the families within the program, was shared with others, much of which I had written over the years. Grouping the data according to the timeline while noting the intended audience and the purpose of the document, there were about fifty documents in this table. The third table was a subset of the first grouping of documents, specifically related to the operation of the program from 2004–2009, when, as evidenced in the first table, the program model facilitated the extension of the program to all of the Ngaanyatjarra communities and supported local community members to take responsibility for the program. The fourth table was another subset of the first

grouping of documents, this time from 2009–2018, that covered both program operations and related events, with the events in this time period frequently referred to by participants during their later conversations.

As well as the initial analysis of the data from these documents identifying the place of documents within the program timeline, content categories also emerged (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2014) such as program model descriptions, program activities and routines, the roles of family adults as teachers for their children, children's experiences, facilitation processes, staffing and venue matters, program plans, and reports. Three of these four tables became instrumental in framing the chronology presented in Chapter 4, Part 1, with the second table, that of media reports and conference presentations, becoming better aligned as complementary data to the timelines within tables 2, 3, and 4.

3.4.3 Observations: Data Collection and Initial Analysis

Documenting observations and reflections on each day's program in my program journals consistently formed part of my daily routine over all the years of this program. In my role as program facilitator, my habit of completing each day's program journal aligned to the concept of writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). These daily program journals included:

- My descriptions of the program setting and environment within the community
- My planning notes about the activities, and sequence of activities, during the program, and reflections about what worked, what was enjoyed, and what could be developed
- My observations, written after the program, regarding the experiences and interactions of the family adults and children during the program
- My descriptions, and reflections, of significant interactions, conversations, and events through the day

In qualitative research, Creswell (2017), stated that "observation is one of the key tools for collecting data" (p. 166). Over the years, my program journals have kept "a good record of events" (Stake, 1995, p. 62) and, unexpectedly, have contributed to the rich collection of observation as data for this research, despite not being written for this purpose. The direct observations within my program journals were consistently collected in the natural setting of the program, framed by my position both in the program and in the community. Similar to ethnographic researchers, my years of living in the communities engaging with the program, enabled me to make specific observations as

needed, “finding good moments to reveal the unique complexity of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 63). For the purposes of this research, I have selected journal entries written around key times, events, and topics within the program as observational data. In this way, my program journals provided the moment in time evidence and the rich descriptions of significant events that corroborate the data from archived documents, or participant conversations, thereby providing an additional perspective of the event, in the shared construction of meaning about program activities and events (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). I refer to my program journals, covering 1995–2019, in Chapter 4, adding my perspective, as the program facilitator, or co-ordinator, to the multiple data sources related to a particular event or issue within this case study. In the following chapters, these journals will be referred to as (My program journal, year).

3.4.4 Semi-Structured Conversations: Data Collection and Initial Analysis

3.4.4.1 Semi-Structured Conversations and Indigenous Forms of Storytelling. Within the qualitative, interpretative approach to research, understanding the experiences of participants is best achieved through interviews, asking them about their experiences and listening to their stories (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). In this study, the selection of the qualitative case study design provided the opportunity for the Ngaanyatjarra families to tell their stories in a way that was “consistent with their social, cultural and linguistic practices” (NHMRC, 2003, p. 18). An informal conversational style of interview seemed most appropriate, with a set of topics about the program written as a guide for the semi-structured conversations (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

“Stories are relational” (Kovach, 2018, p. 226), and in this study, the sharing of family stories about their program experiences through informal conversations is similar to the “Indigenous form of conversation [that is often called] yarning” (Walker et al., 2014, p. 37), with Walker et al., (2014) explaining that this style of interview “prioritises Indigenous ways of communicating, in that it is culturally prescribed, cooperative and respectful” (p. 1216). Storytelling has frequently been a recognised method in qualitative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Drawson et al., 2017) and Indigenous styles of conversation, such as yarning, have more recently been described as a “subtype of storytelling methodology,” with particular use within research with Indigenous people (Bessarab et al., 2010; Drawson et al., 2017; Fredericks et al., 2011; Geia et al., 2013; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2005; Walker et al., 2014).

Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) noted that the English term yarning was first recognised by the Nyoongah people, in Western Australia, as a useful word to describe an Indigenous research method

for data collection as a term that encapsulates a process of "making meaning, communicating and passing on knowledge" (p. 38). Now recognised methodologically as an Indigenous form of conversation, it has four aspects: yarning is held within relationship (Bessarab et al., 2010), is informal and relaxed (Fredericks et al., 2011; Geia et al., 2013), situates the research within the context of the participants (Bessarab et al., 2010; Drawson et al., 2017) and enables the researcher and participants to become partners in their shared construction of research stories (Barlo et al., 2020; Dean, 2010). In this study, the Ngaanyatjarra families speak their own language, and so the English word yarning is not a familiar term. Barlo et al., (2020) asserted that the methodological use of the term yarning needs to recognise that "the structure and versions of which are as diverse as the many Aboriginal nations of Australia [even as] the concept of yarning as a method of sharing information seems to be a common thread' (p. 1–2). In this study, the four aspects identified across the literature are familiar to me, especially the informal and relaxed conversations that reflect our shared relationship within the context of this program and the communities over many years and have provided this common thread in the construction of shared knowledge about this program. However, while this is a potentially useful methodological term that is emerging and evolving, it is not a term that I would have chosen to use to describe my conversational interactions across many years with the families in these communities.

3.4.4.2 Conversations, Ethical Codes, and Principles, Within a Collectivist Culture.

Creswell (2017) maintained that there are many issues faced by qualitative researchers "that surface within data collection in the field" (p. 174) and have to be addressed ethically within the research process. My role as the researcher in this study, began after 15 years of living and working in the cross-cultural context of these Ngaanyatjarra communities, and, in the preceding years, working alongside the families within the playgroup program, I became increasingly aware of the cultural ways of the families, and where these differed to expectations within the Western culture. Consequently, in this research process, one of my major concerns was the research interview process as a foreign academic process, even if it was presented as an informal conversation among known people (Bessarab et al., 2010). I felt apprehensive that this unfamiliar purpose and process, with its written components, could be a deterrent to the participation of families within this study.

Within the ethical processes of this research, my perception was that the cultural difference between the culture of the program and the culture of the families within this study was demonstrated along the dimensions of the individualist aspects of the Western culture in contrast to the more collectivist aspects of the Indigenous culture (Hofstede, 1997; Rogoff, 2003). In academic research, ethical codes and principles are written to guide the researcher and the research process,

but, as Smith (2005) asserted, most ethical principles "have been defined through [W]estern eyes", and the presumption that these principles are "universal principles is one of the difficulties with ethical codes of conduct for research" (p.99). As Smith (2005) explained, "ethics codes are for the most part about protecting the individual, not the collective" (p. 99). Yet within Indigenous communities, the "social cohesion" of the collective community is usually valued above that of the individual (NHMRC, 2003, p. 19).

My heightened awareness of the tension between these foundational differences within the processes of this study, as a cross-cultural activity, led me to try to address these tensions, as the orchestrator of this qualitative research process with the families. My intention was to find a workable balance between the individualistic ethical codes and principles of the Western cultural research process and the everyday lived experiences and understandings of the families within their more collectivist Indigenous culture. I decided that three aspects of the data collection process of semi-structured interviews required specific attention in order to respect the collective values of the participants within research requirements that have emanated from an individualistic perspective. These areas were the process of community consultation and information sharing (Section 3.4.4.3), the community-wide nature of the selection of participants for this study (Section 3.4.4.4), and the requirement for individual informed consent (Section 3.4.4.5).

3.4.4.3 Informing the Community About the Conversational Storytelling Process. First of all, there were additional processes around community consultation and information sharing during this research process, recognising that "consultation and negotiation was a continuous two-way process" (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, [AIATSIS], 2012, p. 10). One thing that became very obvious when living and working in a remote Indigenous community for many years, is that everyone in the community knows everything, and, as everyone needs to know everything, much time is spent ensuring this happens. I believed that these actions demonstrated respecting the "social cohesion" (NHMRC, 2003, p. 18) of the community. Remote Indigenous community life is all-inclusive and, just as the playgroup program was part of everyday community life, the addition of a research component to their community program had to be viewed similarly. The research guidelines from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, (AIATSIS, 2012) stated that "consultation and negotiation was a continuous two-way process" (p. 10), and, in this study, there were additional processes around community consultation and information sharing, as it was important that the research process was transparent to the whole community, and that the sequence of the process provided enough time for

community members to talk about the process among themselves (Dreise, 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2016; Tauri, 2017).

The playgroup program of this study was well known among the families, because it had been operating in various Ngaanyatjarra communities for a number of years, and family adults from every family would have at least visited the playgroup program with their children occasionally. It was also well known, among program families, that, in 2015, it was about 20 years since the program had commenced, it was the right point in time to gather the stories of the families about their program once again, similar to the stories of the earliest years of this program in the booklet *Playgroups: Playing to get ready for school* (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006). Subsequently, in 2015, this research study commenced within the continuing Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program.

Consequently, as a result of many conversations with community members, the Explanatory Statement of the study was developed for those in responsibility across the community and the council, and, because of the varying levels of both English and Ngaanyatjarra literacy amongst community adults, with the expertise of my Indigenous colleague, I wrote the *Explanatory Statement for Ngaanyatjarra participants* (see Appendix D) in plain English, at an appropriate level of English understanding for most participants. An explanatory photographic poster (see Appendix E) about the research process was also created based on the explanatory statement, to ensure that everyone in the community had the opportunity to know about this research, regardless of their ability with print literacy. As per the usual practice within the community for information that is likely to be of interest to everyone in the community, I displayed this poster on boards in strategic community places such as the community office, the playgroup centre, and the local community store. This poster provided a brief summary of the purpose of the study and asked the question *Does your family have a story to tell?* and invited people to talk with playgroup program staff if they were interested in sharing their family stories about the program. Information from the research poster was also presented verbally, on a number of occasions during playgroup program sessions, in both English and Ngaanyatjarra, with copies of the poster available for families to take home if required.

3.4.4.4 Selecting Participants to Share Their Stories. Secondly, the community-wide nature of participation in this study commended the community-based processes of discussion about participants well before any individual participant selection occurred (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). In this study, the “mutually agreed mechanism for recruitment” was for me to meet with the community advisor and one of the community elders to clarify who were the people that the community agreed would be the representative participants for this research (NHMRC, 2003, p. 13). This community-first process of selection contrasted with more common purposeful processes of

sampling of participants for a research study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and is a reflection of the more collectivist culture of the families, which recognises that firstly, knowledge is collectively held rather than individually (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016; Smith, 2005), secondly, that almost everyone in the community would have a shared story within this program, and thirdly, with the purpose for this study agreed by the community, it was important that those with responsibility within the community initiated the selection of participants, rather than the researcher.

As a result of my meeting, the representative community participant group was the current generation of family adults who had participated in the program over the last five years, with invited participants to be spread across the family groups within the community. Importantly, I was advised that participation in this project would assist this generation of adults in the development of their confidence and knowledge, about the program and their children's development through the program. Initially, seven family adults, who had been playgroup participants with their children for a number of years, were invited to tell their family stories, and, reflecting the flexible nature of this research process, within twelve months another ten family adults had also participated in semi-structured conversations about their family experiences within the playgroup program. Within the community, everyone knew who was telling stories about the program for this research, and, over time, there were many additional family adults who also had a comment, or story, about the program which they wanted to share with me, often at informal times within community life, such as while visiting the local store, or walking to the office to collect the mail, or waiting for fuel. In the voluntary sharing of these comments and stories, these community members expected that their stories would also be included with the gathered stories for this community-based project.

3.4.4.5 Beginning the Conversation: The 'Informed Consent' Process. Thirdly, additional processes within the seeking of individual informed consent were developed to assist the family participants with this process. From my experience within the communities, the individualistic focus on privacy, confidentiality, and ownership within the consent form was at odds with the people's collectivist life, and so I wondered if the concept would be understood. With both the purpose and the process of informed consent constructed within Western culture, I expected that there would be tensions within the application of this process with families of different cultures (Smith, 2005). Before explaining the additional processes that we used in this study, I present a brief consideration of the literature about informed consent in the context of research with Indigenous people, living within their Indigenous cultural ways.

3.4.4.5.1 Literature About Informed Consent Within Indigenous Research Contexts. The key concern within the literature, relating to the seeking of informed consent within Indigenous

research contexts, is that the principles of universalism and individualism embedded in this process are constructed within Western culture. Tauri (2017) articulated that Indigenous scholars and research participants "have identified universalism as an especially problematic issue" (p. 5) in relation to ethics approval (see Appendix A) processes, with Ellis and Earley (2006) citing Piquemal (2001) that "ethical beliefs must be contextualised and grounded in particular cultures" (Piquemal, 2001 as cited in Ellis & Earley, p. 5). Similarly, in Australia, Dreise (2018) considered that "research, evaluation and academic communities have had to recalibrate their relationship with Aboriginal communities" (p. 5), while Fitzpatrick et al (2019) concluded that "the [W]estern approach to research with Indigenous communities is not aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being" (p. 1).

The purpose of ethical codes within research is to "protect the rights of the individual" (Smith, 2005, p. 99), with the principle of individualism within informed consent, described by Smith (2005) as "the right of individuals to give consent to participation once they have been informed about the project and believe that they understand the project" (p. 99). However, the universalism of informed consent as an individual response, may not extend to participants within a collectivist culture (Tauri, 2017). Tauri (2017) contemplated that the "'privilege [given to individual] negotiation and informed consent" in research (p. 8), "marginalises Indigenous approaches to ethical research conduct" (p. 1), and the writer calls for the "recognition of the validity of communal processes for attaining the informed consent of Indigenous research participants" (p. 1). Similarly, in Australia, Dreise (2018) linked the importance of community consent in Aboriginal contexts to the "collectivist nature of Aboriginal societies" (p. 5) and Fitzpatrick et al. (2017) advised that although gaining community-wide consent may take a long time, it is a pre-requisite for individual participation in research. Additionally, the different understandings of cultural groups, regarding the extent to which knowledge is owned individually or collectively, and therefore what can be individually consented to share, has relevance to the informed consent process within Indigenous cultures (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016).

Within Western cultures, the process of seeking informed consent with research participants is consistent with the transactional, task-focused characteristics of Western culture, that it is culturally accepted that agreements will be both informed and confirmed in writing, whether it be sales of vehicles or sharing intellectual property. However, an area of tension within the informed consent process with participants of non-Western cultures is the expectation of meeting the task requirements of this Western cultural process with participants who are recognised as living in a relational culture (Tauri, 2017). This was my question for this study, whether it was possible to

complete the task of informed consent within a relational context, or whether the cultural expectations were mutually exclusive (Harris, 1990). Fitzpatrick et al., (2016), within a systematic review of literature about informed consent for Indigenous research projects in northern Australia, concluded that there is little information as to the how of seeking informed consent within Indigenous projects, and that "there is an urgent need for research to understand how best to seek consent" (p. 15)

Fitzpatrick et al., (2016) found "few publications that describe specific communication methods for seeking informed consent for Indigenous research and even fewer that evaluate participants' understanding or preferences for the process" (p. 13) so in 2017, they built on this review in a research project focused on "starting a conversation about research" with Indigenous families (p. 1). In 2019, they reported community recommendations from these conversations about informed consent, that included the importance of strong relationships, using the experience of the local Aboriginal people, making research information clear through pictures and stories, translating information into the local language, and "consulting the community on how to present research information" (p. 12). Also in Australia, from a literature review and case study, Dreise (2018) found five critical factors "regarding Aboriginal community consent for social research", and these included "community empowerment, time, trust, local tailoring, and clear and constant communication" (p. 5).

The process of seeking informed consent is specific to a local situation, with Fitzpatrick et al., (2019) advising that "when seeking consent for research, take into account local language, literacy, and cultural protocols … at each step of the research process" (p. 12). It is interesting to consider the complexities of ensuring the informed consent of participants, when even the purpose for informed consent, that of protecting individual rights, is a concept from a foreign culture, with Smith (2005), contemplating that:

> another concern is about the nature of what it really means to be informed, for people who may not be literate or well-educated, who may not speak the language of the researcher, and who may not be able to differentiate the *invitation* to participate in research from the enforced compliance in signing official forms for welfare and social service agencies. (p. 99)

The signing of individual acknowledgement that informed consent has been sought for their participation in this research, demonstrated the different cultural understandings of relationality, as, within Western cultures, a written agreement is often used to establish trust, but within an Indigenous collectivist and oral culture, relational trust is paramount, with Tauri (2017) suggesting

that “the consent process for any research involving humans is complex and requires more than obtaining a signature” (p. 10), and that this “paper-based’ signing, within a shared trusted relationship, could ‘weaken the relationship’” (p. 7). Fitzpatrick et al.’s (2019) project pondered the confusion of participants linking their signing of informed consent to their signing for welfare payments, therefore “suggesting that they did not understand the information on the form” (p. 8), which raised the question of how informed the signed consent was.

In this study, the similarity of many aspects of this brief overview of the literature, about the concerns regarding the process of seeking informed consent within research with Indigenous people living within their Indigenous culture, will be evident in the following description of the intuitively and collaboratively developed processes of seeking informed consent with the participants of this study, prior to the commencement of their semi-structured conversations with the researcher.

3.4.4.5.2 The Informed Consent Process Embedded Within the Semi–Structured Conversations. My Indigenous colleague and I carried out most of the conversations with family participants together, in English and Ngaanyatjarra. After the usual introductory comments about family and community activities, the first step of the research conversation was to explain to the participants why my mobile phone was in my hand. I explained that it was to make an audio recording of the conversation, with their permission, so that I could transcribe the conversation later, to both use in the research and to give them their own copy. As most participants were unfamiliar with the mobile phone’s voice recorder, I usually asked if they would like to say a few words first so that they could hear their voice. The voice recorder on the mobile phone was usually turned on from this point in the conversation.

The next step was to explain to the participant that before they could share their families’ activities in the program, for which they had agreed, there was this form that had to be filled in because the stories were part of the formal research study of their program. From my experience, explaining the purpose of informed consent, to people who don’t live within Western cultural ways, and who have minimal English language, is complicated and multilayered, like explaining why wearing life jackets is important for people on boat trips, to someone who had never seen expanses of water, boats or people travelling on boats and had limited English. With these families, whom I had worked alongside for many years, I situated this form as a university requirement from my Western culture, that, with their consent, as we already had the community consent, would enable these family stories, and the wider research story of their community playgroup program, to be kept safely for future generations. In this way, the consent form was situated as a practice for a particular

purpose within a different cultural setting (Harris, 1990; Rogoff, 2003), a way of viewing different cultural practices that had become familiar with the cross-cultural context of the playgroup program.

Explaining, and then implementing the process of informed consent often took up to 10 minutes with participants. My Indigenous colleague and I had written the informed consent form in plain English (see Appendix F), and also as a Ngaanyatjarra language translation (see Appendix G). This enabled participants to read the form, or, more usually, have it read to them, in Ngaanyatjarra and/or English, to ensure that they were aware of the content of the form, even if they were not bound by the same values. I found it helpful to have the community research poster on the table in front of us to refer to as I spoke, or on the floor if we were sitting on the veranda, to locate the purpose of the statements with reference to the program. As we read and talked through each aspect of the consent form, usually in both languages, the participant would check agreement, or not, to each aspect.

The final task in this process was asking the participant to write their signature as their consent or give consent verbally if they agreed with each point (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Having the informed consent form written in both Ngaanyatjarra and English was essential to enable shared understanding, yet with each participant, I found myself wondering whether asking these relation-based families for their agreement to this unfamiliar process, would encourage or alienate any further conversation. This was particularly so because this foreign informed consent process was not the shared family storytelling that they had agreed to, and yet it had taken at least the first section of any time they had set aside for their storytelling. However, all the participants did provide their written or verbal consent, and I was always quietly grateful when the participant had kept focus through these explanations and continued with the actual conversation. I was also quite humbled, knowing that their patience during the explanations and their willingness to continue were probably both a response to our shared relationship of trust—quite separate to this task.

3.4.4.6 Continuing the Semi-Structured Conversations With the Participants. After the informed consent papers were put to one side, the conversations of the shared family program experiences stories began, and various props were used by the participants to focus their conversation. Some participants linked their stories to the three text box questions on the research poster, others picked up their child's program photo book and began talking about their shared experiences within the photos, and one person asked for her own copy of the topic guide that I was holding. The conversational topics (see Appendix H) were from the emerging themes of the program documents (Stake, 1995), the order of the topics was flexible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participant always selected the place and time for a conversation, and the settings for these

conversations included the playgroup room, while other families were leaving or having morning tea, and the front veranda of a participant's house.

During the conversations, children and other family adults were often with the participant, just listening and being there, with the conversations more like a friendly sharing of stories, rather than question and answer style conversations (Walker et al., 2014). This informal storytelling within their natural family context, mirrored the Indigenous forms of storytelling within the literature, "the way we make sense of our lived experience (Geia et al., 2013, p. 15). During these conversations, other family members would contribute their stories about common activities, as part of the valuing of the people's collective memory, the shared, collective experience of community members who had watched this program for many years (NHMRC, 2003). Additionally, when listening to the participant's stories, I was able to ask for further information to clarify links with previous comments or events, particularly as my Indigenous colleague was there and could always assist with the language.

Conversations lasted for an average of 20–30 minutes. The language used was appropriate for each participant, often with local language words interspersed within mostly English conversations. When the conversation appeared to be ending, or something happened in the environment to close the conversation, the participant, and their family, were thanked for their stories and, if they didn't have any questions, the conversation was finished by turning off the voice recorder. At that point, most participants wanted to hear themselves talk on the recorder for a few moments, which I facilitated. Then I reminded them that I would write their story for them, so that next time they could read their story, or have it read to them, to make sure that the written story was correct.

Within a few days, I transcribed each audio recording myself (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The conversations were mostly in English, but a Ngaanyatjarra speaking person assisted me with any Ngaanyatjarra words used. Realizing that these actual interview transcriptions may be of little interest to the participants, I wrote a second version of the transcription, more like a story, which I called their *Own Words Story*. In this version, I wrote the words of the participant, often in topic paragraphs, without my comments from the conversation. The resulting stories were narratives that I could read back to the participants, yet they still remained true to what the participants said in the conversation.

Interestingly, when I returned to each family with their written story some weeks later, although the participant, and family, wanted me to read their story to them, they made minimal

comments on their story and there was little interest in the written copy, with every family asking me to look after their copy for them. I wasn't surprised at this, because their shared story was alive in all of our memories, and the paper format of the story was for the purposes of processes within my culture, not theirs. Although I had initially proposed three conversational visits with each participant, within the flexible processes of this inductive research, there were only these two set conversations with the participants, and that was just the way it worked out within community life. Within the following chapters of this thesis, excerpts of these family conversations of 2017 and 2018 will be acknowledged as (Family conversation, year) in keeping with the communal nature of the study program.

3.4.5 After the Conversations—Initial Analysis

Later, on the same day as each conversation, I completed three documents regarding each participant. Firstly, a conversation participant cover sheet (see Appendix I) with demographic notes about the participant and the conversation, secondly, an *ethnographic description* of the conversation environment and thirdly, a *process summary* of each conversation, noting such aspects as the confidence of the speaker in the conversational setting, questions asked by the participant, frequently mentioned topics, and suggestions for future conversations. On the same day, I also transferred the recording of the conversation from my mobile phone to the laptop and made a copy of the recording on a separate USB. A few weeks later, the data sources for this project, both the original transcriptions and the Own Words Stories for each conversation, were stored electronically as well as printed and filed for further analysis (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

The next step in the initial analysis of the conversations was to read each transcription a number of times, noting points of interest. This was also the time that I began informally coding the data, assigning labels to chunks of data and beginning to construct categories within the data (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin 2014). During this initial process as described by Miles et al., (2014), I used three coding methods. For the first coding method, descriptive coding, the labels of the codes were researcher-generated, using the topic of the passage as the code label. For the following two coding methods, process coding and "In Vivo coding" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 74) the labels were participant-generated, using the participant's words from their stories as the code label.

Table 1

Examples of labels within each coding method are given in the following table.

Coding	Examples from Transcriptions of Conversations
1. *Descriptive coding … 'what' (The main topic of a passage)*	Storytime, parent's activities, children's activities Venues – tin shed, veranda, drop-in centre, new building
2. *Process coding … 'how' (Observable actions – over time)*	Helping, talking, coming, learning (children), learning (mothers)
3. *"In Vivo" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 74), coding (Honouring the participant's voice, using their own words)*	'Crying for playgroup', 'sitting down self', 'getting learned'

From this stage, the responses to each code were grouped across the transcriptions from all of the participants, for example grouping all the participant's comments about the program venue of the tin shed. Further analysis gathered the emerging themes within these participant conversations, searching for patterns across conversations, as their purpose was to learn how the family adults viewed both the program and their roles with their children within the program.

3.4.6 Inductive Analysis Across the Collections of Data

Once the participant conversations were completed, data were grouped across the three data sets, within a process of "refining and revising categories" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 209), moving towards constructing meaning across this data. This "construction of categories is highly inductive" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 210), and, over time, my intuitive re-constructions moved from the categories of the sub-questions to a focus on data sets of similar topics, such as facilitation of the program, the significance of venues to this program, pre-requisites for family participation in this program, and, from there, moving to the relationships between these data sets.

Within the socio-cultural context of the study program, the sub-questions guided the collection of data, which in turn reflected the work of Rogoff (1995), focusing the analysis of sociocultural activity on the "observation of development in three planes of analysis, corresponding

to personal, interpersonal and community processes" (p. 140). In the early stages of this analysis, my understanding was that, because the program was a sociocultural activity, where participant's learning and development happened in the context of shared participation in this community-initiated activity, with the program as the unit of analysis for this exploratory case study, this focus on the sociocultural activity in this program would be beneficial. However, although this level of analysis has contributed significantly to the discussion in Chapter 5, for example, as the culturally constructed guided participation of family adults in the context of the learning of their young children (Rogoff et al., 1998), further inductive analysis revealed that underpinning the sociocultural activity of the families within the program, was the program itself, which formed the basis of later analysis of this study's findings.

Miles et al. (2014) stated that chronological descriptions "have an *analytical* and *interpretive* purpose: to illuminate the constant, influential and determining factors shaping the course of events" (italics in original) (p. 332), and Stake (1995) explained that "understanding is linked with chronologies, rather than cause and effect" (p. 39) and is assisted by looking for "key episodes" (p. 40). Within my inductive analysis of the cross-data sets, I wrote a sequence of analysis every few months, reflecting the importance of key episodes as determining factors, within this exploratory study, echoing Creswell's (2014), idea that this approach is helpful "when the researcher does not know the important variables to consider" (p. 20).

In the analysis of this data, I continued to use the process explained by Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), that of using "writing as a method of data analysis, by using writing to think" (p. 970). In my life, not just in this study, my habit was to think through my pen, having often said that I need a pen in my hand to think. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) explained that writing is also a method of data collection, by collecting in the writing, ideas, and thoughts during observations that "were only collected within the writing" (p. 970). In my inductive process of this analysis, another set of writings by Richards, (2015) rang true with my habit of thinking through my writing, and assisted my further analysis, particularly with the pre-2015 program documents and journals. Richards (2015) termed the strategy as "taking off from the data" (p. 89) (see Appendix J), and I used it frequently in writing about an unexpected or interesting piece of data, then writing my reasons 'why' that piece of data was interesting and then following that response with writing why 'that' was interesting for my exploration of the "key variables" in this study (p. 89).

On reflection, my inductive analysis of the data in this study reflected a combination of the writings of Rogoff (1995), Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), and Richards (2015), in the search for understanding of this case, in relation to the literature, as my analysis moved from a focus on the

family adults, children and the program, to a recognition that this program was about the family adults and how they were preparing their children through this program, to a further recognition that it was the key enablers within the facilitation of this program that were enabling the family adults to prepare their children for school within their requested program. Within Chapter 4, with the descriptions of the events, and identification of common themes across the three time periods, and then, within the interpretation and discussion of the findings in Chapter 5, there is frequent reference to the *"*constant, influential and determining*" (*Miles et al., 2014, p. 332) factors of Chapter 4 that enabled the shared development of the program of this study.

3.5 Validity and Reliability—Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Creswell (2017) stated that "qualitative researchers strive for understanding" (p. 243) but the question at the end of a study is often whether the research report has validity—whether "we have it right" (Stake, 1995, p. 107). My extended time in the field enhanced the validity of this study with Creswell (2017) writing that "the longer researchers stay in the field 'the more they know what they know' from first-hand information" (p. 20). My program journals provided in-depth descriptions of the sociocultural, and physical environment of this program, and vignettes about program activities provided the vicarious experience to the readers so that they could link this story to their own context (Creswell, 2014; Geertz, 1973; Stake, 1995; Van Maanen, 2011).

Data for this case study has come from multiple sources over time. Triangulating the interpretations of events, activities, and experiences across program documents, program journals, and the experiences of the participants, often documented as direct quotes, increased the authenticity of the case (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). As part of the conversational process within this study, I presented the stories as narratives so that the participants could check their accuracy to ensure the credibility of gathered themes across these conversations (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

My research diary documented decisions that I made throughout the research process, with frequent reflections about how I, as the researcher, shaped the interpretations and was shaped by the experiences. The inclusion of aspects of this documentation within the narrative has supported the trustworthiness of the final report (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Van Maanen, 2011).

Creswell (2013) outlined that in a case study report of a single case, the conclusions reflect "the lessons learned" from the case (p. 101). But these lessons are also part of the "construction and reconstruction" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113) of the shared knowledge among the families about

preparing their children for school that happens daily in this program with these families because each day's program is a development of the previous days, and there can be no going back; the lessons learned are always moving forwards.

Chapter 4 echoes the words of Miles et al. (2014), that "a good case history, by definition, must trace the flow of events over time" (p. 332). In Part 1, the story of the development of the study program is told in a chronological framework, and then in Part 2, four common themes are identified across this program from 1995–2019 as the basis for the discussion of findings within these themes, in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Findings

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program developed in response to the families' request for assistance so that they could prepare their young children for school. For the family adults, the practices within their requested program were the learning for school experiences that young children, from birth to school entry age, learn within their families in the Western school culture, to prepare the children for learning at school.

How families from one culture can prepare their young children for schooling within another culture is the context of this study. The Ngaanyatjarra families, an Indigenous group living in very remote communities in Australia, are in this situation, as their young children, growing up within in their family and their Ngaanyatjarra culture, must also attend the Western culture's school, which presumes, and builds on, the early experiences of children in families within Western culture.

Therefore, their request for assistance embodied the cultural and educational experience, and expertise, in children's preparation for school and learning at school, that I could bring to the shared development of this cross-cultural learning for school program with the families, both as a parent and as a teacher. This program case study, over 25 years, described the development of their requested program, within the context of the families and the program facilitator/educator walking alongside each other, in their shared development of this 'learning for school' program for the families of these communities.

The research question in this study is:

> 'How does the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enable Ngaanyatjarra family adults to prepare their children for school?'

The sub-questions are:

1. *How has the program developed over the years?*
2. *How do the Ngaanyatjarra family adults prepare their children for school within this program?*
3. *How do the roles of the program facilitator/educator support the purpose of the program?*

Within this chapter, the findings of the case study are presented from the three time periods during which I was responsible for the operation of the local playgroup program and/or the coordination of the playgroup programs across the Ngaanyatjarra communities (see Table 2).

Table 2

Playgroup Programs Across Ngaanyatjarra Communities, 1995–2019

Year Community	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
WARB												41	68	39	53	153	170	178	180	173	165	178	164	161	171
BS	150	150										9	13	15	7			25	37	61	23	61	91	32	37
JM													3				32	8	52	58			19	52	36
WN												10	8	33	11					1					
WR												3	4	3	2				21	20	2			46	
WG												4									20	7			
TJU												4													
TJI												10													
KW																				24	8	11	10		

Note. Table 2 identifies the three time periods of this study and presents the number of playgroup sessions per year during the three time periods. The three time periods are:

Time period 1: 1995–1996

Time period 2: 2006–2010 (enlarged in Table 3)

Time period 3: 2011–2019 (enlarged in Table 4)

Chapter 4 has two parts:

- Part 1 describes the chronological development of the program within each of the time periods.

- Part 2 presents four common themes that emerged across the time periods, concluding with the identification of four major findings from the common themes, that contributed to answering the research question for this study, and which form the basis of the discussion in Chapter 5.

Part 1—Program Development Within Three Time Periods

4.1 Time Period 1: 1995–1996: Establishing the Program With the Families

4.1.1 The Content of the Program

> Playgroup, or 'Little Kid's School', is for little children, to get them ready for school. It is a place that mothers and little children can come to, together. We have the playgroup in a room next to the women's centre which is also close to the school and the store … When all the big children go to school the little brothers and sisters can go to playgroup. ('Little Kid's School' video script, November 1995)

The playgroup program began in February 1995, and for two years the family adults and I participated together in these learning for school activities with their 0–4-year-old children every school morning, from 9 am–11 am, as we developed this program together. From the beginning, the families called this program their *Little Kid's School*, '*Tjilku Kurlunyku Kuurlpa'*, as their purpose for this program was to enable them to prepare their children for school, within their requested content to support their purpose "to introduce school readiness orientated activities, especially early literacy in their Ngaanyatjarra language, to facilitate the children's ease of adjustment to school" (Program objective, February 1995).

After two years, and about 300 playgroup sessions, the daily program routine, became firmly established:

> The children begin by playing with well-known activities set up for their arrival, called 'come in and play activities', followed by a directed group activity, morning tea, and Ngaanyatjarra story time, then outside play. (My program journal, October 1996)

Within this daily program, routines developed for each of the activities:

4.1.1.1 'Come in and Play' Activities. These activities included drawing, baby toys on the mat, looking at books, painting at the easel, home corner play, and outside play. As the children became more familiar with the playgroup environment, they increasingly choose their own activities from those around the room, or outside. Sometimes the women joined the children in these

activities and at other times the children played by themselves or with other children. (My program journal, December 1995)

4.1.1.2 Group Activities/Inside Table Activities. The mothers are almost always involved with the group activities … doing the activity alongside the children or helping them do it … children can watch them … the family adults can talk to the children about the activity. (My program journal, July 1995)

> The children are confident with the routines that happen, taking minimal calling to be ready for group activities, such as story time … One just has to start cutting up the oranges (for morning tea) to watch some of the young children drop what they are doing, and come and sit on the floor, ready for morning tea and story time. (My program journal, June 95)

4.1.1.3 Ngaanyatjarra Story Time and Morning Tea. "The interest in print literacy through stories in their own language continues … the children listen well and often ask for favourite stories. We still have morning tea during this time, which helps with the children's stillness and concentration (My program journal, December 1996).

4.1.1.4 Outside Play. Women are taking more ownership of the outside area and realise that some of them need to sit outside with the children while they play with the sand toys, the slide, and the cubby. (My program journal, August 1995)

For young children to become increasingly familiar with the environment, so that they can begin to choose their own activities, and confident with the routines that happen, so that they know the signs of activity changes within the program, and able to ask for favourite stories from the stories that they've enjoyed and shared in during previous playgroup sessions, the predictability of the activities, routines, and resources within this program was paramount.

4.1.2 The Language for Learning at Playgroup

In these remote communities, the families speak Ngaanyatjarra as their first language, therefore the use of their language as the language of interaction and learning within the program enabled the family adults to continue as teachers for their children, in the new experiences of this program. During each playgroup session I spoke mostly in English, talking more with the adults than the children:

> The adults seem to know that I need and want a few of them in the room with me always, to translate for the children, and for me, and to just be there.... I usually show the family adults

> what to do and then they do the activity with their children, in their language. (My program journal, November 1995)

Consequently, the young children could continue to consolidate their first language learning with their family adults as their teachers, within their shared participation in the new activities and routines of the program. In this way, the new experiences of this program were just another family routine for the young children with their family adults, continuing their guidance by the family adults, and learnt by the children, within the usual child-rearing practices of their culture. Additionally, with the language of learning at this program their home language, learning about early literacy in their Ngaanyatjarra language, one of the program activities specifically requested by the families, became possible. The Ngaanyatjarra people traditionally had an oral culture, and yet by the end of the second week of the program, I noted, in my journal, the family adults and the children's interest in their written language:

> Some large Ngaanyatjarra charts (laminated picture and word charts) were on the walls. I was pointing to the pictures for N (3-year-old) to say, and the family adults were watching and repeating my questions in Ngaanyatjarra: 'Wantjatja minyma'? 'Minyma wantjatja'? N and another child found the picture of 'minyma' (lady) on the chart and pointed to it. Then the children would repeat the names of the pictures after me as I read the words, family adults encouraging the children to respond.… Later in the morning, I noticed that the two children had pulled up chairs to the poster to do the game again. (My program journal, February 1995)

At around the same time, in the community, local Ngaanyatjarra adults had written and illustrated some children's story books in Ngaanyatjarra, with the help of the resident linguists—stories about camels arriving at school, hungry dogs eating the family food, and children being given rides on motorbikes. Ngaanyatjarra story time, as part of the daily playgroup program, began early in 1995, when one of the linguists visited the playgroup and read some of the new story books to the mothers and children together, while the children were sitting in a group on the floor, having morning tea, with their family adults near them:

> Mothers very interested … some children didn't know to look at the books. B looked at it because she was sitting on was her aunty's knee. Really good time, need to continue this reading, but I may have to read until the family adults can read. (My program journal, March 1995)

I had learnt to read Ngaanyatjarra fluently, but I could only read it, more than understand it, and I did not have enough language to talk about each story in Ngaanyatjarra with the children, as one does in shared story routines. However, this daily story time activity became the catalyst for new learning for the family adults, as we developed a routine where I would read a page of the Ngaanyatjarra story book and then, one of "the family adults would talk about the pictures in the books with the children, in Ngaanyatjarra, after I read each page to the group" (My program journal, June 1915). Then, after a *palya* to me from the family adults, I'd read the next page, for the family adults to then talk about with their children. Story time each day was therefore a shared activity, where the skills of the family adults, and my skills, were both necessary so that the children could enjoy the Ngaanyatjarra stories.

Facilitating this playgroup program each day, alongside family adults with whom I only shared minimal language, and even less with the young children, the lack of shared language actually seemed to add to the richness of the program for everyone. This was my first experience of developing learning opportunities with families who spoke a different language to me, and the families demonstrated to me each day, that learning does not have to be mediated by talking. I began to learn from the families about *learning through watching*, family adults *doing the activity alongside the children … the children can watch them*. I learnt about the power of a *signifier*, rather than words, as a transition to the next activity, watching children *drop what they are doing, and come and sit on the floor*, ready for their morning tea. A different signifier became the regular introduction to the group activity each morning. When most of the families had arrived, and it seemed the right time to introduce the group activity, having limited shared language, and because we had no tables and chairs for the *table activity*, I'd roll out about 3 metres of butcher's paper on to the middle of the floor and tape it around the edges, so it was like a table space. Then we'd all sit around it and do the group activity, usually an art or craft activity, which I usually modelled first, explaining it to the family adults, and then they would show, and explain, it to their children in their language. The paper, as a signifier, introduced the activity time, although it was initially just my way of preparing the space for the next activity. But after a few days of this routine, I noticed that as soon as I began rolling out the paper and taping it onto the floor, some of the children (even the 2-year-olds) would stop what they were playing with and come over and just sit around the edge of the paper—with no-one telling them to do this. They would come and sit and wait—watching what I was doing. Even the parents commented on this, quite amazed at the children's initiative, that already they'd worked out that when I taped the paper onto the floor something interesting was going to happen.

However, I did wonder whether my lack of a shared language with the families would impact the program's development. I had some Ngaanyatjarra, and the parents had some English, but neither of us had strong enough language to have a reflective conversation with each other, and I also knew that Western-style questions and answers weren't part of their use of language. Over time, I came to realise that my concerns about a shared reflective language were part of my cultural expectations, rather than being a necessity for this program. The families were learning by watching and participating, and I was learning too, by watching how they responded to each aspect of the program, collectively and individually. But cultural habits changed slowly, and one day, after about six months of playgroup, I remember asking the community adviser, with some concern, "How will I know if the families are enjoying the program each day, as I can't ask them?" Having lived in the community for most of his life, he answered my question rather dismissively. "Why are you asking? They're coming, aren't they?" (Reflection on a program journal, 2016). And that was my answer—there was no need for talk, but there was encouragement to keep watching.

4.1.3 The Operation of the Program

During the first two years of this program, my priority for the operation of the daily program was enabling the family adults to be the teachers for their children in this program, as they had requested. Early in 1995, I documented five principles foundational to my development of the program. The first three principles focused on children *learning within the family*:

1. Young children, 0–4 years of age, learn and develop within their family
2. Family adults are the teachers for their young children
3. Young children learn in the home language of their family. (Program principles, February 1995)

The final two principles focused on the content and the operation of the program, *what* was to be learnt and *how* it was to be learnt, as their request to me was not only for a program in which they could prepare their children for school but for a program in which they could learn about preparing their children for school.

4. Young children learn through play and so the play experiences of this new program are the activities and routines that young children will need to become familiar with, in preparation for going to school.

5. The program is operated for the families, so that family adults can participate in the experiences of this new program with their children. (Program principles, February 1995)

Within this shared learning program, my operational role had two parts—the facilitation of the environment and activities of the program and the facilitation of the participation of family adults with their children within the experiences of the program. The first part of my operation of the program, encompassed the usual before, during and after tasks of educational programs for young children, the planning and preparation of the activities, setting up an excellent play environment for the children, sequencing the delivery of activities with the families during the program, guiding them through the routines and activities, and then, after the families had gone home, the packing up, cleaning and maintenance of the room and the equipment, the administrative tasks for the program and the planning for the next session.

My model for how the program could work for the families was always *young children learning within family at home*, with the intention of creating an *out-of-home yet within-family* environment at the program each day, in which the family adults and their young children could participate in the play and learning experiences of the program together. I kept a program journal each day, reflecting on the interaction within each day's activities, what was enjoyed and what needed modifying, in the process of trying to work out what this learning for school program would look like with these families in this community. As the family adults had asked me to help them with the development of this program, as a parent and as a teacher, my initial ideas of the program reflected a combination of our young children's play and learning environment at home, and my experience enabling children's learning once they were at school.

For the second part of my program operation, because the families had requested my assistance to develop a program in which they could participate with their children, my expectation was that I would guide the family adults through each day's playgroup activities, as they increasingly guided their children's learning in these new experiences. Surprisingly, however, this expectation did not come to fruition as, even within the first few weeks, it was noticeable that many of the family adults came to the program and went again – while the children stayed. I remember talking about this with my Playgroup Assistant, who was one of the Indigenous grandmothers in the community, "Parents not staying, dropping children off, and going … I asked my assistant, 'Haven't they got time to stay?' She said that they had nothing else to do" (My program journal, February 1995).

At the beginning of this program, there had been a community agreement regarding the operation of this program, that two or three family adults would be paid each week through CDEP (Community Development Employment Program), to work with me as Playgroup Assistants.

> I coordinate the playgroup and one or two women are the main helpers each day, and these women are paid from CDEP. Mothers are asked to come with their children each day. About 20 women have spent varying amounts of time there, with an average of 4–5 women each day, at times (My program journal, February 1995).

It was also agreed that there would always be some family adults accompanying the children in this playgroup program. It was expected that the family adults would learn how to get their children ready for school while they were actually participating with their children in the program, as part of their requested training component within this program, so that they could eventually lead such a program themselves. However, although this program was a playgroup program, where family adults and children would participate together, within the first few weeks, it became clear that the community's employment of family adults in this new, and in many ways unknown program, actually blurred the role of family adults within this program, as only a few family adults paid as Playgroup Assistants stayed with the children each session, "CDEP funds pay 1–2 women per day as assistants; mothers and children still come and go" (My program journal, April 1995).

These family adults were usually extended family, so closely related to most of the children, and although it was unexpected, I didn't overly question the fact that many family adults were not staying with their children. My task was to assist the family adults in the development of their new program, and having worked for many years as a teacher, I was accustomed to working in collaboration with Education Assistants, supporting their development while they worked with the children. But, in contrast to my previous experience, these Playgroup Assistants changed quite frequently:

> Just two weeks into the program, my initial allocated Playgroup Assistant told me ' … that she had to work in the Women's Centre, so K will be my helper from now on … I can see I will have to get used to a constant change of main helpers … May need to slow down the rate of new activities, because of the variety of children and adults ... Need the activities there for a while, for them all to see them and use them. (My program journal, February 1995)

It was also difficult to know if the paid family adults were coming to the playgroup as parent participants or Playgroup Assistants, as they all brought children to playgroup with them. If they

were coming as Playgroup Assistants and they didn't help with operational tasks because they had children with them, it didn't seem fair that they were paid, when there were some family adults who came with their children without being paid. Conversely, if they focused on program tasks rather than their child, this was often a problem for the child.

The impact of this situation on the operation of the program was the "emerging problem of needing more helpers, as the number of children increased" (My program journal, February 1995), because programs that operated as playgroups did not employ additional staff to work with the children, as family adults were expected to stay with their children in these programs. This situation was potentially problematic, however, because I was an experienced teacher, I was accustomed to creatively implementing activities for children in the context of unexpected events with the one or two family adults who stayed:

> Halfway through the session most adults had gone, but seven children were still there and only T (an aunty). … We used the bottom half of egg cartons and painted them, all sitting in a group, to make them look like *maku*. This worked well, the children all interested … (My program journal, June 1995)

As the year progressed, the need for more family adults to stay, continued:

> There is still the issue of some family adults dropping children at the playgroup … but as long as there are enough family adults to children each day, that is not really a problem, *enough* being dependent on the number of children on a day. (My program journal, December 1995)

In February 1996, there was a welcome addition to the program. Beryl Jennings, a Wongai woman with close family ties to the Ngaanyatjarra people, came with her Ngaanyatjarra family to live at Blackstone and asked if she could work with me at the playgroup as one of the Playgroup Assistants. Beryl was an older Indigenous woman, with a passion for helping children, and she had worked for many years in remote schools as an Aboriginal Education Worker. Beryl and I had met on previous occasions, as my family had lived next door to her sister's family for two years in a different community. I was privileged to work alongside Beryl, with her knowledge of the language, the families, and schooling. She especially wanted to help with the 3 and 4-year-olds, by working with these children in more school readiness type activities. "Beryl then set up some cut and paste activities for a few children, sitting down with them to teach them" (My program journal, February 1996)

With Beryl's inclusion in the Playgroup Assistant team, the potential increased for local family members to take on the responsibility of the operation of the program:

> The role of the 2–4 local family adults on CDEP funding, who were helping at the program as well as caring for children, was evolving over time, hopefully leading to their taking the responsibility of the playgroup even next year. (My program journal, April 1996)

From the middle of the year, in the context of our daily activities within the program, my support to the Playgroup Assistants focused on preparing them to take on the program operation: 'I've almost shown the women enough of the playgroup operation for them to run with, and to learn how to own over the next few years … including preparing and leading the activities each day … ' (My program journal, August 1996). My final journal for 1996 described the future operation of the program, under Beryl's leadership:

> The women are becoming more confident in operating the playgroup, as it has been part of the community for two years now...About 4 playgroup assistants are paid by CDEP, often those being paid changing from week to week, depending on who is in the community. It is my hope that the women can learn to operate the program themselves in 1997 so that the playgroup experience can continue to give their children the early educational activities that will make their time at school more successful. (My program journal, December 1996)

4.1.4 The Place of Family Adults in the Program

The emerging two-fold place of family adults in this program was quite different from how I expected it to be, but, nonetheless, almost every day, there were some parents, grandparents, older sisters, and aunties, in addition to the family adults paid by CDEP, who came to the playgroup and were keen to participate in the program with the children:

> They watch their children play … help the children do the activities, especially group activities, art, and puzzles … help the children with the activities—explaining and showing what to do in easel painting, group art and craft activities and story time. (My program journal, April 1995)

"Different family adults come on various days and some stay for a while, some go almost immediately and some stay for the whole session and for morning tea as well" (My program journal, June 1995).

There was always strong support for the program within the community, and the families seemed proud of having this place for their children. The use of the families' home language, Ngaanyatjarra, in the program, made the place, and role, of the family adults in this program absolutely essential. Some days, the young children would come over to the playgroup after their older siblings had gone into their classrooms, and if there were no family adults with them, the children and I would sit on the steps outside the playgroup front door, sometimes playing in the dirt, waiting for the family adults to arrive.

One memorable day, I was sitting on the steps with a group of toddlers, waiting for the family adults, when one of the elder men in the community, a grandfather, came over with another group of playgroup children. He explained to me that the women had something on and couldn't come but that the children all wanted to come and play:

> Apparently knowing of my language concerns with the children, the grandfather offered to sit outside the front screen door to watch the children till one of the playgroup helpers turned up for the day. I thanked him and willingly opened the playgroup for the children, getting a chair for him to sit beside the front door so that everyone could see that he was there in that particular role. The children knew what was happening and we had an excellent time, as they … played inside in the cool, drawing with crayons … until one of their aunties came to help. In the two years, this only happened on this one day. It was quite humbling for me to realise that the families recognised my role with the children, and that this gentleman, as a significant elder of the community, valued the children and the opportunity afforded to them by this program, enough to facilitate it happening on this day. (Reflection on my 1995 program journal, 2016)

At the start of the second year of the program, the mixed messages about the place of family adults in the program continued, with family adults seeming to look for ways to stay with their children, equating working at playgroup with staying there with their children. "Many women and children came, around 15 women and 15 children … Many women want to work..." (My program journal, February 1996). However, as the months progressed, with many children coming by themselves, and a number of playgroup sessions where even the paid family adults arrived much later than the children, my concern was that both the place for family adults in the program and the program's principles of young children learning within their family and their own language, were in jeopardy, especially if I, as the person responsible for the program, opened the playgroup for the children without any of their family there, as I wasn't family and my communication in Ngaanyatjarra

was quite limited. I decided that it was important to re-affirm the families' requested place with their children in this new program:

> Late start for playgroup today. I sat outside the playgroup till 9.45 am, with 6 children, till some women came … I decided not to open by myself with 6 children as it then becomes a creche or childcare. (M program journal, April 1996)

> We didn't start till (the Assistant) came today at 9.50, with the children hanging around with me outside … My intention is each day to wait for some of the mothers/Playgroup Assistants to come, otherwise, it is like a creche, saying loudly that this program does not really need family adults, that the help of the women is only optional... (My program journal, May 1996)

My waiting prioritised the participation of family adults with their children in this playgroup program, with family-relatedness and shared language the essential requirements for adults in their participation with their children in these playgroup activities. But this waiting response only worked for me. If I was away, and one or two Playgroup Assistants were there, they didn't have the same reasons that I had to wait for more family adults before opening up the playgroup, because they were all family and their language was Ngaanyatjarra, "12 children and 6 women today, but only 2 (of the women) took any responsibility for the children, and these were the women paid by CDEP" (My program journal, May 1996).

These Playgroup Assistants were culturally obliged to open, even if there were many children and only one or two adults, creating a situation that very much resembled a creche/child care program, but without the necessary staff. 'The playgroup has looked more like a creche, with some women paid as assistants and other women welcome to visit and join in … rather than a playgroup where family adults and children attend and participate together (My program journal, September 1996). By the end of the second year, even though family adults were always welcome at the playgroup, their place, and role, were increasingly linked to their paid workplace activity as Playgroup Assistants.

4.1.5 An Early Outcome of Their Requested Program

By the end of 1996, the families' requested program was well-established in the community, as the program through which they could prepare their own children for the activities and routines of school, as teachers of their children, and using their home language. In 1997 Beryl took over the leadership of the playgroup program, and I resumed my role at the school next door to the

playgroup, as the teacher of the kindy-year 2 class each morning. Four of the playgroup children, who had been at playgroup nearly every morning during 1995 and 1996, were beginning kindy that year, and as a teacher, I was very keen to see how these playgroup graduates managed at kindy, whether the years at the requested learning for school program, with their family adults as their teachers, and learning within their home language, had prepared them to participate successfully in the context of school. I had written about this possibility in an earlier journal, just two months into the developing program:

> The children are learning many skills, at a fast rate. They are keen to come and play and are beginning to initiate their own activities, such as drawing at the little tables, looking at books, playing with mat toys, painting... It is obvious that they are getting better with practice … and that they are comfortable and knowledgeable about the routines that go on in the room. This can only be of great benefit when they hit the school environment in a couple of years, although at this rate of progress, the preschool /kindy program for Aboriginal children would have to be changed to accommodate and extend these children who have the readiness skills in 'school' activities and routines and familiarity with literacy and story books in their own language. They would be ready to learn well from the first day at school. Maybe it is early days to say yet, but the signs with these children are definitely there already, after only one term of the program. (My program journal, April 1995)

Fast forward two years and this group of children were immediately ready to continue their learning at school. These playgroup graduates knew what to do and how to do activities such as writing and drawing with pens and using scissors and glue in cut and paste activities. They were familiar with group story time routines and the daily transition routines between activities, and they enjoyed spending time looking at picture story books and were comfortable with working in a group and listening to instructions in Ngaanyatjarra. As their teacher, observing their participation and confidence within the activities, it was evident by the middle of the year, that these kindy children were demonstrating greater competence in school activities than the year 2 children in the class, who had not experienced the playgroup opportunity with their family adults. In contrast, the participation of these playgroup graduates in the learning at school activities was an early indication to the families across the communities, that through the shared participation with their family adults in their requested learning for school playgroup program, they were prepared to begin their learning at school experiences from day one at school.

4.2 Time Period 2: 2006–2010: Operating the Local Playgroup Program

4.2.1 Background: Playgroup Program from 1997–2005

In this study, my focus was on the years of the playgroup program during which I had an operational and, or, coordination role, hence picking up this story again from 2006. But, to set the context for this next story, a brief update of the program from 1997–2005 is provided, with information gleaned from public articles and personal communications.

In 1997, the playgroup operated under Beryl's leadership, with support from local women paid through CDEP. I was teaching in the school next door to the playgroup, and, on most afternoons, I would visit Beryl and we would talk about the day's playgroup and prepare for the next day's program. At the end of '97, my family moved to Warburton, and a year later we returned to Perth. Beryl continued operating the playgroup program with help from a younger local woman and community staff. Children continued to be at playgroup without their parents—either coming by themselves or being dropped off by family—in the assumption that the paid staff, who were also family, would care for their children. In 2001, Beryl moved to Warburton with her family. The playgroup program continued at Blackstone, with support for the local playgroup leader from various agencies and community staff. In 2005, with the demand for local playgroups increasing, the State's Indigenous Best Start Playgroup program took on the responsibility for playgroups in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, employing a non-Indigenous coordinator, and with Beryl employed locally as the program's Playgroup Support Worker.

During that year, my husband and I relocated to Warburton, with both of us working in visiting teacher roles across the communities, and as Beryl and I were living in the same community again, we talked on many occasions about the playgroup program. When the position of the Best Start Coordinator was advertised again towards the end of 2005, I felt strongly that Beryl would be the best person for this position, as the families had watched her working in the playgroup program over many years, she shared their culture and language, and she could pro-actively guide the playgroup program as the Coordinator rather than as the Support Worker. Although Beryl didn't have the required administration skills for this position, in conversations with Beryl and her management at Warburton, we agreed to support her in these areas. I wrote to both of our employers requesting that, rather than appoint another new person to work as coordinator alongside Beryl, that "Beryl take up the Best Start Coordinator role … and that structures be put in place to support her in the task" (A. Shinkfield, personal communication, November 2005). Remarkedly, our employers accepted the proposal for Beryl and me to collaborate on the playgroup

program, across our respective positions of employment, and we began working together again in February 2006.

Part 2 of the playgroup story for this study, 2006—2010, covers the five years of my collaboration with Beryl. It begins with a description of the support given to the local playgroup leaders during 2006—2007 and is followed by a description of the playgroup programs from 2008, for which Beryl and I, once again, took responsibility. The significant developments in this time period, 2006—2010, proved to be around the operation of the playgroup program in the communities, as the families re-confirmed their initial request that they be operated for them, so that they could participate in this program with their children, for the purpose they had requested, that of preparing their children for school. Table 3 is a summary of the events and activities during this time period.

Table 3

Playgroup Program Overview: 2006–2010

		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
WARB	Sessions	41		30	38	22	17	10	43	70	82
	Conversations.	5	7		17		12				
BS	Sessions	6	3	10	3	7	15	7			
	Conversations		21								
JM	Sessions	2	3	3							
	Conversations		9		9						
WN	Sessions	3	10	8	3	18	15	10			
	Conversations		14		12		2				
WR	Sessions	3		4		3		2			
	Conversations		13		13		13		2		
WG	Sessions	4									
	Conversations		8		2						
TJU	Sessions		4								
	Conversations	3	5	5	2		2				
TJI	Sessions	4	6								
	Conversations		14								
KW	Sessions										
	Conversations										

Note.

Sessions: Number of playgroup sessions per community, per semester, or per year.

Conversations: 'Catch-up' phone conversations per community, per semester

4.2.2 2006–2007: Supporting Local Playgroup Activity Leaders in Their Program Operation

As the Best Start Coordinator, Beryl's role was to coordinate playgroups across the Lands, to support the local playgroup activity leaders, and to encourage the families to participate in the playgroups. Within the Best Start program, it was a requirement that local community women be employed as playgroup Activity Leaders, and so, assisted by community women, Beryl was also the Activity Leader for the playgroup at Warburton two or three mornings a week. My role in 2006 involved regular travel to the schools in the communities to implement a training program with the Aboriginal Education Assistants. Beryl explained, "Every two weeks, we go round, (Anne) does her role … I go to the playgroup, working with the playgroup leaders, mums, grandmothers, family adults, or even aunties, sisters – whoever has responsibility for the children" (My program journal, May 2006).

Early in 2006, prior to commencing our support for the local playgroup leaders, we visited each community playgroup: 'Beryl worked with the local women to host a playgroup for the children, then we both sat with the women to talk about their needs for playgroup activities.' (My program journal, March 2006). The local playgroup leaders reported that the content of the program - the daily routines and activities that were established during the 1995/1996 program - was familiar to them and provided a comfortable sequence for each day's program. However, they were struggling with both planning activities for each day's program and also with the responsibilities of the program. In contrast to Beryl, these younger women didn't have the educational experience – the schooling background, the literacy skills, or the experience of working in educational settings - that could have prepared them for their role. Additionally, they had no personal experience of participation in early 'learning for school' activities as a child.

Therefore, supporting the local playgroup leaders with their daily activity planning was our first task. This was achieved by Beryl faxing her activity plan from Warburton playgroup to the local playgroup leaders each week, via the school or the community office, so that they could use the same plan in their playgroup. 'This will give the playgroup workers a new set of activities to focus on each week until they are confident to plan their own activities for the children' (My program journal, September 2006)

The activity plan also enabled the local playgroup leaders to set up an appropriate play environment each day to match the activities. A common set of equipment and resources was given to each playgroup, which became the foundation for each week's playgroup activities and ensured

that each playgroup had consistency and familiarity for families, as they travelled between communities. Each week, Beryl followed up these activity plans with a 'catch up' phone conversation with the playgroup activity leader, talking through a prepared list of questions about the playgroup program that week. In 2006, there were almost one hundred catch-up conversations with local playgroup leaders (Table 3). We also visited the community playgroups one or two times each term, assisting the playgroup activity leader with the playgroup activities, talking with the school, community, and health staff, and providing support to the activity leader both within their programming and in their responsibility for the program within their community. By 2007 only four communities had playgroup families and regular activities, and so many of the 'catch up' conversations that year, were to community staff.

During 2006, in addition to our ongoing support to the playgroup activity leaders, there were two significant 'whole of the Lands' events that brought playgroup families together from across the communities and reinforced their collective understanding about playgroup activities and the place of family adults with their young children in their playgroups. The first event was the 'Ngaanyatjarra Communities Playgroup Leader's Workshop', a three-day, multi-agency weekend camping event, for 25 playgroup family adults / interested playgroup leaders, and their playgroup-age children, from the 8 communities. Beryl, and a younger playgroup leader, painted a large canvas picture of the theme of the event: '*Tjilku-lampa Nintirringku'* (Our children are getting learned) as children are the future for our community. At the camp, the playgroup families participated in new activities that could be included at playgroup, and Beryl talked with the family adults about the importance of their role with their children in the program, so that 'By the end of the year, most family adults knew that they had to stay at playgroup with their children, not drop them off.' (My program journal, December 2006)

The second event was the publication of the booklet *Playgroups: Playing to Get Ready for School* (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006), the description of the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program of 1995/ 1996, and each playgroup family, across the communities, was given a copy. This booklet was written "to assist family members set up playgroups for children in their communities" (p.2). It had many photos of local children participating in playgroup activities, along with explanations for each activity that clearly linked the program, 'Playgroup', with the purpose of the program, 'Playing to get ready for school'.

Supporting the local playgroup leaders with their second identified difficulty, that of taking responsibility for the playgroup, became an ongoing part of our regular playgroup visits, through our liaison with community and school staff on behalf of the local playgroup leaders, around operational

matters of program responsibility. For example, each playgroup program needed a venue in the community, which Beryl and I usually negotiated, but once the program was loaned a place, it was the responsibility of the local playgroup leader to maintain the program environment. Unfortunately, on a number of these occasions, when a place was given for the program, but 'looking after the place' wasn't done responsibly, the offer of the place was retracted, which meant that with no place for the program in the community, there was no playgroup program for the families. A report about one community playgroup described how issues around program operation and responsibility could quickly become cumulative, often exceeding the capacity of the local playgroup leader to address them:

> There is still some uncertainty about who does the playgroup – one lady does it quite regularly, but sometimes there isn't anyone responsible to run the playgroup … There are still problems about family adults dropping their kids at playgroup for others to mind … There have been times when people aren't in the community because of funerals and cultural business. The playgroups have not been consistent this year. Next year, the playgroup workers need more help and more visits. (My program journal, December 2007)

The notes from many of the 'catch-up' conversations frequently documented the reasons why playgroup hadn't happened during the week: 'change of community adviser, building works', 'no-one to do playgroup', 'only one or two children in the community ', ' funerals at another community'. (My program journal, December 2007)

There was a growing call within communities for on-site help for the local playgroup leader: 'a need for a facilitator to assist the women/ mothers with the playgroup, someone who has expertise … local people could then assist the facilitator as required.' (My program journal, May 2007). By late 2007, even with all the individual and collective support to the local playgroup leaders over the two years, none of the community playgroups were operating across the communities.

4.2.3 2008–2010: Resuming Responsibility for the Operation of the Playgroup Program

4.2.3.1 Coordination of the Playgroup Program. In February 2008, the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, at Warburton, introduced an *Early Years Program* to their suite of services to the communities, following on from discussions the previous year, and I resigned from the Education Department and took up the position as their first Early Years Program Co-ordinator, which I held from February 2008 until December 2019. The community matters of 2006/2007, that Beryl and I

had increasingly addressed during our playgroup visits, in many ways signalled the necessity for this new position in order to continue the playgroup program. My co-ordinator's role was to "facilitate the development of sustainable early years learning and development opportunities for children aged 0–4 years in the Ngaanyatjarra communities" (My program journal, February 2008). Beryl's Best Start Coordination role also continued, with a strong focus on communication with the playgroup families, usually in Ngaanyatjarra language, and so we continued to work together within the playgroup program.

4.2.3.2 Community Playgroups: 2008–2010.

4.2.3.2.1 Warburton 2008. In early 2008 Beryl and I were both in playgroup program coordination roles—but, alas, there were no functioning playgroups. There was no funding for a facilitator at each playgroup, as previously suggested, so another way of providing the playgroup program for the families was required. There were three communities that still had groups of playgroup-age children, Warburton, Wanarn, and Blackstone, and as Beryl was the playgroup leader for Warburton, that playgroup was the first consideration. Warburton playgroup had closed in October 2007, after the old tin shed, from which the playgroup had operated for four years, was finally condemned. Later that year, we heard that the Shire, the Council, and the local community were negotiating the building of an Early Years Centre for the playgroup program at Warburton. In 2008, with the Shire now supporting playgroups, it was agreed that Warburton playgroup could operate on the Shire veranda once a week, while the families were waiting for their new building.

Beryl and I collaborated in the operation of this program, which, under our leadership, was, very intentionally, a playgroup program—where young children, 0–4 years of age, could only come if they came with a parent/family adult who stayed with them. Consistent with the 1994 request for the program, the playgroup was, once again, both the place for children to come and play with school-like activities and the place for family adults to be the teachers for their children in these requested activities. Playgroup on the Shire veranda began early in February and after the first session,

> We talked with the mums, and they all said that it was really good to have it there at the Shire so that the program could keep going, even though there was no building. They could help with their little ones, and the things that they were doing with them were very good. (My program journal, February 2008)

Our operation of the activities and routines within the program was familiar to the families, as many of them had watched us work in playgroup programs years earlier. With the play

environment set up ready for the families each day, and the program's activities prepared, the family adults were free to just come and participate in the program with their children. Playgroup operated one morning a week for the first 3 terms of 2008, and, during that time, 59 children and 77 adults participated at least once, with about seven families at each session (Program data, 2008). Many of the playgroup children came with different family members from week to week—aunties, grandmas, mothers, and cousins.

4.2.3.2.2 Wanarn 2008. Within a few weeks of re-commencing the playgroup at Warburton, Beryl and I travelled to Wanarn to support the playgroup there, but, when we arrived, the women told us that they wanted to talk with us first. We all went to sit under a tree, behind the store, and the women talked about the fact that it was not right for them to be the playgroup facilitators for their families, that taking on the responsibility was too hard, and that it was better to wait for whenever Beryl and I could come and to have playgroup just at those times. They talked about how families can't tell other children and families what to do, and how they can't say no to families—life rules that are so important to them. However, they said that they wanted playgroup activities for their children, and they asked if Beryl and I would come and do playgroup for them so that they could continue to participate with their children at the playgroup. Beryl summarised the meeting for us:

> We talked about playgroup. Who is going to help?... We said that we'll come to your community on Wednesdays... They said that all the mums will join and help with little ones in the playgroup. … We told them that it's good to have us to show how and what and why. This is good if all mums come. Only by looking and doing things will they get clever and make you feel very comfortable when working together. But no dropping off children. This playgroup is for mums and their little ones … Then Beryl said, 'What do you think about this?' They all said that it was a good way of doing things. (My program journal, March 2008)

For the rest of the year, Beryl and I led the same playgroup program for the Wanarn families that we were operating with the Warburton families—which was also similar to the playgroup program of 1995/1996. Travelling the 340km return trip to Wanarn one day each week, we set up the playgroup environment in one half of the school's library, with support from school staff, using the equipment and resources that were already there, facilitating the program and encouraging the family adults to participate as the teachers of their children, using their home language.

During 2008, there were 27 playgroup sessions, with 26 adults and 19 children attending at least once, and about 5 families attending each session (Program data, 2008). The regular, consistent program was helpful:

> The children are well used to the playgroup routines, and the mums are beginning to facilitate some of the activities. Even though the playgroup is only provided on one day a week, how the young children have got used to the routines and activities over the year, and join in with the activities, is frequently commented on by the mums. (My program journal, December 2008)

However, the growing awareness and confidence of the young family adults within the program didn't change their views about taking responsibility for the program: "Beryl and I were going to be away for one Wednesday, but neither K nor L (playgroup mums) thought that the local mums could do playgroup for that day" (My program journal, November 2008).

4.2.3.2.3 Blackstone 2008. During the first half of the year, the community playgroup was rarely operational because of continued indecision about who would take responsibility for both the program and the maintenance of the playgroup room. Beryl and I had visited the playgroup on seven occasions during the semester, a 440km return trip, to assist the families to clean the playgroup room, sort out the equipment and prepare for playgroup, often also leading informal play activities with the children during the visit. At one of our visits, we talked with three key playgroup mothers, and they said that although they wanted the playgroup for their children, "it was too hard to do playgroup" (My program journal, March 2008). They asked if we would come and do playgroup for them, one day a week.

In July 2008, we commenced weekly playgroups at Blackstone, as we were doing for the families at Wanarn and Warburton. The playgroup was in the same building that had presented many problems earlier that year, but, with our operational experience, these difficulties were successfully absorbed into our cleaning and maintenance routines after each session.

> Over recent years, playgroup has been inconsistent, resulting in some negativity towards playgroups. However, it is evident that when the playgroup is provided, the mums/children are very happy to come and participate … The children and mums are becoming used to the playgroup routines, and the mums are beginning to help with some activities. (My program journal, December 2008)

With the program regularly operated for them, the family adults responded with enthusiastic participation in the playgroup's activities. There were 15 playgroup sessions during that semester at Blackstone, with 24 children and 30 adults participating at least once in the program, and three to four families at each session (Program data, 2008).

4.2.3.2.4 Wanarn and Blackstone 2009. During semester one, Beryl and I continued operating the two playgroups each week, with 6–7 families participating regularly on each day at each community. But we couldn't continue in the second half of the year because the new building would be ready for the playgroup at Warburton to re-commence. We spoke to the families at both communities during five consecutive playgroup sessions about what would happen when we could no longer come, but there was no interest in taking on the program. Instead, families from one community told us that "they would come to visit us at the new building in Warburton, when it's ready" (My program journal, April 2009), and families from the other community invariably reminded us that "we need someone to take responsibility for the program" (My program journal, June 2009). Although families from both communities definitely enjoyed the playgroup program, the difficulties associated with taking responsibility for the program were too daunting, and so, without local playgroup leaders, these playgroups closed at the end of June 2009—until we could find another way of operating them for the families.

4.2.3.2.5 Warburton: 2009–2010. The playgroups on the Shire veranda had stopped towards the end of 2008 when the heat, wind, and dust of summer had arrived. In 2009, the Warburton playgroup families were still waiting for their new building, but there was definitely a sense of ownership among the families about the building, and it was always spoken of as *their place*. During the months while we waited for the new building, Beryl and I talked with many community families about the new building and the playgroup program, in both Ngaanyatjarra and English. Beryl summed it up: "We both went around… telling what was happening what, who, when, and why. So, we told all these things... and told them that you must think about all these things because it will be soon" (My program journal, May 2009).

The first day of playgroup at the new Tjilku Kurlunyku Centre was on 4th August 2009: "After morning tea, Beryl thanked everyone for coming and said how good it was that the building was ready and how the children are the future and that it is important to help the children begin their journey" (My program journal, August 2009).

Perhaps inspired by the excellence of this building, this new environment encouraged fresh participatory activities in the family adults, as Beryl noted after just two months in the centre:

> Over past four, five years, mums were watching Beryl and Anne, but this year, in the past few weeks, they were getting up … doing things for their little ones. It's very interesting to see the way young mums do things … helping with the playdough. (My program journal, October 2009)

For the rest of the year, Beryl and I operated the playgroup three mornings a week. The families were very keen to come, with 55 children and 77 adults coming at least once over the 27 sessions during term 4, and about 11 families coming to each session (Program data, 2009).

In 2010, the program grew quickly to five mornings a week, which the family adults had asked for so that it would be *just like at school*. Later that year, after one year at the new centre, there was an incredibly special celebration at playgroup for Beryl—for her birthday and her official retirement from work. As there were no other playgroups across the communities, the Best Start program moved out of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands later that year, and the Warburton playgroup continued to be supported through the Shire, as a federally funded Locational Supported Playgroup. I continued operating the program at Warburton each morning, with informal, yet extremely helpful assistance from many different family adults. During 2010, about 40 families visited the playgroup each term, with an average of 46 children and 70 adults each term and about nine families at each day's playgroup session (Program data, 2010). By late 2010, many families from the other Ngaanyatjarra communities had visited Warburton playgroup, and, once again, they began asking for similar playgroup programs for their children.

4.3 Time Period 3: 2011–2019: Sustaining the Program

4.3.1 Coordination Across Community Playgroups

By late 2010, I felt like the playgroup program had somehow arrived, and the task for this time period was to find ways to sustain both the program opportunity for the families and the place of the family adults with their children in the program. The playgroups' purpose and content had remained remarkably consistent across the communities over the years, and, because so many family adults and children had participated in the playgroup program since it began in 1995, there was a shared understanding of what going to playgroup was about for most Ngaanyatjarra children and adults.

Table 4 is an enlargement of this time period from Table 2, showing the location of community playgroups, and the number of playgroups that operated at each of these communities each semester. During this time period, the regional shire held the responsibility for the program, under the auspice of Playgroup WA, through various federal funded programs for Indigenous families.

Table 4

Playgroup Programs per Community, per Semester—2011–2019

	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
WARB	90	80	88	90	89	91	86	89	77	88	87	91	80	84	85	76	97	74
BS			14	21	18	19	30	31	18	5	33	31	46	45	31	31	23	14
JM	6	28	8		19	33	32	36						19	29	23	21	15
WN							1											
WR					15	6	13	7	2						28	18		
WG									11	9	7							
TJU																		
TJI																		
KW							12	12	8			11	10					

Note.

Number of playgroup programs per community, per semester

My role during this time period, as the early year's program regional coordinator, with the Shire, continued to be to develop the playgroup program across the communities, to build the capacity of family adults within this program, and to liaise with agencies and interested persons about the program. This coordination role across the communities became essential, to both sustain this learning for school program and ensure consistency for the families within, and between, each community playgroup, both in terms of playgroup content and operational processes.

Whenever we offered the playgroup program there was eager participation by the families. For example, in semester 2, 2017, across three community playgroups," about 78 families participated, with at least 188 different adults bringing 110 children at least once to the program" (Program data, January 2018). The pre-requisite for sustaining the place of family adults as teachers of their children within the playgroup program, was the provision of a well-operated playgroup, with

the learning for school purpose that they had requested, in an assisted program that enabled their participatory role with their children.

My coordination role included the extensive process of establishing each community playgroup initiated by requests from families in a community which was followed by negotiation with the families and community staff. However, the implementation of a playgroup program was contingent, on finding a place and staff for the program within the community—both difficult tasks—but, because the families had definitely chosen to have the playgroups operated for them so that they could participate with their children, finding staff was the more complex task. Potential playgroup operators had to be already living in the community, usually partners of people working there, often young mothers with their own playgroup age children, or grandmothers. As this role was the vital relational factor in the playgroup, it was important that the person was appropriate for this position. Although these women hadn't led playgroups before, the program content was familiar to them from their own family experience, and, as all of them had prior career experience, they understood the requirement to meet the workplace expectations of a program, including regular cleaning, maintenance, and administrative responsibilities.

Once I established the program my on-site training for each local playgroup facilitator assisted them to implement it with the Ngaanyatjarra families, even with a limited shared language. Initially, each new playgroup operator spent time at Warburton playgroup observing the tasks within their dual roles of firstly setting up the program, environment, and activities for the families and secondly encouraging and enabling the parent's participation with their children during the program. This was followed by my working alongside each new facilitator for a few sessions within their community, with the playgroup families, encouraging the new facilitators to be aware of the family adults' teaching roles with their children, using their own language. Once they settled into their role, the program facilitators maintained weekly program journals, as a basis for my regular phone conversations and occasional visits to the community, as they endeavoured to provide excellent playgroup programs for the families.

From 2017, as the Ngaanyatjarra families became more knowledgeable within the playgroup context, it was expedient to recruit program facilitators with experience in early childhood education, for the community learning for school playgroups. This requirement added significant difficulty to the task of finding appropriate staff for these very remote communities, and so, during 2017–2019, there were at least five terms when I added the role of local community playgroup facilitator to my coordination role, rather than closing a playgroup, in the hope that staff would soon be found to maintain the playgroup opportunity for the families in the community.

During this time period, the coordination role also included negotiation with the families, with regard to specific issues that affected the participation of the family adults at the program, at an *across the Lands* level. For example, although everyone knew that children were meant to be at playgroup with an accompanying family adult, dropping children off still happened from time to time, and, more recently, there had been increased concern by family adults at the playgroups about the fairness of this situation:

> The mother leaves the kids and goes. That's no good. They have to look after their kids, in the playgroup. They make other (mothers) look after the other kids, and their mothers should be looking after them. Too hard to look after them (other people's kids). (My program journal, June 2017)

Sadly, on a number of occasions, a parent would tell me that it was better that they didn't come to playgroup so that they couldn't be expected to mind children of a related family. As issues such as the dropping off of children had emerged in earlier years, the fact that I shared the known history of playgroup experiences with the families enabled positive conversations with them about these vexing issues. These conversations often resulted in the formation of an agreed program response which could be used by both the families and the playgroup operators across the communities, as for this issue, that usually, "two children are enough for a family adult to help at playgroup" (My program journal, 2017), which added to the consistency of expectations between the community playgroups, regarding the role of family adults in this program, as teachers of their children.

4.3.2 Prioritising the Use of Home Language in Playgroup and in Early Literacy Activities

A key element of sustaining the place of the family adults in this program was prioritising the use of the Ngaanyatjarra families' home language in this learning for school program so that their children would learn the new experiences of this new program in their home language. The combined importance of the family adults being the teachers of their children in this program, within their home language, was particularly evident in the Family Story Time activity each morning, which Beryl introduced in late 2009:

> During morning tea, Beryl read a Ngaanyatjarra story to the group, then she said that she had something else—she had laminated a small Ngaanyatjarra story book for each family

> adult to read, or talk about the pictures with their children … They really enjoyed it … (My program journal, September 2009)

From this time onwards*, Family Story Time* preceded each group story time activity—a morning version of Western culture's bedtime story routine within family groups. With the popularity of family story time, more story books were needed in Ngaanyatjarra, and, around the same time, the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF)[1] (www.indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au) offered to provide the playgroup with children's story books. However, these books were written in English, not Ngaanyatjarra, and I initially declined their offer, but after visiting Beryl to talk further about this situation, it was decided that selected books would be translated into Ngaanyatjarra, so that they could be used in family story time in the playgroup.

From that time, I added the process of facilitating the local translation of selected children's books into Ngaanyatjarra to my role. My coordination of the informal language assistance of many playgroup family adults, Beryl's encouragement and linguistic skills, and the production assistance of the ILF, resulted in more than 18 much-loved children's books being translated into Ngaanyatjarra, to add to the family story time books, including stories such as *Dear Zoo*[2] (*Yanamulpa pirni kanyilpayinya*) and *Where's Spot?*[3] (*Wanytjatja Spotnga*?). With these books written in Ngaanyatjarra, the family adults could confidently talk the story in Ngaanyatjarra with their children during family story time, even if they couldn't read it, and, in the process, some of the family adults also learnt to read their own language.

> Story time has always been encouraged in Ngaanyatjarra because playgroups are about empowering family adults—and family adults are only empowered to be the teachers of their children when they can speak in their home language. (Shinkfield, 2015, p. 11)

During my regular visits to community playgroups, to ensure the place of family adults in this program continued to be prioritised, I made sure that each playgroup had an excellent collection of these favourite story books, now written in their own language, for families to enjoy. I would often read the day's Ngaanyatjarra story to the playgroup families, encouraging the young mums to watch how I was leading the group story time, so that they could do the same at their playgroup. I talked

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[1] The Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF) provided the stickers with the text in Ngaanyatjarra language and the children's story books.

[2]Campbell, R. (2007). Dear Zoo (R. Campbell, Illus.). Macmillan Children's Books.

[3] Hill, E. (2009). Where's Spot? (E. Hill, Illus.). Frederick Warne

with them about how, in 1995, early literacy in their Ngaanyatjarra language was one of the first activities specifically requested by their families as an important part of preparing their children for school through this program, and how story time routines, and children's enjoyment of books, are both learned behaviours with which they can become familiar through repeated experiences.

At each playgroup, I encouraged the playgroup facilitators to protect the set time and place of family story time in each day's program, so that Ngaanyatjarra families could spend time and learn to enjoy looking at story books together. I reminded them that, as young children learn best in their home language, it is essential that the family adults share story time with their children in their own language. The family story time and group story time routines have continued to be much-loved parts of the playgroup program, and a Ngaanyatjarra story is still read to the children, and family adults, while they are having their morning tea each day, sometimes with my reading the story for adults to talk about each page with their family, and at other times encouraging any family adult who can read Ngaanyatjarra, to read one of the familiar stories to the families, and talk about it in Ngaanyatjarra with their children. Prioritising the use of their home language in this program has enabled the family adults to support their children's learning of the new *early literacy* tasks of the program and grow their children's enjoyment of looking at story books, with many of the translated books those they would later use at school.

4.3.3 Family Adults Learning How to Prepare Their Children for School in This Program

The informal learning of the family adults continued, learning while participating in the program activities. As in the story time activities each day in their learning program, the shared participation of the family adults with their children in the program activities continued to be the context for their learning about what was required to prepare their children for school, in response to their request in 1995, "to teach us how to do this" (My program journal, 1995). Over the years, the knowledge of the family adults grew, as their experience within the program continued to add to their knowledge of what to do to assist their children in their learning of these new experiences.

At times, because of the cross-cultural context of this program, the playgroup facilitator was often helpful to the family adults in their teaching role with their children, sometimes quietly assisting the family adults when their children chose not to participate in an activity. Cultural boundaries meant that the family adults couldn't tell their children what to do, and so, in those situations, as the playgroup facilitator, I would often simply continue the program's activity, without saying anything or drawing attention to the child:

> He didn't want to join in, but as soon as I said, 'Are you ready?' (to the group), with my hands up for the song, 'Open, shut them', he came straight over to sit close to his nanna, without being spoken to, and joined in with the actions. (My program journal, May 2017)

Excitingly, in 2013, for the first time for the Ngaanyatjarra people, young family adults who had their own knowledge and experience of this playgroup program, began bringing their babies and young children to playgroup. By 2018, there were at least seven of the playgroup graduates from the 1995/1996 program who were bringing their own children to various community playgroups. "Next generation, more babies, more coming up...So they can come and, you know, get learned here, playgroup … things they see … by painting, and playing blocks. … Yeah, mums too learning" (Family conversation, 2018).

To enrich the informal learning of the family adults in this program, Beryl initiated workplace training within the playgroup program in 2007, when she asked me to assist her in gaining some nationally accredited training in children's services, as both recognition of her expertise and as a role model to the other women. In the process of mentoring her through four units of a certificate, Beryl excitedly insisted that we opened up this learning opportunity to other playgroup family adults, explaining that, after years of watching their children learn at playgroup, the family adults would want to learn, and become more knowledgeable about how various activities were provided for their children and the reasons why they do each activity.

Consequently, from 2008, Beryl and I often held workshops for the family adults after playgroup sessions, co-presenting in Ngaanyatjarra and English. During much of the time period of this story, workshops after playgroup sessions became a regular part of playgroups in two communities, using a set of learning materials written for these families, *Working in Early Childhood* (see sample Workbook 1) (Western Australian Government. Department of Training and Workforce Development, 2017) that centred around the activities that the family adults do each day at playgroup with their children. Between 2011–2015, and linked to this workplace training program, were five highly coveted, week-long visits to TAFE and early childhood settings in Perth, for small groups of five or six family adults and their children—family adults who were workshop participants and who had also participated in many playgroup sessions with their children, often over 100 in a year. These visits to a variety of early childhood environments were important learning opportunities for the family adults, showing them the similarity of the activities and routines that they are assisting their children to learn, yet within these quite different settings. Watching their children confidently participate in the learning at school activities during one particular visit to a kindy in a well-to-do inner-city school stands out in all of our memories:

> Within minutes of entering the colourful early learning environment of the kindy room, it was very hard to find our children in the midst of the rest of the class! Our six children were scattered among the interesting learning activities in the room—completely engaged and very focused. The children had turns at most of the activities, the family adults moving from activity to activity with their children, smiling, watching, and helping as needed … It was a great time—seeing how well our children and family adults participated in the environment and how ready the children are for an excellent kindy like this. (My program journal, June 2015)

In this new environment, but in a familiar play and learning setting, in an English-speaking school where very few people had met families from remote Indigenous communities, the enthusiastic participation of their children in this state-of-the-art early learning setting, alongside the children of the kindy class, was a confirmation to the family adults watching, of the importance of their place as teachers of their children in their learning for school playgroup program. The confident participation of their children also validated that they, as family adults, had learnt to prepare their children for the activities and routines of the different culture of the school, through shared participation in their program with their children, fulfilling the program purpose for the families'.

4.4 Conclusion for Chapter 4 Part 1

Chapter 4 Part 1 presented descriptions of the shared program development over the three identified time periods. The story from 1995–1996 described the establishment of the family adult's requested learning for school playgroup program so that in fulfilling its purpose the family adults could prepare their children for school.

The story from 2006–2010 described the refining of the operation of their established program. In 2008, the families emphatically reaffirmed their initial request for assistance so that they could participate in their requested program with their children, as teachers of new school readiness experiences. During this time period, the tasks of the program facilitator/educator, required to enable the learning of the families within their requested cross-cultural learning program, became evident.

Finally, from 2011–2019 the story described the importance of sustaining both the program, the established program content, and the requested operation for the families, and also the place of the family adults as teachers for their children in the program so that the purpose of the program

could be achieved by the families, that of preparing their children for school through shared participation in the program.

The next section Chapter, 4 Part 2, presents four themes that are common across the program, from 1995–2019. This chapter then concludes with a gathering of these four themes into four major study findings that contribute to answering the study's research question.

Part 2: Common Themes and Major Findings Across the Program

Part 1 of this chapter described the chronological story of the development of the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program during three time periods. Part 2 presents four themes that emerged as common within each time period and across the whole development of the program. The first three themes built on each other:

- Theme 1: The Playgroup Program is a 'Learning' Program (Section 4.5)
- Theme 2: The Purpose and Content as 'Learning for School' (Section 4.6)
- Theme 3: This 'Learning for School' Program is a 'Learning Within Family' Program (Section 4.7)

The fourth theme:

- Theme 4: What it Takes: The Tasks of the Program Facilitator/Educator (Section 4.8)

This theme drew together the tasks of the program facilitator/educator as the link between this cross-cultural program and the participation of the families within the program, within a relationship of respectful collaboration. In concluding this chapter, the researcher identified the four major findings from these themes that contributed to answering the study's research question.

4.5 Theme 1: The Playgroup Program is a 'Learning' Program

The initial request by the family adults in 1994 was for assistance to develop a program with them, "to help 'us' get our children ready for school and to teach 'us' how to do this" (My program journal, 1995). Therefore, this program was a learning program from its commencement, a program in which the family adults could learn about preparing their children for school in the context of their shared participation with their children in this program of new learning experiences.

4.5.1 The Playgroup Program is an Adult Learning Program

The family adults had asked me to teach them how to prepare their children for school, as our family had prepared our children for school. Therefore, I understood that the job they asked me to do was to create a learning for school environment facilitating family adults learning about preparing their children for school while they guide their children's participation in the activities and routines of their new program. The findings indicated that the family adults' informal learning about the activities, and their role as teachers of their children in these activities, continued throughout

this program, as described in Chapter 4, Part 1. This program provided the opportunity for them to learn about preparing their children for school, in the context of the program environment, with support from the playgroup facilitator/educator, from each other, and from their shared participation with their children as they prepared their children for the activities of the school.

> All mothers help with their children**.** … Today, mums learn more about how to sit with their child and they finish this one, then go to another one, which is really helpful to them. Mothers are learning at the same time. (My program journal, November 2009)

In the first two years of the program, their informal learning of the new experiences of this program was through their participation in the program with their children, and the modelling of the activities and routines by the program facilitator/educator. During the second time period, it became apparent that the program had to be operated for the families, as they had initially requested, so that their informal learning, through participation with their children in the program, could continue. In the third time period, workplace training activities added to the family adults' knowledge as to why particular activities were part of the new experiences in learning the different practices for young children, in the culture of the school.

4.5.2 The Playgroup Program is a 'Learning Through Participation' Program

Being responsive to the families' request for this program, the initial facilitation of this program was as a learning through participation program. This intention was reflected in one of the initial program principles that guided the program's development. "The program is operated for the families, so that family adults can participate in the experiences of this new program with their children" (My program journal, February 1995). Therefore, from the beginning the operation of this learning program was two-fold each day, firstly, the facilitation of the environment and planned program activities for the families, and secondly, the facilitation of the participation of family adults with their children in the experiences of the program, through sequencing the activities and routines and modelling of the activities within this program. In 2008 when the family adults asked Beryl and me to take on the responsibility of the programs for the second time (see Section 4.2.3), their specific request for the opportunity of 'learning through participation' was reaffirmed emphatically: "Great to see how engaged the mums are with the children … maybe they just needed someone to facilitate it all and then they can get on with doing the activities with their children" (My program journal, November 2008)

Interestingly, although using the same words, this second request for this program revealed a significant difference from their first request in late 1994. In 2008, after a decade of watching, and

sometimes participating in, the program across the communities, the families were more knowledgeable about the process of preparing their children for school, recognising that this process was only possible when they were participants with their children, as they had requested in 1995/1996. Consequently, since 2008, this assisted playgroup program model remains the chosen model for their playgroup program, because the participation of the family adults with their children can only happen when the family adults don't have any other responsibilities, such as operating the program, which would preclude their participation, as teachers of their children.

Particularly since 2008, participation of the family adults in this program has been embedded and encouraged through the use of their home language with their children. Additionally, continuing to position this program as a playgroup, with only one person taking the playgroup facilitator position, necessitates the participation of family adults as teachers of their children during the activities and routines of the program.

As Beryl often said, "When the playgroup is, people come" (My program journal, June 2009). In other words, when the playgroup program 'is', meaning that it is operating as expected, have requested, and know it to be, then the families come, and guide their children's learning through participation in the program. However, the coming of the family adults was conditional on ensuring that the playgroup is, as defined by the families. The consistently large numbers of family adults and young children participating in community programs over the last decade (see Table 4) evidenced that assisted, participatory learning for school playgroup model suits both the families' ways of learning and their purpose of preparing their children for school through this program.

The stories of this chapter are set within this program as a learning program, a program of learning how to do the activities within the program, in the context of families learning together to realise their agreed purpose of this learning for school program. This style of learning program is similar to a community of practice learning program, with Wenger (1998) describing the three dimensions of a community of practice as comprising "mutual engagement … joint enterprise [and] a shared repertoire" (p. 81). These dimensions could well describe many of the interactions outlined in Chapter 4 Part 1. In Chapter 5 I elaborate on the similarities.

In this section of Chapter 4, Part 2, along with the emergence of common themes within the cross-cultural program of this study, there were particular program facilitator/educator tasks within each theme that became evident as integral to the program practices. When this program began, the families had asked me to assist them in its development because they knew that I could share my knowledge and experience of learning for school activities. This first theme categorised this

program is a 'learning program', alongside the tasks of the program facilitator/educator including the preparation and implementation of learning for school activities in which the family adults and children could participate, and the expertise for operating programs bound by Western cultural educational workplace expectations.

4.6 Theme 2: The Purpose and Content as 'Learning for School'

Across the time periods of this learning program, the purpose was to enable the family adults to prepare their children for school through the shared participation within the content of this program, modelling the set of experiences of young children within families of the Western school culture that enabled them to participate in the activities of school.

4.6.1 The Purpose of this Program is for Family Adults to Prepare Their Children for School

This program was requested by the family adults so that they could prepare their children for the practices of the culture of school. Even in the first year of the program, the families confidently called this program their 'Little kid's school' (*Tjitji kurlunyku kuurlpa*), their school-like environment for preparing their 'little kids' for the practices of school. Ten years later, in 2006, when we created the booklet telling the story of the first few years of this program for all the families across the communities, the program purpose was embedded in the book title, *Playgroup: Playing to Get Ready for School* (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006). For the children, their purpose for coming to this program has always been to play, "He likes just to come here. When he walks into the playgroup, he sees things and just go for it and plays" (Family conversation, 2018).

For the family adults, wanting to fulfil their program purpose that within the program they can prepare their children for school, their first action was bringing their children to the program. "For me, it's important to bring my kids so that they can learn, you know" (Family conversation, 2018). Then, their second purpose for bringing their children was that they knew that through shared participation in the play activities their children would *get learned*: "Just to, you know, take the little ones so that they can get learned when they're young and small" (Family conversation, 2018).

Thirdly the environment at playgroup contributed to the families' purpose for their children, that of getting learned, as the set-up of the playgroup each day provided interesting learning spaces where the children and family adults participated in new activities. This learning environment was a

purposeful reflection of both a young child's play activities within the homes of families within the Western school culture and the set-up of kindy rooms in many schools, with routines and a variety of equipment and resources that facilitated the learning for school activities within this program.

4.6.2 The Content of This Program is the Set of New 'Learning for School' Activities

For the family adults, the purpose of this program was so that they could prepare their children for school through shared participation in the activities and routines of this program. Therefore, the content of this program was visualised through the activities, routines, and experiences that children encounter when they commence learning at school. This was the content requested by the families for this program early in 1995, "to introduce school readiness orientated activities, especially early literacy in their Ngaanyatjarra language, to facilitate the children's ease of adjustment to school" (Program objective, February 1995).

The daily program of activities, routines, and experiences was established during the first two years of the program with this program content continuing in each playgroup since that time. For the Ngaanyatjarra children, this set of activities is additional to any that they have within their home and family in their Ngaanyatjarra culture. The additional nature of the purpose and content of this program was illustrated by Beryl in 2009, depicting this program as a bridge for the families, a bridge between the culture of their home and the culture of the school. On the bridge, that is the playgroup program, the family adults and their young children participated in the content which was the additional set of experiences required for learning at school, such as playing with blocks, playdough, puzzles, painting and joining in story time activities with the Ngaanyatjarra Story books.

Over the years, the introduction of extended program content was led by the family adults. As the teachers of their children in the new experiences of this program, they knew when their children were ready for further learning. An example of this was in late 2009 when Beryl introduced the new activity of family story time, which has been embedded as regular content in the daily playgroup program since that day. It was the same for the introduction of counting activities to the content of the daily playgroup program:

> At a prompt by a parent, it 'just happened'. A few weeks ago, for the first time, we counted the children in the group before we served morning tea—wave-pointing to each child as we counted, counting aloud together, and I quickly found number cards to give to the children to hold up together (and then hide) as we counted each child again. This was greatly enjoyed, and from that day 'counting the kids' has been a fun–filled few moments each

> playgroup session, just after family story time and before morning tea, which is enjoyed by babies, toddlers, and family adults. (My program journal, August 2015)

Since that day in 2015, a new child coming to playgroup would only know playgroup with the counting routine as part of the content of the program. Counting was not a common activity in their family life, as in their Ngaanyatjarra language, where the common words for numbers were for one, two, three, four, and many (Glass, 1990). However, the family adults knew their children, and they were increasingly knowledgeable about the purpose of this program, so when this counting routine was suggested, it was the right time for the introduction of this activity. After the story books are packed away, and the program facilitator asks the family group "What do we do before morning tea?', the family adults seem so proud of their very young children when a confident toddler calls out 'Count!'" (My program journal, 2015).

Because these learning for school practices were the activities and routines of the different culture of school, as in the illustration of this playgroup as a bridge between the two cultures, for the family adults this program was to be an introduction to the culture of school for their children: "Family, they thinking about bring their kids to playgroup to get learned, while they're little" (Family conversation, 2018). In fulfilling the families' initial request for me to help them learn how to prepare their own children for school, it was a matter of learning what to do in the activities as well as how the activities were expected to be done in the culture of school: "In playgroup … they learn how to listen to the teacher, learn how to share things, learn how to sit down and read the books" (Family conversation, 2018). As one of the long-term playgroup parents, who was also a school student on the other side of the fence during the 1995 playgroup program, reminded me, in those days even the use of pens was a learned behaviour for children who hadn't used pens before:

> Must be some kids … they don't know about playgroup … they'll go straight in school. Must be the teacher teach them about pens, an' they'll be thinking 'what's this for? What I do with this? An' they be playing round with it, tapping it, putting it in their mouth. At playgroup they can learn for everything before they go to school. (Family conversation, 2018)

In my implementation of these activities from the culture of school, for the families to learn within their Ngaanyatjarra cultural ways, the framing of this set of additional experiences as "repertoires of practice" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 19) for the different cultural setting of school has proved particularly advantageous, as it positions these school-readiness 'learning for school' activities as culturally separate to the activities of the Ngaanyatjarra children during their child-rearing years within their own culture. Additionally, these repertoires of practice, learnt as a new set

of activities for the purposes of another culture are therefore practices that the families have not had the opportunity to learn previously. The significance of this new set of experiences, in terms of preparation of Indigenous children for school, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

For the program facilitator/educator, within this cross-cultural program, each day's activities had to be implemented in such a way that they could be learnt within the cultural and linguistic ways of the Ngaanyatjarra family culture, whilst, importantly, retaining the cultural integrity of the activity within the expectations and purpose of the culture of school. This alignment of the program content of one culture to the learning ways of families within another culture was another integral task of the program facilitator/educator. In the next section of this chapter, with the identification of this program as a learning program, in Theme 1, and that the purpose and content of this program are about learning for school, in Theme 2, the next common theme illustrates learning within family where the family adults are the teachers of their children within their cultural ways as a way of learning for school.

4.7 Theme 3: This 'Learning for School' Program is a 'Learning Within Family' Program

4.7.1 The Family Adults are the Teachers of Their Children

In 1994, when the family adults asked for my assistance with this program, they asked me to help them, as family adults, to learn how to prepare their children for school – they did not ask me to prepare their children for school. Therefore, as identified in Theme 1, this program is an informal environment for the family adults to learn—a learning environment situated within the context of the program through which they can prepare their children for school. I understood that in this program, the intention of the family adults was that they would maintain their role as teachers of their young children in the new experiences of this program, and so this program would progress to be a *within their family but outside of their home* learning program:

> It's good to have a playgroup in the community. It's a special place where children can learn. The mothers and children all know each other and at playgroup they are talking with each other and helping the children, even their grandchildren. It is the best place where we can help them, by reading and speaking to the children and to help them feel confident. (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006, p. 4)

The family adults are both learners and teachers in this learning for school program. A few moments of informal adult learning as I modelled the activity and explained it in English to the family adults usually introduced a new activity for both the family adults and children sitting around the group activity table. Minutes later, the family adults would be guiding the participation of their children in the activities. In the conversations for this case study with long-term playgroup family adults, when asked about how they help their children with the activities in the playgroup, the family adults talked about 'telling the little kids, explaining them in our language' (Family conversation, 2017).

> Painting, where to put the things in, at the right spot, an tell him in language. Then he goes an do it. Table activities … puzzles an things. Mums, they want to watch, and they do the little activities, looking, the kids can help, together. (Family conversation, 2017)

Over the years, through repeated shared experiences in the playgroup program, the family adults are increasingly confident with their place with their children in this program, as teachers for their children in the culturally different experiences of the program. Through repeated playgroup experiences during children's first four years of life, the family adults and children have become familiar with this additional set of learning for school activities, through the guidance of family members, who are increasingly experienced with the new activities:

> Well, they doing something that's good for their little ones, so they can learn, when they here, when they look at other kids doing, in the playing room, when they get together. My boy, he been learn from here, all my three kids been learn from here. (Family conversation, 2018)

In their learning program, the family adults are both learners and teachers, as they teach their children, guiding their participation in the different cultural experiences of the program, while also gradually learning about this 'getting children ready for school' process themselves. And, with the family adults as the teachers of their children, their teaching is in the home language of their family, and the responsibility of family adults with their children is within their cultural structure of family.

4.7.2 As Teachers of Their Young Children, the Family Adults Use Their Home Language

Ngaanyatjarra is the first, and home language of most of the families in these communities. Therefore, the use of Ngaanyatjarra within this program enabled the family adults to continue as

teachers for their young children, within their usual child-rearing ways, while it also enabled the children to continue to consolidate their learning of their first language, with their family adults as their teachers.

> Playgroup is a place where children can learn about all the new activities with their mothers, and at playgroup they can use their own language. In our communities, the children and families speak Ngaanyatjarra, so it's best for the children to learn in their own language while they are young. (Beryl, in My program journal, 2007)

In the early days of this program, because I had limited Ngaanyatjarra language, my expectation that I would always have some of the family adults with the children in this program was well-known to the families, and they were familiar with me waiting on the playgroup steps with the children, for family adults to arrive, before opening up playgroup. Responsive to their initial request about this program, my consequent prioritising of the family adults as teachers, and of the use of their home language as their language of learning with their children in this program, has continued throughout the stories in Chapter 4 Part 1. The immense value of these to the children both learning the new experiences of this program with their family adults as their teacher, and learning within their home language, has proved particularly significant in the shared family story time at each playgroup session:

> I tell her, I read to her in our language, then after that, I explain her. I tell her, oh, turn the page, then she turns the page. She always watch me when I read it. Then I tell her 'something hiding there, got to lift it, have a look, then what's in there? (Family conversation, 2017)

In this program, enhanced by the significant increase of story books translated into Ngaanyatjarra since 2009, learning about early literacy through the group and family story time activities and routines within the program has been made possible for these young Ngaanyatjarra children, because their family adults are their teachers and the story books have been translated into Ngaanyatjarra their home language, their language of learning in this program.

4.7.3 Family Adults from the Child's Extended Family are Their Teachers in This Program

In this family 'learning' program, 'family', as in 'family adults', is defined by the culture of the families in these communities. In the Ngaanyatjarra culture, the family structure is that of the extended family, and "everyone is regarded as being related to everyone else" (Glass, 1990, p. 26).

In the planning stages of this program, in 1994, the community agreed that there would always be some family adults who would be at the program with the family children, and particularly since 2008, the agreed ticket for a child to come and play at playgroup has been a family adult who would bring them and stay with them during the program. Therefore, family adults within the extended family bring family children to the playgroup program, and so many different family members have brought a young family child to a playgroup session, "Well, I'll take him if the mother not going to take him … That's why I always come here, so I can come and sit down and watch him" (Family conversation, 2017)

The knowledge of the opportunity within this program for their young children spread quickly across each child's extended family, and many family adults had the opportunity to participate in the program's activities with their family children. Family adults visiting from other communities also brought the young family children to playgroup, perhaps with an additional agenda of finding out what going to playgroup was all about. This was because even from one visit to this program, family adults could see how comfortably even toddlers negotiated the different cultural expectations within the program and environment, and how family adults could assist their children in the activities and routines of the program. With most community adults being part of the extended family of many playgroup children, nearly all of the families in these communities have participated in playgroup activities at some time over the last two decades, and those who have not experienced playgroup are encouraged to, for themselves and for their children. "They can go with their family members if their family members been going to playgroup for long time, and they can take their young mothers to playgroup … Cos it's important for kids. Kids need to learn" (Family conversation, 2018).

Sometimes it is the older children who have been to playgroup themselves, who add their voices to the family nature of this playgroup program for the children, as they encourage their younger siblings about the playgroup, and sometimes even remind their family adults to bring their younger siblings to playgroup:

> The brothers and sisters, they pass it on to their little brother. Yeah. They'll say to him, 'Your turn to go to little school (playgroup). 'We're going to the big school'. And they'll say, 'Oh we was going to little school (playgroup) when we were like your size. (Family conversation, 2018)

> Mum, you got to take (little sister) to school (playgroup). She wanna learn like me. (Family conversation, 2018)

The family members, across the communities, have embraced the playgroup program and its purposes for their young children, and, over the years, the program has become embedded within family and community life: “It’s growing, it’s good, it’s growing to the next generation of kids, you know. So that they can get to learn in the playgroup, first, before they go to school” (Family conversation, 2018).

However, in order to enable the learning of the new experiences of this learning for school program by the families, within their cultural ways of learning and teaching, the task of aligning the content of this program with the practice of these new experiences in this ‘learning’ program, was another of the contributions of the program facilitator/educator to the practices of this cross-cultural program, which will be further discussed in Theme 4.

4.8 Theme 4: What it Takes: The Tasks of the Program Facilitator/Educator

The families asked me for help in the development of this program, as they knew that I would bring my cultural and educational experience of preparing children for school, and children learning at school, to the shared development of this cross-cultural learning for school program. The three themes presented within Part 2 of this chapter have demonstrated that the tasks of the program facilitator/educator were necessary for the activities and experiences of this program from another culture, to be learnt by these families within their own cultural ways. However, from the beginning of this program, the children’s learning was the result of my *walking alongside* the family adults in our shared development of this cross-cultural program: “they knew their children and what they wanted for them within their family, and I knew what was required of young children for school, as a parent and as a teacher” (see Chapter 1).

Therefore, it was within relationship, and within the relationship of respectful collaboration and trust, that the family adults and I each brought our own expertise to the development of this program. In this final common theme of the development of this program, theme 4, four integral tasks of the program facilitator/educator are presented as tasks that facilitated the learning of the activities within this program by the family adults and children, as the family adults prepared their children for these different cultural practices of school, through shared participation with their children.

4.8.1 Task 1—The Operation of the Program Within the Cultural Workplace Expectations of the Program

Within the program stories, and the common themes of this study, it was the operation of the program, as a necessary foundation, which enabled the families' participation in this program. In the early years of this cross-cultural program, as the program facilitator/educator, my cultural affinity with the program's workplace expectations, and my experience with meeting these workplace expectations as a non-negotiable part of holding a program position within this culture, ensured that the program was operated in a manner that was consistent with the cultural expectations of this program, and so provided an authentic learning environment within the culture of the program. Within the common themes already presented, the implementation, modelling, and alignment of the activities in each day's program (theme 2), within the cultural ways of learning of the families (theme 3), so that the families could participate in the learning for school program together (theme 1), all required that the program be operated for the families, as they had initially requested.

However, it was in the disturbing events of 2006/2007 (see Section 4.2.2), that it became evident that the cultural expertise of the playgroup facilitator/educator was required to meet the cultural workplace expectations of this cross-cultural program. During those years, local family women were employed as playgroup activity leaders, but even with the assistance with activities and regular visits to the playgroups, their difficulties with taking responsibility for the program continued, leading to the closure of the playgroups in 2007. My interpretation of the events of those years is that it was the cultural differences within program expectations that resulted in the challenges of this time in the development of the playgroup program, and, because of the significance of this situation to the ongoing development of this program, I present a more detailed explanation of this task of program operation.

The Ngaanyatjarra family adults employed as local playgroup leaders, were also Ngaanyatjarra family adults, living within their family and cultural expectations, particularly in terms of ways of relating within family, with adults and children. Therefore, these Ngaanyatjarra family adults, employed as local playgroup activity leaders, had two sets of cultural expectations to meet within each playgroup session—family expectations from their Ngaanyatjarra culture and workplace expectations from the culture of this new program. For these Ngaanyatjarra family adults, these two sets of cultural expectations were often mutually exclusive (Harris, 1990), as meeting the expectation from one culture necessarily meant failing to meet the expectation from the other.

However, with family cultural expectations always taking priority, it often just wasn't possible, or permissible, for these family adults, as playgroup leaders, to meet the workplace expectations from the program's culture, which was evidenced in their identified difficulty with taking responsibility for the program.

Reflecting on these events 15 years later, I posited that if there had been clear recognition that a program from one culture needs to be operated by a person who can meet the cultural workplace expectations of that culture then these situations could have been avoided. To explain this, I briefly examined three of the difficult situations that faced the local playgroup leaders on a daily basis by viewing each one through a cultural lens, firstly, through the lens of Western culture's workplace expectations and secondly, through the lens of Ngaanyatjarra family cultural expectations.

The first situation was the workplace expectations around the daily maintenance of the playgroup environment. This expectation was difficult to meet because of the continued drop off of children for the local playgroup leader to mind during playgroup. Cultural and family expectations did not allow the playgroup leader to refuse. But having to mind family children each day, and to walk them home at the end of each session, impacted their ability, and time, to do all the packing up and cleaning that was part of the workplace expectation after each program session, and eventually, the maintenance of the program environment became too difficult to manage.

The second situation involved workplace expectations around the regularity and reliability of the community playgroup program. These expectations were difficult to maintain when family and cultural expectations required the playgroup leader's attendance at activities such as ceremonies, funerals, sorry camps, town visits, and football. These attendances were often at minimal notice, often on the day of the event, which meant that not only would the playgroup leader not be in the community to lead the playgroup, but that there was no opportunity to give advance notice of playgroup being closed for the day. Both of these results were in contrast to the regularity and reliability expected within the workplace expectations of the program.

The third situation was about the workplace expectation of consistency of processes within the workplace program. But this workplace expectation was often in direct contrast to family expectations, and so not possible for the local playgroup leader to meet. For example, the contrast between the workplace expectation that family adults will stay at the program with their children, and the family expectation that the playgroup activity leader, as a family adult, will not only mind the family children but will be the participating family adult with the children at playgroup.

During these years, it became evident that the effective operation of this program for the families was contingent upon the program facilitator/educator having the cultural affinity with the program to responsibly address the program's workplace expectations. Consequently, in 2008, as the families wanted the playgroup program for their children, the families asked Beryl and me to take up the responsibility for the program once again, so that they could bring their children to the program and participate with them in the program. Since that time, the responsibility for the operation of the program has been held by a playgroup facilitator/educator who has both the cultural experience of the activities and the cultural and professional experience of meeting the workplace expectations of programs within the Western culture of the program, which results in the family adults continuing to bring their children to the programs (See Table 4).

4.8.2 Task 2—The Planning, Implementation, and Modelling of the Activities of this Program

Within the task of planning and implementing the new activities of this learning for school program in this cross-cultural program with the families, I identified three aspects of the program facilitator/educator task.

Firstly, as this program is an informal adult learning program (theme 1), the modelling of the activities to the family adults by the program facilitator/educator was essential. Without the expertise of an instructor, there was limited modelling of activities, therefore reducing the opportunity for the family adults to learn how to prepare their children for school (theme 2). In 2006 /2007, when family adults, as playgroup activity leaders, were expected to lead the playgroup programs without this expertise, the connection between the expertise of the program facilitator/educator and the participation of family adults in this program was noticed by family adults who asked me if a visiting tertiary student who was working in the community, could come to the playgroup session to show the family adults how to do the activities, and then leave the room so that the families could do the activities with their children (My program journal, 2007).

In another community, the family adults noted the cultural barriers to their taking on the role of playgroup activity leaders with their own families, with some of the family adults reminding me that in their cultural ways, their families can't tell other children what to do, and that they can't say no to their families. (My program journal, 2008). Consequently, the families asked Beryl and me to do the program for them, so that they could, once again, participate in the program with their children.

Secondly, with the content of this cross-cultural program 'new' for the families, the educational expertise of the program facilitator/educator was necessary for the planning, implementation, and sequencing of the learning for school activities so that children would get learned through participation in the program with their family adults (theme 2). In 2006, 2007, although the local playgroup activity leaders had Beryl's activity programs to implement each week, (Chapter 4.2.2) their ability to implement these planned activities was thwarted by their difficulties with taking responsibility for the operation of the program, a situation that was again resolved with Beryl and I resuming responsibility for the operation of the program.

Thirdly, the program facilitator/educator was responsible for the cultural expectations of the program, including the operation and the processes of the program. This was in contrast to the local family adults as playgroup leaders, for whom the clash of family cultural expectations and workplace cultural expectations often precluded their responsible operation of the program (Chapter 4.2.2). In contrast, from 2008, when the playgroup program was once again an 'assisted' program, the planning and implementation of each day's program was carried out from our educational and cultural knowledge and experience of the activities and the purposes of the activities in the cultural context of school:

> It is not just setting up a sequence of activities for the children, but for the mums too—learning the routines, how to play with their children … in this playgroup today it is preparing the environment and program to include the 18 mums, as well as encouraging the 18 children. (My program journal, August 2009)

As the program facilitator/educator, my expectation was that the family adults would learn to be the teachers of their children in this program (theme 1) so that they could participate together with their children in the program, and so prepare their children for school, (theme 2). However, within the implementation of activities and routines within this cross-cultural learning for school program, there were also cultural expectations around the practices of this program, that were different from the cultural expectations within their own culture, that had to be considered within the tasks of the program facilitator/educator.

4.8.3 Task 3—Negotiation of Cultural Differences Within the Program

The program facilitator/educators required educational and cultural expertise for the task of assisting with the negotiation of cultural differences as they arose within the activities of the program. This program, as an introduction for their young children to the cultural expectations of

the practices of school, was part of the families' request to me for this cross-cultural program, so that they could introduce their young children to the cultural expectations of the activities and routines of school. Therefore, there was no apology for any clash of cultural expectations, because, for the families, this program was the time and place for their children to learn these different cultural expectations within their family. "They gotta learn at the playgroup first, and when they go to kindy, they'd be know little bit" (Family conversation, 2018).

Because family adults were always at the program with their children, any unexpected ways of doing, or being, arising within this program, could immediately be explained to the young children by their family adults, using their own language and ways of explanation. However, in this cross-cultural learning program, it was essential that the playgroup facilitator/educator was recognised by the family adults as someone who could rightfully negotiate any cultural differences on behalf of the program. Therefore, while working with Beryl for many years I held the responsibility for my culture's expectations, usually around the program and the workplace, and Beryl held the responsibility for her culture's expectations, usually around family, within the process of negotiating different cultural expectations. Yet for Beryl, as a local playgroup leader, similar to the 2006/2007 situation, she was frequently in the position of facing expectations from both the culture of her family and the culture of the program, because, even for Beryl, with all her years of experience in educational settings within the Western culture, it was more important for her to meet family cultural expectations, than the expectations of a program from a different culture. Therefore, when the workplace expectations of the program clashed with the expectations of her family, she asked for my help, deferring to my cultural affinity with the culture of the program, noting that "Each playgroup needs a 'playgroup friend', someone who can support/facilitate the activities and also be a backstop to assist with management and resources" (My program journal, May 2007).

Over the years, Beryl and I developed a process, often along with the family adults, to find a way ahead in situations of different cultural expectations, and an example of this is the development of a response to children when they wanted to take playgroup toys home. In this situation, the program expectation was that the equipment that was bought for the playgroup program stayed in the playgroup, yet the young Ngaanyatjarra children often wanted to take a favourite toy home. It was not possible for Beryl, or other family adults, to say "no" to the children because direct refusal was not the way that family adults engaged with young children in their culture. But as I was not family, and therefore not accountable to family expectations, I could say something as a backstop, a playgroup friend for Beryl. We would decide on a statement that I began saying to the families, such as "we don't take the toys home, because they have to be here for you to play with the next day."

Beryl could then also say that frequently, in Ngaanyatjarra, as the families knew that she was not telling the families what to do, but just repeating the program expectations that I usually said. Over time, the family adults began to repeat it to their children too "At the end of playgroup every day, I hear the mums say in language, 'Help pack up, put it away, it is for you, when you come the next day, you will play with it and use it again'" (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006, p. 20).

Within that process, used in many different situations, by using my words in their language, the families enabled their young children to become familiar with the expectations of this learning for school program that were different from how things were done within their families, knowing that, from these experiences, their children would be prepared to meet the same expectations later at school.

4.8.4 Task 4—The Aligning of the Program Content to the Cultural Learning Styles of the Families

The educational and cultural expertise of the program facilitator/educator was required for the task of aligning the Western cultural content of this program (theme 2) to the cultural learning and teaching ways of the family adults and children within the program (theme 3) in the context of their learning through shared participation in their learning program (theme 1). From the beginning of this program, my daily journals were essential for this task of alignment, as my observations of how the families interacted within the activities and routines of each day's program became the basis for planning the implementation of the next day's activities, so that the families could learn these new experiences in their cultural ways, whilst retaining the content authenticity of the practices of the different culture of school. Three examples of alignments presented from those early years have since become the ways that things are done in this cross-cultural learning program.

Firstly, the alignment of setting out of two sets of resources for an activity, one set for the family adult and one set for the child, so that they could both enjoy the activity at the same time, teaching and learning with each other:

> The mothers asked to do cooking each Friday, but they are not so keen to let the children do the mixing by themselves, however, the children make a fuss when things are taken from them, so the mothers are sort of learning to let the children have a go. (My program journal, June 1995)

This alignment of "the children have a bowl of their own during cooking so that they can make a small quantity of their own" (My program journal, June 1995), in facilitating group activities

such as art, craft or cooking, quickly became the accepted practice for these activities within the program.

Secondly, building on the first example, the alignment of positioning an adult chair next to each child chair around a group activity table, made it easier for the family adult to help the child and to explain the activity in their own language to the child, establishing both the expectations of shared adult/child participation, and the recognition of the place of family adults with their children as teachers for their children in these new activities. However, we later found out that these expectations were unfamiliar to staff in the early learning centres that we visited in Perth:

> At each site, we received very positive feedback on how well the children engaged in the activities, with staff at many sites noticing how the family adults frequently sat next to, or just behind the child as they explored new tasks, particularly in group activities. I explained that this was our usual routine with many activities at playgroup. (My program journal, December 2015)

Again, this alignment has become just the way it is done, the expected practice in this learning program, as it contributed to the place and role of the family adults as the teachers for their children in these shared activities.

Thirdly, the alignment of the use of visual cues, rather than verbal cues, as the signifiers of transitions between activities at playgroup

> The playgroup leader had put the coloured mats on the floor, as we usually do before story time … Two-year-old K had gone straight to the mat and was getting his own book out from the shelf to look at—not looking around for anyone else, just focused on what he wanted to do. (My program journal, March 2016)

This alignment is another of the practices of playgroup that has continued for many years. These small changes, in structuring the learning experiences to enable the participation of the family adults and children, reflect the cultural and educational expertise of the program facilitator/educator. This expertise evidences knowledge about the purpose of the program, and so can consider diverse ways of meeting that purpose, that of the family adults comfortably participating in their requested program and preparing their children for the practices of the different culture of school.

4.9 Conclusion for Chapter 4 Part 2

The four common themes described in sections 4.5—4.8 have emerged within the case study of this twenty-five year program. These themes can be summarised as four major findings that contribute to the answer to the study research question.

The research question is:

'How does the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enable the family adults to prepare their children for school?'

The four major findings are:

1. The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program is a learning program
2. The purpose and content of this program is learning for school
3. This 'learning for school' program is a learning within family program
4. In this cross-cultural learning program, the contribution of the program facilitator/educator is the cultural and educational expertise within this 'learning for school' program.

As anticipated, it is the interwoven nature of these findings within each interaction in the program, that contributed answers to this research question. Chapter 5 presents the discussion of these findings in relation to the literature.

Chapter 5: Interpretation and Discussion of the Major Findings

The purpose of this case study was to explore the Ngaanyatjarra early years program, which the families had requested so that they could prepare their young children for school. In the study of this program, the *what* of this program's preparation of children for school is almost incontestable—the school-readiness related activities of young children prior to school. It is the *how* of these children's preparation for school, through shared participation with their family adults, which is the subject of this thesis, how this group of Indigenous families, living in their own cultural ways, in remote communities, learnt to prepare their own children for the practices of the different culture of school.

This program is of research interest as it has two significant differences to the literature of programs with the purpose of preparing children for school. Firstly, this program is about family adults preparing their children for school, in contrast to the many school readiness programs for children where the children are prepared for school by non-family adults. Secondly, this preparation for school program is built on the foundation of the cultural difference between the culture of the program and the culture of the Ngaanyatjarra families, as the reason for their children's experiences at school entry age, in contrast to early years programs as interventions that address family disadvantage as the reason for children's experiences at school entry age.

This chapter presents a discussion of the four major findings of this study that developed from the common themes in Chapter 4. This discussion is situated within the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and concludes with a summary of how these findings contribute to answering the research question of this study. The research question for this study is:

> *How does the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enable the family adults to prepare their children for school?*

The four major findings of this study are that the Indigenous family adults of this program are empowered to prepare their children for school when they participate in the study program as:

- The program is a learning program
- The purpose and content of this program is learning for school
- This learning program is a learning within family program, with family adults as the children's teachers

- In this cross-cultural learning program, the program facilitator/educator contributes the cultural and educational expertise required for this 'learning for school' program

Additionally, as suggested in Section 4.9 it is within the interwoven nature of these findings in the context of the shared participation of the family adults with their children in each day's program that demonstrated how this study has contributed to answering the research question.

5.1 Finding 1: The Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Program is a 'Learning' Program

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school because the program positioned itself as a learning program. As identified within this common theme in Section 4.5, there were three ways in which this program exemplified a learning program. Firstly, as a program of new learning that the families had not previously had the opportunity to learn, secondly, as an adult learning program, so the family adults could learn about these new experiences as they led their children's learning within the program, and thirdly, as a learning through participation program, where the family adults and their children could learn these new experiences through shared participation.

5.1.1 This 'Learning' Program as a Program of 'New' Learning Experiences

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program provided new learning experiences for these families. The Western cultural activity of school had only been part of their community life for about two generations, and so, with learning at school now part of their children's future, the family adults requested the development of a program so that they could add preparing their children for school to their family activities and routines. This was similar to families across the world who choose new activities to participate in with their children, that the families are not able to give their children within their home (Boethel, 2004; Evangelou & Wild, 2014). For the Ngaanyatjarra families, their chosen additional learning activity was the set of early experiences children in the families of Western school cultures, practice with their children to prepare them for school.

Exploring the reason these experiences were new for the Ngaanyatjarra families had significant implications in this study findings' discussion. I situated these reasons within two sets of literature, reviewed in Chapter 2, and presented them within a 'yes … but … therefore' scenario, as applied to the program study explaining my understanding of these reasons before continuing with the discussion.

Firstly, yes, young children learn and develop within their family and the culture of their family (Hamilton, 1981; Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) through child rearing practices aligned to their family's cultural goals (Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 2000; Hamilton, 1981; Kearins, 1984; Rogoff, 2003). But, it is only the early experiences of children living in families within the same culture as that of the Western school culture, for whom their early experiences are expected to lead to readiness for learning at school (Bloch, 1991; Heath, 1982; Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, the Ngaanyatjarra family adults requested access to this program of new experiences for both their children and themselves:

> Mums might sit down and think about how it would be good for their children to have a place like playgroup to go to, to help get their kids ready for school. At playgroup the children learn to use things like scissors, pencils, paper and also hear about numbers and shapes. (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006, p. 5)

Secondly, yes, for children within Western families their experiences, demonstrated at school entry age, are predictive of outcomes at school and in later life (McCain & Mustard, 1999). With the predictive nature of children's experiences linked to the socioeconomic status of the family (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) the development of early years programs in less affluent communities are more likely to be seen as interventions rather than a need to address cultural difference to prepare those children for school (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Heckman & Masterov, 2007). But, although, the Ngaanyatjarra families observed that their children were not doing well at school, the families knew that their children's early experiences within the Ngaanyatjarra family culturer, could not prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of school. Therefore, the families requested this program of new experiences in the hope of affecting change.

My conclusion is therefore that the study program is a program of new experiences because of the difference of the culture of the family, to that of the culture of school, as reflected in children's child-rearing experiences within their culture of their family (Rogoff, 2003). For the Ngaanyatjarra families this reason of cultural difference positions their requested learning for school program as a new set of learning experiences, because it was not possible for them to have the experiences of another culture within the child-rearing practices of their own culture. I believe that this reason of cultural difference as the reason for their children's demonstrated experiences at school entry age, is the most profound, and most pervasive difference between this study and both the literature and the practice of early years programs as interventional programs.

It is through the use of a “cultural lens” that the experiences in this program are recognised as new for the Ngaanyatjarra families (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 369). Without the use of a cultural lens, the distinction between readiness to learn and readiness for learning at school is not visible, because this distinction is unnecessary for children of families within Western culture, as it is “expected” that their early experiences within their families will prepare them for schooling, as schooling is in the culture of their families (Kagan & Rigby, 2003, p. 2). Unfortunately, this distinction within children’s early experiences is rarely noted as the causal factor for children’s different experiences at school entry age as children of different cultures (Kagan & Rigby, 2003). with McTurk, et al. (2008), writing about school readiness for Indigenous children in remote Australia, confirming that these two distinct concepts are “confounded” when considering the reasons affecting Indigenous children’s readiness for school (p. 1).

However, by requesting this ‘new’ program on the basis of the cultural difference of their children’s early experiences within their family, the Ngaanyatjarra family adults have clearly distanced themselves from the prevailing narrative of disadvantage, in relation to their families and their children’s early experiences within their family. Although living in the context of disadvantage (SCRGSP, 2016), this disadvantage was not perceived as the causal factor of their children’s early experiences within their family (see Chapter 2.4). This recognition of the families, as to the reason that the experiences in this program would be new, is significant, but their response is, even more momentous. Faced with their children’s lack of ‘school readiness’ experiences at school entry age and knowing that the reason was the cultural difference of their child-rearing practices within their family, the family adults requested the opportunity, within this program, to teach their children these new experiences, because they had not had the opportunity to learn these experiences previously, in the context of their family. Rogoff et al., (2017), considering differences within child-rearing practices across cultural groups, write that “in today’s world, it is often an advantage to know the skills necessary for school. But it is not a deficit to not know how to do so ‘yet’” (p. 879). This statement mirrors the response of the Ngaanyatjarra families, that, for their families, not knowing these experiences has presented them with an opportunity to learn – to learn how to prepare their children for school, through the everyday shared experiences within this program.

Therefore, for the Ngaanyatjarra families, once they walked in through the gate to participate in their new program of additional experiences each day, there was no link to any family disadvantage or deficit, that may exist within their family situation outside the gate. From my perspective, living alongside the families in these communities for many years, it is helpful to reflect that in the families’ many conversations with me, there was never any suggestion that their children

should, or could, have learnt these experiences within their family already. For the family adults, these experiences were additional experiences from another culture, and this program was their opportunity to learn these new experiences within their families so that they could prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of school:

> Because it's good, good things in this building... stories and play. That's why there's a lotta mums bringing all the kids … They can play outside, and mums can have a cup of tea here and sit down, watch the kids, and play around, outside and inside. (Family conversation, 2018)

This response of a new program of additional experiences because the families had not yet had the opportunity to learn these experiences, is, I believe, a significant 'fork in the road' from the literature about school readiness for Indigenous families in remote communities. For the families in this study, faced with the set of experiences that children are expected to have at school entry age, but are not yet able to demonstrate, the families have recognised that this inability to demonstrate these experiences is a matter of opportunity, an opportunity that they had not yet had. In contrast, within the literature, faced with the same situation at that 'fork in the road', it seems that a linking of disadvantage, deficit within the family to children's inability to demonstrate the experiences at school entry age 'was not simply the idea that somebody still has something to learn – it assumes that they should already have learned it … ' (Rogoff et al., 2017, p. 878). Similar to an example given by Rogoff et al (2017) to illustrate this different response, in my family, just because we do not speak French, for example, we are not a 'deficit' family, it is just that we have not needed to learn French yet, but, similar to the families in this study, when the need is presented, and an opportunity is sourced, then, we will learn French with our children so that we can participate in the practices of the different culture of France when we get there. Therefore, in this program, not having had the opportunity yet, creates the opportunity to learn. For the family adults in this study, their requested program is the opportunity for them to learn about preparing their children for the new practices of school, an opportunity that they had not yet had within their families.

5.1.2 This 'Learning' Program as an 'Adult Learning' Program

From the beginning of this program, alongside the request of the family adults to help them prepare their children for school, was their request 'to teach them how to do this' (My program journal, 1995), so that they could learn how to prepare their children for school. Therefore, for these family adults, this program was a learning program for them, as the opportunity for them to learn how to prepare their children for school, an opportunity that they had not yet had. And they asked

for my assistance in their learning, recognising my expertise and experience in what they wanted to learn to do. Therefore, from the beginning of the program, as described in the stories of chapter 4, my practical response to their request was to ensure that the play and learning environment that was set up each day for the young children, would automatically double as a situated learning environment for the family adults (Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020) so that they could learn, and participate in this learning program with their children at the same time.

Over the years, I've frequently commented to questioning observers, that my development of this program has always had a 99% focus on the family adults and about a 1% focus on the children. As a parent, I know that very young children often want to join in with what family adults are doing at home, whether it be playing with the sockets in the huge socket set beside the family adult working on the car each weekend or pulling up a stool to add the next ingredients for the cake that family adult is making. Rogoff (2003) explained that the propensity of young children in all cultures to be involved with the activities of their family adults, assisted children's learning. In this program of new learning, when the family adults were enthusiastically participating in the activities, then the young children want to join in too, creating the shared learning environment for the family adults and children within this program of new learning experiences.

Merriam and Baumgarten (2020) describing adult learning environments within Indigenous and Eastern cultural settings, explain that learning happens in the context of the purpose of the learning, that "learning is structured by the community problem or issue needing attention, by accessing resources, including people and materials that can assist in the problem solving" (p. 288). Interestingly, this statement reflects the initial development of this family program, beginning with the community concern that their children were not doing as well at school as they expected, *"*they're not learning*"*, their request for the purpose of this program "to get our children ready for school" and their request for my assistance, to "help us … teach us*"* within the development of this program for their children.

However, before adding to this discussion, it is important to explain that, in my view, 'adult learning' is a difficult descriptor for the learning of the Indigenous family adults in this program, and it is not a phrase that I've ever used within the program. The communal, collectivist feel of the informal learning of family adults each day as they participate with their children in the activities of the program, is not so well represented in the descriptor of adult learning, as is the more individual, task-focused adult learning that occurs within many Western cultural environments. Intriguingly, this admission is also reflected in the literature, which valued adult learning in Indigenous settings may look different to what has come to be expected within adult education within the Western culture

(Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020). In their study of adult learning in Eastern and Indigenous contexts, Merriam and Baumgarten (2020) identified themes within Indigenous adult learning styles that "stand in contrast" with Western cultural views, although noting that this contrast is more an "emphasis" rather than an "either/or" (p. 286)—the next section of this discussion is framed within three of these themes.

Firstly, for Indigenous families learning within their cultural ways, adult learning is "primarily informal … embedded in everyday life, [in contrast to] "formal" (Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020, p. 287). This informal learning was demonstrated each day through their shared participation with their children in the everyday activities and routines of the program, through which the children and family adults became familiar with the materials and resources, activities, and routines of the new experiences of the different culture of school. Their situated learning environment was the context for their informal learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Secondly, adult learning is 'interdependent', rather than 'independent' (Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020, p. 286). In this program of shared participation, the family adults were learning together, learning how to 'do' this preparation of their children for school, through watching the modelling of the activities and routines within this program as they were presented to the family adult/child groups by the program facilitator/ educator and learning from each other, as they participated in the activities with their children.

Thirdly, for these Indigenous families, this interdependence of learning was demonstrated in their expectation that "learning is communal and within the community, rather than an isolated activity" (Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020, p. 289). Learning activities situated across family groups were frequently described in the stories in Chapter 4, within activities such as family story time, group story time and morning tea, and art and craft activities. The communal nature of this program was evident within the initial identification of the need for this program among the families, and their agreed purpose that this program would enable the family adults to both learn, and to prepare their children for school, for the benefit of all the families in the community.

Within additional literature, there are further similarities to the informal learning of the family adults within this program. Harris (1990) working in the context of Indigenous families in nearby remote communities, observes that "learning has more to do with participation and experiencing than with active cognition" (p. 30), and in this program, sharing learning opportunities with the family adults was always in the context of doing activities, in contrast to more Western cultural ways of learning through talking about doing. The workplace training activities that

complemented this program for the family adults had a similar foundation (see Chapter 4.3.3), as Beryl explained, that after years of watching and assisting their children learn through the activities within the program, the parents would want to learn and become more knowledgeable "about 'why' the activities were part of the program with their children" (My program journal, 2007).

Facilitating the learning of the family adults was integral to my role in this learning program. But it is not surprising that the families asked me to help them learn of how to prepare their children for school, as I'd worked in the classroom with a number of the family adults across the community who were Aboriginal Teacher Assistants, supporting them in the context of workplace training processes for them within their roles at school. They knew that I had the experience and expertise about young children's learning for school, both in the family context, and at school, and that I was accustomed to sharing my expertise with them, in the context of learning within the culture of school.

As an adult learning program, this program was always a shared learning program with the family adults, because, as stated in Chapter 1, "I knew what was helpful for children to know prior to day one at kindy, both as a teacher and as a mother, and they knew their children and their ways of helping their children learn new things" (My program journal, 1995). Within the literature, in the sociocultural context of programs as learning programs, Cole (1985) uses a helpful conception of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) in positioning such a shared learning environment as the "structure of joint activity in any context where there are participants who exercise differential responsibility by virtue of differential expertise" (p.155). In the development of the study program, I believed that this statement mirrored our various learning and teaching roles within the that development so that the family adults could prepare their children for school through shared participation.

5.1.3 This 'Learning' Program as a 'Learning Through Participation' Program

One of the initial program principles that guided my program development with the Ngaanyatjarra family adults, was that "the program [was] operated for the families, so that family adults could participate in the experiences of this new program with their children" (Program principles, February 1995), because that is what they asked me to do. The dynamic relation that unfolded over the years between the participation of the family adults and the operation of the

program so that they could participate with their children positioned this program within the finding, that their learning is through participation.

A program from a different culture needs to be operated by a person who can meet the workplace expectations within the culture of the program. In the first two years of this program, 1995–1996, (Section 4.1), when the families asked me to help them with this new program, my cultural affinity with the program's workplace expectations, and my cultural and educational affinity with the learning activities for the family adults and children, enabled the family adults to participate with their children in the daily activities.

During 2006–2007 (see Section 4.2), support for the local family adults in their roles as Playgroup Activity Leaders focused upon two of their identified difficulties within their roles. Firstly, the planning and implementation of the activities within the program, and secondly, taking responsibility for each day's operation. Even with ongoing support, it was too difficult for them to continue as leaders, and the community playgroups closed. Such inhibiting factors experienced during these years, demonstrated yet again that firstly, for the families to participate in this program, the program needed to be operated for them, and secondly, that operation of the program was dependent upon the playgroup operator having the cultural affinity with the program to responsibly address the program's workplace expectations.

In Section 4.8.1, a detailed description of the "key episodes" (Stake, 1995, p. 40) of those years concluded that, for the family adults, their participation with their children in this learning program was "mutually exclusive" to their having responsibility for the operation of this program (Harris, 1990, p. 44). The use of a cultural lens in this analysis demonstrated how, for the Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Activity Leaders, confronted within each playgroup session with expectations about family from their Ngaanyatjarra culture, and with expectations about the program from the Western culture of the program, meeting the expectation from one culture necessarily meant failing to meet the expectation from the other culture.

Harris (1990) writing from the context of remote Indigenous communities slightly northwest of the Ngaanyatjarra communities, noted that regarding the differences between the cultural expectations of these remote Indigenous families and that of the Western culture, "most of the time it is more a matter of irreconcilable incompatibility than of degree of difference" (p. 43). Bain, 2006, raised the issue of cultural conflict associated with local Aboriginal people being employed in Western roles and expected to maintain these roles within their communities. In the context of remote Indigenous communities bordering the Ngaanyatjarra communities to the south-east, she

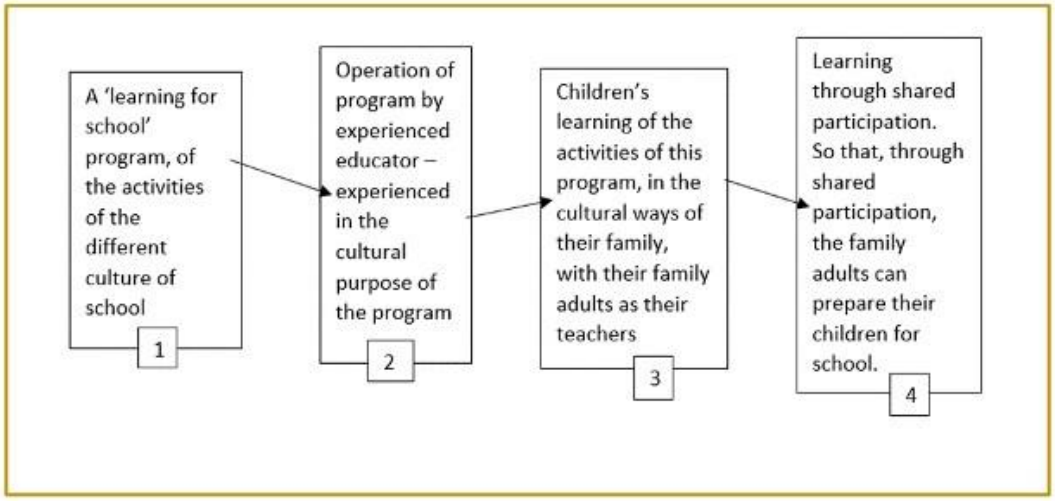
suggested that “such a move is disruptive for the Aboriginal social structure [and can] put both the individual and the community under intolerable pressure”’ (p. 33, 41). Mahood, (2012), commenting on these contrasting expectations within similar communities, remarked that “the assumption that Aboriginal people should be trained to fill these roles … often results in … people being set up for failure” (p. 10). In those situations, Harris (1990) explained that sometimes the “values behind’ the expected roles within another culture can become ‘deeply offensive’, and the Aboriginal person “may have to abstain from filling those roles” (p. 64). Sadly, in the Ngaanyatjarra program this was the inevitable outcome for the family adults acting as playgroup leaders, who, recognising that for them that it was too hard to do playgroup, resolved the issue by absenting themselves from their position as playgroup leaders and, perhaps more importantly, the tension of these competing cultural expectations resulting in the playgroups’ closure (Section 4.2).

However, my shared development of this program with the family adults was always responsive to their concerns. Therefore, in 2008, when these Indigenous family adults, decided there was “irreconcilable incompatibility” (Harris, 1990, p. 43) between the Western cultural expectations of the program operation and their cultural responsibilities to their family, then their action in choosing to have no playgroup rather than operating it themselves at the end of 2007 made an immensely powerful statement about their place in this cross-cultural learning program. Their statement was heard, and responded to, and so from 2008, the Ngaanyatjarra program continued as a program operated for the families, by a person with cultural affinity to the program culture so that the family adults could participate with their children in the program, without the concerns of operational responsibilities or the clashes of cultural expectations.

Therefore, from 2008, the model of the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program has been an assisted playgroup model of ‘program content plus program operation’ (Chapter 4.5.2), as this model enabled both the learning through participation for the family adults, and the participation of the families with their children within this program structure (see Figure 1). The consistency of the program content and purpose over the years enabled the family adults to know what they are coming to. “The kids cry for playgroup, and we tell them, ‘Oh, playgroup’s there’, and mothers bring them to the … playgroup, and play with the toys, and all, little cubby house” (Family conversation, 2017).

Figure 1

Model of the Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Program



Within the literature, the discussion of finding 1, that this program is a learning program, is more frequently found in the literature about learning, than about school readiness and early years programs, which is not surprising, as family adults are rarely included in children's preparation for school programs, and the focus within early childhood literature is usually child-centred (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Fleer, 2003) rather than focusing on family adults guiding their young children's learning. Therefore, this discussion is centred on the literature about learning in sociocultural environments, and learning for adults (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020; Rogoff, 2003).

In the socio-cultural context of these communities, this learning program is similar to a community of practice, with the learning of the family adults situated in the context of the purpose of their learning, that of preparing their children for school (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020; Rogoff, 2003; Wenger, 1998). Over the years of this program, the ebb and flow of people's participation in activities have been reflected within the expectation that the families would become increasingly knowledgeable, more *'ninti',* aligned with their "changing involvement, [in the] legitimate peripheral participation" within the activities and routines of the program (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 284). Every persons' participation in the program was a legitimate learning activity, no matter how peripheral, whether they were only visiting once from other communities with family children or they participated in the program with their family children nearly every day.

In this learning program as a "'community' of practice, [the] shared history of learning" across the families, created their shared learning context for each day's program (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 106). The shared history of the families' learning through this program was always

important, so it was often recorded through photos, adding to that shared community history within their Indigenous communities. The favourite photo books in this program were always of the early years of this program, such as the playgroup booklet, *Playgroup: Playing to get ready for school*, the story of the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program of 1995/1996, because in this booklet, the young children can see their older siblings, cousins, and family adults at playgroup, participating in the same learning activities that they were doing each day in their program, even across two generations. The history was always part of the present of the program for the families, but it was always moving forward. For example, at the twenty-five year mark of the program, any children under 5 years of age would never know playgroup without the counting the kids activity before morning tea, and children under 10 years would never know playgroup without shared family story time with their family adults, with the local stories in Ngaanyatjarra about camels and dogs, and the translated story of *Where's Spot?* (Hill, 2009) into Ngaanyatjarra language, *Wanytjatja Spotnga?* and the purposefully designed playgroup centre at Warburton, where so many family adults and children enjoyed their shared participation in this program. In fact, remarkably, anyone under the age of 25 years, would never know what the Ngaanyatjarra communities were like without these learning for school playgroups in some communities.

Within these programs as a community of practice, it is not only the participatory experiences of the children and family adults changed, but the context of their participation in this community learning program also changed. Rogoff (2003) writing about human development in the context of cultural communities, explains that "learning is a process of changing participation in community activities", and that within this changing participation, participants can take on "new roles and responsibilities" (p. 284). Over the years as family adults shared their experience of assisting their children in this program with other family adults, they demonstrated these new roles each day. But perhaps one of the most awesome demonstrations of these changed roles, since about 2014, occurred when watching the changing participation of the playgroup children of the mid-1990s to the playgroup family adults with their own children:

> No one has to teach these family adults how to share picture books with their children– they learnt when they were young themselves and now, they are giving their children the same opportunities. These young family adults enjoy family story time and are very keen on changing their role from the child of '95 to being the enthusiastic parent for their child in 2017. They are comfortable within the familiarity of their community-based program and ready to be the teachers for their children, using their home language (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2019, p. 83)

Returning to the literature, there are two closing points to make. With reference to early years programs, Fleer (2003) suggested that viewing an early childhood program as a community of practice is a helpful "vehicle" to "think differently [about] taken for granted" (p. 77) ways within early childhood programs. Fleer's (2003) suggestion was firstly reflected in the prioritising of the Ngaanyatjarra family adult's responsibility for preparing their own children for the new practices of school. In the findings, the family adult's expectations, that they would learn this 'new' task of preparing their children for school within their family child-rearing responsibilities, in an out of home yet within family program, was highlighted within the discussion in terms of a community of practice, and a learning program for family adults, rather than an early childhood program. Secondly, the discussion prioritised the importance of the culture of the family within this learning program, with Wolcott (2008) proposing that within a learning program as a community of practice the "attention to context will be attention to *sociocultural* context" (italics in original) (p. 251).

5.1.4 Summary for Finding 1

Finding 1 declared that this program acting as a learning program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for the new experiences of school. Viewed through a cultural lens, this program offered the set of new experiences that the family adults, and children, had not had the opportunity to learn yet (see Section 5.1.1). With their request for my educational and cultural expertise to assist them in both the content and the operation of this program, the informal learning within this situated learning program enabled the family adults to learn about these new experiences so that they could teach their children (see Section 5.1.2). Therefore, through their ongoing shared participation in this learning program, within the community of practice of their identified assisted playgroup program model, it is through shared participation with their children, that they both learned about, and prepared, their children for the practices of the different culture of the school (see Section 5.1.3).

Finding 2, the next section of this chapter, discusses how the implications of the family adult's choice of purpose and content for this learning for school program continued to enable them, through shared participation with their children, to introduce their children to the activities and the practices of the different culture of the school.

5.2 Finding 2: The Purpose and Content of This Cross-Cultural Program is Learning For School

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school, because the purpose and content of this program focused on learning for school. As identified within this common theme in Section 4.6 there were three aspects of this finding. Firstly, the single purpose for this program is so that the family adults can prepare their children for school, through shared participation with their children in this program, and secondly, that the content of the learning experiences within the shared participation of the family adults and children is the additional set of learning for school activities and practices required by the Ngaanyatjarra children to succeed within Western school culture. Then, thirdly, the purpose and content of the program combined as an introduction to the cultural practices of learning at school.

5.2.1 The Single Purpose for This Program

For the family adults, the single purpose for attending this program with their children was so that they could prepare their children for school, through shared participation. This singleness of purpose was demonstrated in three ways. Firstly, the families knew that the activities and routines of this program were the set of new experiences bridging the knowledge of the different culture of school, that they, as families, had not yet had the opportunity to learn, "It's good to have a playgroup in the community. It's a special place where children can learn" (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006, p. 4).

Secondly, the families knew that their purpose for bringing their children to this program was so that that their children would get learned*,* a translation of their Ngaanyatjarra word *nintirringkula*, explaining the reason they attend and reflecting the way they expected their children would learn—"Why do you bring your little one to playgroup? *Nintirringkula* [to get learned]" (Family conversation, 2018). To me, their translation *to get learned* has a different sense to the possible answer from Western families to the same question—to learn. To get learned suggested that the children learn from every aspect of the program environment, the resources, activities, routines, social interactions, and through watching and by just being there. Thirdly, the family adults knew that they were coming to a program in which their request to both learn the new experiences themselves and to be the teachers of the new experiences to their children in this program, had always been respected and prioritised (see Section 4.1).

Within the literature, the *single* purpose of the Ngaanyatjarra program, as a learning for school program, is in contrast to the *dual* purposes of early childhood programs as interventions among Indigenous families in remote areas, with the purposes of these dual programs often framed as "overcoming generational disadvantage" (Mason White, 2013, p. 3) or "closing the gap" (Sims, 2011, p. 1). However, within early years programs as interventions, the link between children's experiences at school entry age, and their family, is often that of family disadvantage (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Evangelou and Wild (2014) warned that in these programs "parents are frequently viewed through a deficiency lens, as in need of external support" (p. 383), while Bloch and Kim (2015) advised that the purpose of an interventional program may be to address a 'lack' within the family (p. 4).

In stark contrast to this literature, the researcher found that the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program was not referenced to the evidence for early years programs that are strongly linked to changing the course of disadvantage as were the dual-purpose programs (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). In this study, the Ngaanyatjarra program has been referenced to family adults teaching new experiences to their young children (Rogoff, 2003), to family adults gaining new learning in situated learning programs and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020), and to family adults and children learning new experiences within the socio-cultural context of their learning with experienced others (Cole, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). For the Ngaanyatjarra family adults, it was only their single learning purpose that was their issue needing attention that of assistance with the development of this family program so that, through shared participation in the new learning experiences of the program, the family adults could prepare their children for the different cultural practices of the school(Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020) Why do you bring your little one.

Within this single purpose as a learning program, the participation of the family adults depended upon the program being an 'assisted' program prepared and operated for them, with this 'assistance' being provided by a program facilitator, a coach, or instructor, facilitating the requested learning experiences with families. This would be similar to the role of the home tutor, or instructor in the home visiting and school-based parents as teachers programs for Indigenous families in remote communities, where family adults are instructed so that they can participate in learning for school activities with their children. (Connelly & Mallet, 2020; Hanrahan, 2004; Page et al., 2019). But this assistive function of the program facilitator is in contrast to the assistance of program facilitators in dual-purpose programs, usually described as "parenting support" (Williams et al., 2015, p. 33) as these programs reflect an interventional focus within the family.

Interestingly, although intentionally a single purpose learning program, the Ngaanyatjarra program has operated since 2009 within the supported playgroup model, which is a dual-purpose program model. For the families, this program has consistently remained a single purpose learning program, as they requested, while the task, and tension, of balancing the evaluation of this single purpose learning program, within a dual-purpose program model, is the task of the program facilitator. Rogoff et al. (2017) commented on this tension, regarding research with families of different cultures, noting that although cultural diversity is valued, evaluations are often requested within the "perspective of the cultural values and practices" (p. 877) of the Western culture's program expectations. Intriguingly, this tension is reflected within the parents as teachers program referred to in Section 2.4.3.1, perhaps indicating an emerging need for a single purpose learning for school playgroup program, for Indigenous families living in remote communities, specifically for families who want to prepare their own children for the practices of the different culture of the school.

Within the literature, in some family programs within the Indigenous culture, there is a different single purpose to the single learning for school purpose of this study's program, that of the single purpose and focus on strengthening their culture, language, and Indigenous identity within their families, so that their children will be prepared, in themselves, to learn the new experiences of school at school (Ball, 2010; Hutchins et al., 2007; Prochner, 2004). However, for the Ngaanyatjarra families, with their strong cultural traditions, and the continued use of their language as their first and home language (Glass, 1990), their request for this program of new learning was limited to assisting them with preparing their children for the experiences of the different culture of the school. Therefore, for these families, maintaining the sharp distinction between their children's experiences within their family and culture and the new experiences required for the purposes of another culture, also emphasised the single purpose of this program, that of learning an additional set of experiences from another cultural context, that they had not yet had the opportunity to learn.

5.2.2 The Content of This 'Learning' Program

In this study, the family adults have always specified the content of their requested program as the "school readiness orientated activities, especially early literacy in their Ngaanyatjarra language, to facilitate the children's ease of adjustment to school at pre-primary level" (Program objective, February 1995). Consequently, since this program began, the Ngaanyatjarra children have had two distinct sets of experiences during their early years of life within their family:

1. *their continuing early experiences within their daily family life, their readiness for learning experiences, for their family purposes within their Ngaanyatjarra culture*
2. *the additional set of specific school readiness experiences of the Western culture of the school, when participating in their playgroup program with their family adults*

This additional set of school readiness activities being content of their requested learning program so that through shared participation with their family adults, the children can become familiar with the activities and routines of the different culture of school, such as playdough, painting and drawing, art and craft activities, home corner, puzzles, and story time. Viewing this content from the families' side of the bridge, through a Ngaanyatjarra cultural lens, this content embodies the new experiences of the different culture of the school (Finding 5.1.1), because these activities are not part of children's daily life at home in their family and culture. However, viewing exactly the same content from the school side of the bridge, through a Western cultural lens, these activities are the skills and experiences of children at school entry age, which are built on when children begin learning at school.

5.2.2.1 The Content of This Learning Program as 'Repertoires of Practice'. In Section 4.6.2, the content of this learning program, as the additional set of school readiness experiences of children within Western school culture families, was positioned as the repertoires of practice for the cultural context of school. As noted in that section, my framing of this additional content as repertoires of practice is taken from the work of Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) and their explanation that "the idea of a 'repertoire of practice' shifts from thinking about culture as a stable characteristic … to focus on people's 'experience' with cultural practices through their life and community history" (p. 32). In Chapter 4, for the family adults and children, the learning of new activities and routines within this program was the learning of the practices of school, what to do, and how to do the activities of the cultural setting of school. The illustration of this program as a bridge between the two cultures positioned the activities of this program, on the bridge, as separate to the activities of children within the culture of their home and family life. This positioning of the content of this program, as an additional set of experiences, to be learnt for the purposes of another culture, also builds on the previous finding, in Section 5.1.1, that this new program is a learning program for a particular cultural purpose.

Learning a repertoire of practice for a particular cultural setting does not diminish the cultural ways already learnt within our homes or other settings. We all develop different repertoires of practice for different cultural settings, for example, a repertoire of practice for participating in a ceremony overseas, or a repertoire of practice for cheering on a football game near home. Similarly,

the Ngaanyatjarra family adults, in their everyday routines, encouraged their children to learn repertoires of practice, such as the repertoire of practice for buying food in the bi-cultural context of the community store each day, or the non-negotiable repertoires of practice for their children's participation in the community swimming pool each day in summer. Within their playgroup program, the family adults were teaching their children the repertoires of practice for family story time, for cut and paste activities in a group at the table, for lining up for bikes after morning tea, for hand washing routines before story time and for leaving the toys at the program for the next day's play (see Chapter 4). Additionally, over the years, these repertoires of practice within the program, have become, cumulatively, the repertoires of practice for the routines and activities of each day's program, similar to the expectations of families at learning programs as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, the family adults brought their children to their learning program knowing and expecting that their children would learn, "they can get learned when they're young so that when they go to the next school, they know what they're doing" (Family conversation, 2018).

Writing about the bi-cultural nature of two-way schooling with Indigenous families in communities near to the Ngaanyatjarra communities, Harris (1990) described the process of learning the repertoires of activities, skills, and routines of the Western culture of school as like a "giant role play—to be learned but not believed in as necessarily representing the best way to live: (p. 16). Harris (1990) explained that the choice of separation of experiences by culture can be helpful, as cultural separation is less dangerous than "osmosis, [and these] roles can be more easily kept external to their most personal Aboriginal identity" (p. 64). Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) made a similar recommendation, that "when learning new cultural practices...everybody is able to, and benefits from learning to do things more than one way, expanding their 'repertoires of practice'" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003 as cited in Rogoff et al., 2017, p. 879). Importantly, there is no deficit in learning an additional set of practices for a different cultural setting, that one has not yet had the opportunity to learn. It is a matter of new learning.

5.2.2.2 The Content of School Readiness as Repertoires of Practice. From the stories in Chapter 4, it is evident that the activities and routines of this study's program are quite similar to the activities and routines of many play-based environments for family adults and their young children. However, from these stories it is also evident that it is the family adults who are teaching their children the repertoires of practice, the new activities, and routines, for the different cultural setting of school. In the discussion of this finding about the content of this preparation for school program

as repertoires of practice in relation to the literature about school readiness, there are four aspects to be discussed.

Firstly, in this study program, it is the Ngaanyatjarra family adults who are preparing their children for the practices of the different culture of school. This is in contrast to much of the literature where the preparation of young children for school is not with their family adults as teachers but is with non-family educators as teachers of their children (Dockett et al., 2010; Mason-White, 2013, 2014). Secondly, within this study, the setting of the family adults preparing their children for school is within a playgroup program, an out of home yet within family program, in contrast to more formal centre-based programs such as early childhood programs and readiness programs, with qualified educators. In playgroup programs, the family adult always has the responsibility for their child. Additionally, there is no agreed curriculum or learning framework for supported playgroup type programs, because the purpose for supported playgroups is often within the context of parenting support (Commerford & Robinson, 2016) and it is only rarely that family adults guide their children's learning for school within the program (Williams et al., 2015).

However, through a brief perusal of the national Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) used in accredited early childhood education and care programs in Australia, I observed that there are three interesting intersections of this Framework with the program and families of this study, using the lens of 'family preparing their children for school'. To start with, the vision for children's learning in this Framework is based on children's learning within their family, which is not dissimilar to the views of the families in this study, that "from before birth, children are connected to family, community, and culture. Their earliest development takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's first and most influential educators" (Australian Government. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 7). My next observation was that of the five learning outcomes for children within this framework, four of them could be viewed as outcomes that would usually be within the responsibility of families, which in this program will be within the culture of these Indigenous families. These outcomes are of children having a "strong sense of identity … connected to their world … a strong sense of well-being … effective communicators" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 8). My final observation is that the remaining outcome of the Framework reflected the task that the families asked me to help them with, in this cross-cultural learning program, that through the activities and routines of their requested program, their children will be "developing a range of skills and processes..." (DEEWR, 2009, p. 35) so that children are prepared for learning at school. Therefore, through these three intersections, it can be observed that the chosen content of this new learning program by the Indigenous families was reflected in this

framework, as the skills and activities, the repertoires of practice of the different culture of the school, whereas the remaining four outcomes were naturally subsumed within the everyday routines of family adults with their young children.

Secondly, the school readiness content selected by the Ngaanyatjarra family adults was about enabling their children to learn the practices, activities, and routines, of the different culture of the school. This view of school readiness is similar to the interventionist view of school readiness, as "what the child can do and how the child behaves" (Meisels, 1998, p. 13). Also, there is some similarity to the sociocultural view of readiness (Meisels, 1998) that recognizes the relativity of readiness among children in social and cultural terms, as, in this program, it is the different social, cultural, and linguistic context of these families that have created the need for the development of this program. However, the wider views of sociocultural readiness outside of the family that include the school, the view that "looks to the setting for its definition of school readiness" (Meisels, 1998, p. 15), and the ecological views of readiness that includes the readiness of the school (Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Dockett et al., 2010), are not reflected in the purpose of this program for the Ngaanyatjarra families.

Within this program, my role as the program facilitator/educator was to be responsive to the concerns and intentions of the family adults, rather than directing their choices. In 1995/1996, as part of my program facilitator role, I kept journals each day to "observe what model the playgroup develops as the mothers shape it to meet their needs as they perceive them, and the needs of their children" (Program objective, February 1995). This program was about family adults preparing their children for learning at school, but it was always within the context of their family, not the school, and it was more about the learning, than the school. As for many families across locations and cultures, I would suggest that the readiness of the school is not relevant to within-family activities of children prior to school entry age, or is it a matter of concern, or responsibility, for family adults. Interestingly, it seemed these later views of school readiness in the literature moved the preparation of children for school away from the everyday routines, activities, and practices of families with their young children.

Thirdly, in this program, the purpose of the family adults is to prepare their children for school, which is in contrast to the wider sociocultural and ecological views of readiness that include the child, the family, the community, and the school (Kagan & Rigby, 2003; Meisels, 1998). Dockett et al., (2010) write that this wider view "rejects the perspective that readiness for school resides in individual children, and so rejects the notion that some children would be considered unready for school" (p. 8). Similar literature seems to have taken the *fork in the road*, illustrated in Section 5.1.1,

linking a set of behaviours to be learnt, and not currently being able to demonstrate them, with the reason of deficit. In contrast, for the Ngaanyatjarra families of this program, the linking reason was within a yet framework, that "it is not a deficit to not know how to do so 'yet'" (Rogoff et al., 2017, p. 879). In this program, with the Ngaanyatjarra family adults distancing themselves from any deficit model, for their child or for themselves, they brought their children to their learning program, expecting that their children would *get learned* through shared participation in the activities of this program, as they know that it is only their children who will be in the kindy class on day one of school.

Fourthly, the purpose of this program was so that the family adults could prepare their children for school, prior to school. Family adults can only be their children's teachers prior to school, guiding their children's new learning experiences within the cultural ways of their family, during the child-rearing years. And also, within this program, this family learning opportunity is for children from birth to school entry age, not just for 3–5-year-olds, because young children begin learning these experiences with their family adults from when they are babies, as they watch their siblings and become familiar with the activities within the environment, similarly to children growing up within families in Western school cultures. In this program, for the Ngaanyatjarra families, preparing their children for school was "to facilitate children's ease of adjustment to school" (Program objective, February 1995), reflecting the words of Arnold et al. (2006) that "for transition to be smooth, children need to be ready for school" (p. 6).

However, in contrast, within the literature about school readiness for Indigenous families, Mason-White (2013) reported that "there is growing support for the view that children should not be required to demonstrate 'readiness' prior to starting school" (p. 30). Yet the findings from the study of this program (see Chapter 4) unequivocally demonstrated that the Ngaanyatjarra family adults, from remote communities, can prepare their children for the activities and routines of school, given the learning opportunity structured to enable the preparation of their children for this learning. Additionally, part of the shared learning history of the families in this program over the years is the evidence of the readiness for school demonstrated by the first playgroup graduates at kindy in 1997 (see Section 4.1), and with these playgroup graduates now bringing their own children to the playgroup program. I proposed that the question must be asked as to why there is such a significant difference, a mutual exclusivity, between the stories within this study and the literature, and whether the literature is reflecting a reduced expectation that Indigenous family adults can prepare their children for the practices of school, prior to school entry. I considered these

disconcerting questions in the next section, 5.2.3, in the discussion of this program as an opportunity for an introduction to the culture of school.

5.2.3 This Program as an Introduction to the Culture of the School

An introduction to the culture of an event presumes a recognition that the culture of the event is different from the culture of the person intending to participate in that event, and that such an introduction would be advantageous for the person's participation in that event. Many aspects of this program contributed to the families' introduction, for their children, to the cultural practices of school, beginning with their initial family to family request for help, so that as families they could prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of the school. The idea of programs designed as an introduction to the culture of the school for Indigenous children living within their Indigenous culture, though rarely mentioned within the literature, have been suggested previously:

> If Indigenous children, especially those from more traditional lifestyles, are to make a successful transition to Western-style school, they need to be introduced to a 'schooling culture'—one that makes explicit the pre-learning on which the school system is based (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999). (Penman, 2004, p. 47)

For the Ngaanyatjarra families, the recognition of the cultural difference between the culture of the families and the culture of the program/school was foundational to their purpose for this learning program, as was their knowledge that they had not yet had the opportunity for this pre-learning within the context of their families. In discussing this finding through a 'cultural lens' (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), three implications became evident for introducing the culture of the school through this program.

Firstly, the families requested this program so that they could teach their children about the cultural expectations of school, before they went to school, in their own language and cultural ways (Section 4.7). There were no apologies for the different cultural expectations within the program because these differences were both requested and expected in this cross-cultural learning program. To enable negotiation of culturally different expectations in this bi-cultural program, the findings indicated that the program facilitator needed to be someone from outside the families' culture, who could negotiate the cultural differences on behalf of the program, as reflected in their request for my assistance at the beginning of this program (Bain, 2006; Harris, 1990). Whether with Beryl or with the family adults, any negotiation of different cultural expectations was always a shared negotiation, with our "differential responsibility by virtue of differential expertise", (Cole, 1985, p.

155) even in terms of cultural expertise, assisting this process within this cross-cultural program (Section 4.8.3). Within the literature, however, it was only the absence of any introduction to the culture of school that was frequently noted, once the children were at school, with Moyle (2019) remarking on the "problem of 'cultural mismatches' between the home and school life of Indigenous children" (p. 21), and Mason-White (2013) referring to the children's need for a "significant shift in cultural contexts when moving into mainstream schools" (p. 5). However, I would suggest that it is too late to address these different cultural expectations at school, as family is not there to explain the differences in their own language, and, once the children are at school, it is no longer an introduction to the culture of school.

Secondly, in my modelling of the activities for the participation of the families in each day's program, it was often important to share my cultural knowledge about the practices of learning at school, sometimes informally and sometimes explicitly, explaining how these new skills and behaviours contributed to activities at school. In the earlier story about the use of a pen in class (Section 4.6.2), the important point was that it was not just familiarity with a new set of materials that was required, but also how, and when, to use these materials within the cultural expectations of the school setting. That, although a pen could be used as a drumstick while watching the young men play guitar in the community at night, a very familiar sight for the young children, it was not acceptable within the cultural practices of school. Put simply, it was important for the children to learn that we used a pen for writing. Situating the content of this program as repertoires of practice for the specific cultural setting of school was integral to the explanations of how and why, for certain activities.

Thirdly, the content of the repertoires of practice that the family adults intended for their children to learn, and so be prepared for school, was the set of markers for school readiness of children's development within families of the Western culture. However, within the literature, the inappropriateness of this expectation for Indigenous children was frequently stated, as the set of markers did not reflect Indigenous children's child-rearing experiences (see Chapter 2) within their own culture (Armstrong et al., 2012; Carbines et al., 2008; Dockett et al., 2010; Mason-White, 2014). In the literature, there was certainly recognition of cultural difference, but it seemed that the response to this recognition was to avoid putting any expectations for school readiness on Indigenous children and families, intimating that readiness can't be expected prior to school (Carbines et al, 2008; Dockett et al., 2010; Mason-White, 2013). This literature is in contrast to the expectations and practice of the Ngaanyatjarra family adults. Additionally, a serious concern for me arose about how this avoidance response would play out when the Indigenous children began school

if there was no expectation for them to learn these new experiences prior to school. The following description of an event during one of the workplace training visits of our playgroup families to an Indigenous playgroup in the city (see Section 4.3.3), added to my unease:

> After the family adults had helped their children finish their craft constructions, everyone moved over to the soft chairs. As happened at most places we visited, our families then opened their box of translated Ngaanyatjarra & English story books, to share their family story time activity with the families with whom we were visiting. Within minutes, our children had chosen some favourite stories, and the six family groups were sitting on the carpet, engrossed in talking animatedly together, about each page of the story books, with the children leaning on their family adults. But although the story books were next to the Indigenous families from the city, none of them moved to pick up a book and share it with their child—they just sat silently, hunching back into their lounge chairs, watching our families, watching these Indigenous family adults and their young children, from the remote communities, confidently enjoying their shared story time books, in their own language. After a few minutes, our families realised what was happening, and, with glances and gestures to each other, and to me, I announced that morning tea seemed to be ready a little early, and so our families packed the story books away. (My program journal, 2015)

Later that day, chatting with the families on the bus, their conclusion was that maybe the city families had not been given the opportunity yet, to learn this story-time practice of the different culture of school. Whereas, for the Ngaanyatjarra families, having had the opportunity for this learning within their shared family story time routine at playgroup each day, they had not only mastered the learned behaviours, the repertoires of practice for this activity, but they genuinely enjoyed sharing story books together in their own language (Heath, 1983). Within this cross-cultural learning program the Ngaanyatjarra families were free to learn the new activities, the repertoires of practice, of the different culture of school.

Within earlier literature, the foundation of Western schooling ‘is’ children’s experiences at school entry age within a Western culture, and the set of markers can ‘only’ reflect children’s development within their families in the Western culture, because children’s development within families of Western cultures is ‘expected’ to lead to their readiness for school, within the Western culture (see Section 2.3, 2.4). For children of different cultures, this set of markers will not, cannot, reflect their early experiences within their family, because children’s early experiences are aligned to the culture of their family (see Section 2. 2.1; Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Therefore, in this program study, the families requested assistance with the development of a program in which

they could prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of school, practices which they had not yet had the opportunity to learn within their families.

The difference in expectations between the statements in the literature and of the families in this study, was overwhelming, in terms of Indigenous families preparing their own children for school. At the fork in the road, faced with something one is expected to have learnt, but not having learnt it, because the Indigenous families in this study recognised that they had not had the opportunity to learn these new experiences yet, they were free to learn them, thereby "expanding their 'repertoires of practice'" (Rogoff et al., 2017, p. 879) in different cultural settings. At that same fork in the road, taking the pathway from realising one has not learnt it yet, to then internalising that as a lack, a deficit, a should have learnt situation, is reflective of the fact that programs for Indigenous children in remote areas are often heavily embedded in the wording of deficit, disadvantage and interventional language (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Moyle, 2019). However, the literature rarely pointed out that it doesn't have to be this way, as the interventional evidence base within the literature was initially for "disadvantaged children and families" (Elango et al., 2015, p. 7) not for children and families of different cultures to that of the school.

Therefore, for the families in this study, their requested program was an introduction to the culture of school, because they recognised that the culture of the program was different to the culture of their family, and that the practices of the program, the additional repertoires of practice for the specific cultural setting of school, were practices that they had previously not had the opportunity to learn within their family.

5.2.4 Summary for Finding 2

This new learning for school program has the single purpose of enabling the family adults to prepare their children for school, through shared participation in its content, the additional set of learning for school experiences of children within families in the Western culture. Within this program, this content is positioned as learning the repertoires of practice for the different cultural setting of school, and so, for the family adults, with the cultural and educational assistance of the program facilitator, this program enabled them to introduce the cultural practices of school to their young children, prior to school. Finally, although there is literature that suggested that the Western cultural nature of the set of markers of school readiness positioned children from other cultures as deficient when they cannot meet these markers, the study's program emphatically demonstrated otherwise, with the Indigenous families in this program learning this set of markers for learning at

school as repertoires of practice for the different cultural context of school, that they had not had the opportunity to learn yet.

Finding 3, in chapter 5.2.3, continues the discussion of this learning for school program of this study, with the discussion of how the family adults guided the participation of their children in these new learning experiences, within the cultural ways, as teachers for their children, as they prepared their children for school through this program.

5.3 Finding 3: This 'Learning' Program is a Learning Within the Family Program

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school because the family adults are the teachers of their children in the new experiences of this learning program. Within this common theme of Section 4.7, there are four aspects that contributed to this finding. As the context for learning in this program is firstly, learning within the family, then it follows that the family adults will be the teachers of their children in this learning program, using their home language with their children, and that learning will be in the cultural ways of the families. However, within the literature there are two differences to the implications of a program in which learning within the family is prioritised, and these implications will conclude this section.

5.3.1 'Learning Within Family' is the Context for Learning in This Program

In this program, the place of the Ngaanyatjarra family adults was defined by the culture of their family, not by the culture of the program (see Chapter 4). The finding of this study is that for these family adults, within their requested program of new experiences, their place, and role, with their children in this program was a continuation of their usual guidance within their cultural ways of their children's experiences during their child-rearing years. In contrast, a program where the cultural place of the family adults was not upheld in the learning of their children, may not be appropriate for families from a culture different to that of the program, as it could move parents out of their rightful place with their young children in their learning of new experiences (Hamilton, 1981; Kearins, 1984; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Interestingly, the literature about the significance of children learning within their family, and the important roles of family adults with their children mentioned in Section 2.1 (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), seem to have surprisingly less congruence with the role of family adults in early years programs in the Western culture, where the literature was situated, than with the role of

family adults of different cultures, as demonstrated by the families within the study's program as a family adult often pointed out, "I have to be here with my children" (Family conversation, 2018). Therefore, this finding identified that, although it was not possible for these family adults to teach their children these new experiences within their homes, their learning of these new practices could still be within their family, in this playgroup program as a purposeful out-of-home-but-within-family learning environment. Additionally, the idea of this program as a bridge between the culture of the home and the culture of the school also maintained the separation of these additional experiences for the families, as different sets of experiences for the purposes of different cultural settings.

Having an appropriate environment in which the families could learn about these new activities and routines was essential. Merriam and Baumgarten (2020) noted that in the development of learning programs within Indigenous communities, there was a practical component of "accessing resources, including people and materials" (p. 288), and, similarly, Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) wrote about the development of repertoires of practice across different cultural settings, explaining that the learning of these practices is "highly constrained by people's opportunities and access to participate directly or vicariously in settings and activities where particular formats are employed" (p. 26). For example, many families in these communities do not have story books within their homes, or the family routines that would facilitate shared story time activities, but in this program, the opportunity for this story time activity was within a set time and place in the daily program, with access to a selection of story books in the language of the family and therefore, through shared participation across their families, the routines and practice of Family Story Time became increasingly well known, as discussed in Section 4.3.2 and 4.7.2 (Heath, 1983; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As explained in Chapter 1, the request of the family adults for my assistance with them in the development of this program was a family to family request. In many families, children are prepared for school within the shared experiences of their family, but these stories do not feature in the literature, with Bronfenbrenner (1986) suggesting that this is because "the body of research … is curiously one-sided, for its predominant focus is on the ecologies of family disorganization and developmental disarray" (p. 738). Self-evidently, the literature about school readiness can only be within the context of programs for children, and families, for whom readiness for school has not developed for their children within their family. Therefore, within the broad range of early years programs for children prior to school, there is only a small proportion of early years programs, where family adults are actually with their children in these programs (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Harrison et al., 2012), and an even smaller proportion of these programs that are learning programs (Connelly &

Mallet, 2020; Hanrahan, 2004). Narrowing the field of comparative literature even further, the requested program is also a cross-cultural program (see Finding 1), in which the cultural content of the program is learnt within the different cultural ways of the families.

Significantly, within this program enabling Indigenous family adults to prepare their children for school, this finding of the essential place and role of the family adults in this program with their children, demonstrated a reversal, and a distancing, from the history of education for many Indigenous children in Australia, where "keeping children away from their families" (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 32) for education, was the governmental policy for many years. The progressive action of the Indigenous family adults of this study in requesting assistance with the development of this program, so that they could learn about preparing their children for school, and so, as teachers of their children, prepare them for the different cultural practices of the school evidenced an alternate path.

5.3.2 The Family Adults are the Teachers of Their Children in this Learning Program

For these Indigenous family adults, their cultural and family responsibility was to their children, guiding their participation within everyday activities, and looking to their needs (Glass, 1990; Fleer & Williams-Kennedy, 2002; Hamilton, 1981; Harris, 1990; Kearins, 1984). Therefore, the response to their community concern to find a way of preparing their children for school (Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020) was the development of this family learning for school program, through which, as teachers of their children, they could prepare their young children for the practices of the culture of school. At family story time, "when we sit down kids … some they want to read it self, some they want their parents to read it, but they want to turn the page themselves, they ready getting learned how to turn the page" (Family conversation, 2018).

This discussion focuses on the findings of the family related factors of their intention.

Firstly, within this study, learning within their Indigenous family meant learning within their extended family, and, therefore, during the years of this program, many adults within the community had the opportunity to participate in playgroup experiences with a family child. In this program, the "interdependent" and the "communal" nature of the family learning became evident (Merriam & Baumgarten, 2020, p. 286), and through this shared responsibility for family children (Hamilton, 1981; Warrki Jarrinjaku ACRS Project Team, 2002) the knowledge of the purpose of this

program for the children and family adults quickly spread across the communities, and increasingly embedded their requested program within their family and community ways (see Section 4.7.3).

For the families, this program created the opportunity that they had not previously had, to learn how children learn these experiences through everyday activities with their family adults, how even as babies, the children become familiar with the environment of the program, sitting on adult's knees and watching their older sibling share in table activities, or being held closely by their family adult, to share in the family story time each morning (see Chapter 4). Additionally, the set-up of the play environment each day and the consistency of the program, activities, and routines, enabled the family adults to be increasingly confident in their teaching role with their children in this program of new experiences (see Section 4.1). Furthermore, as the informal learning of the family adults about preparing children for school was situated in the context of the play and learning program, the family adults benefitted by learning momentarily ahead of the children, often through the modelling of the activity by the program facilitator to the shared group of family adults with their children, enabling the family adults to guide their children's participation in the activity (see Section 5.1.2).

However, the natural embedding of the Indigenous family structure of the extended family in this program was in contrast to the literature which suggested that this family structure required special consideration (see Section 2.4.4.2) within the implementation of these programs (Borg et al., 2004; Lohoar et al., 2014; McTurk et al., 2008, Mildon & Polimeni, 2012). However, within this program, I believed that respecting the responsibility of the families for their children was paramount, and I trusted the families to work out who brought their child to a playgroup session, within the cultural structure of their family.

Secondly, for the Indigenous families in this program, learning within their family meant learning within the home language of their family, so that the family adults continued their teaching of their young children in their home language, and the young children learnt, and learnt through, the home language of their families (Ball, 2011). In this out of home yet within family program, the finding was clear that the continued use of their home language enabled the family adults to be the teachers of their children within these new experiences: "Like when I tell her to copy my things, and to explain it in Ngaanyatjarra, do that, and sometimes she won't do it but when I tell her, she do it" (Family conversation, 2017). For the family adults, the use of their home language with their children made their place, and role, essential to the program, as the communicators, and teachers, with their children. Their vital linguistic role positioned the family adults as the teachers of their children and also positioned the program facilitator as the facilitator of the program and for the family adults, as they taught their children. The role of the family adults also positioned this set of new experiences

within this program, as just another set of repertoires of practice, for an agreed family purpose, that the family adults encouraged their children to become familiar with, during their child-rearing years. In the early days of this program, my actions prioritised the place and role of the family adults with their children within their culture and language, and my insistence on having some family adults with the children in the program at all times was well-known to the families, as I only had limited communicative skill with the Ngaanyatjarra language (see Section 4.1).

Learning within their home language in this program was the foundation for the early literacy in Ngaanyatjarra activities that the family adults requested from the beginning of this program (see Section 4.1). Within the story time activities over the years, it was because these activities became embedded in the family and community practices and expectations of this program that story time activities could become part of children's daily practices within their family (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2019). Consequently, in this program the family adults could still be the teachers of their children in the family story time activity even if they could not read, because having the story books translated into Ngaanyatjarra meant that they could confidently talk the story in Ngaanyatjarra with their children, and so guide their children's new learning in this practice of the different culture of the school (see Section 4.7.2).

Within the literature, the use of home language in similar programs is advocated as an "effective [strategy to] improve school readiness" (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2005, p. 2), but in this program, the use of the families' home language with their children was the only way that the families could be teachers of their children within these experiences, and the only way that the children could learn these new experiences. Similarly, the literature, recognised family adults as being empowered by the use of their home language (Woodhead & Moss, 2007), and within Indigenous programs such as parents as teachers programs (Hanrahan, 2004; Page et al., 2019), the blending of empowerment and responsibility, for family adults using their home language with their children, was noted in many Indigenous communities where sharing stories written, or translated, in the Indigenous languages of the families became regular activities within their community programs.

Nevertheless, before leaving the discussion on the findings regarding the use of families' home language, it must be mentioned that prioritising the use of the home language of the families in a learning for school program, creates linguistic challenges for the program facilitator, dependent upon the extent of the program facilitator's knowledge of the families' written and spoken home language, and the extent of the families' knowledge and experience with written literacy in their own language or English. Additionally, the language difference limiting the role of the program facilitator in verbal interaction with the children can sometimes be a significant cultural and

paradigmatic shift for program facilitators whose experience and training has been in early childhood education and care within the more child-focused context within Western culture. These challenges are rarely considered in the literature. However, it should also be pointed out that there is a benefit for the program facilitator in having minimal shared language with the families in a cross-cultural learning program, as it is a very effective way of always prioritising the role of the family adults as the teachers of their children within the new learning experiences, as the lack of a shared language, especially with the children, precludes the program facilitator from naturally gravitating to the role of teacher.

Finally, within the literature, Higgins and Morley (2014) asserted that when Indigenous families are part of the development of early years programs, the "primary goal [was usually for support] in their roles as their child's first teacher" (p. 10). This was reflected in the literature about parents as teachers programs, where Indigenous family adults, from remote communities, chose to retain their responsibility for preparing their children for school (AIFS, 2016; Connelly & Mallet, 2020; Dean & Leung, 2007; Hanrahan, 2004). Similar to the program in this study, these programs also recognised that it required making opportunities, sometimes requested by the families, so that Indigenous family adults could learn what was required for children's preparation for school, through shared participation in relation to the different cultural practices of the school. Perhaps there are many Indigenous families, particularly in remote communities, who have not yet had the opportunity to learn about how to prepare their young children for the different practices of the culture of school.

5.3.3 Learning, in This Program, is in the Cultural Ways of the Families

With family adults as the teachers, the children's learning will be in the cultural ways of the family, a continuation of their child-rearing experiences within their family, in their home language, but in another setting and with a different set of activities and materials. My Indigenous colleague, Beryl, explained how the Ngaanyatjarra children learn alongside their family within their cultural ways, and how that extends naturally to the children's learning within the playgroup program:

> How do children learn Ngaanyatjarra way? They learn when grandpop talks to them. Also, they learn by watching—looking at nanna making wirra (tapping stick) or making damper. When they go out bush, mum is digging witchety grubs, bardi, honey ants, and showing them, giving them a taste of things that are food for them. Sometimes the children get frightened, but at the end they have a good feed. At playgroup, when the children are playing together on slides and talking together, they are learning. Sometimes they are

> playing alone, using outside equipment, learning to use it. They talk about the activities in Ngaanyatjarra, they copy each other, they play with the same things every day, they are learning. (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2006, p. 24)

The third family related factor in this finding is that although the children's learning in this playgroup program is not about known content, their learning of this new content is within their known ways of learning, such as learning by watching older family members, listening, and talking together, joining in, copying each other and by playing with the same activities day after day. All children learn within the cultural ways of their family (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Section 2.1 introduced the concept of "guided participation in cultural activities" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 283) confirming that family adults guide their children's activities in "culturally constructed ways" (p. 283, 284). Therefore, within the new experiences of this program, the guiding of the children's learning by the family adults, within the cultural ways of their family, actually made the young children's learning of these new experiences possible. Rogoff (2003) explained that, because the guided participation of family adults is culturally constructed, "what is done in one way in one community may be done another way in another community, with the same effect" (p. 368).

"Family, they're thinking about bringing their little ones to playgroup, to get learned, while they are little" (Family conversation, 2017). Therefore, although the ways of learning through the cultural ways of the Indigenous family adults may be different from how family adults in Western culture culturally construct their guidance of their children's learning, the same effect, of children becoming prepared for the activities of school, is achievable.

There are differences in the cultural practices within this program, for example, situating family story time around the program routine of morning tea time, rather than, as in other cultural settings, situating family story time as a part of bedtime routines. Either way the activity has the same result, developing children's love of story books, of close moments with family adults and children focused on the story together and of children getting to know about books as a foundation for early literacy at school. In this program, the story time activity is in their home language, Ngaanyatjarra, rather than English (see Section 4.3.2), yet importantly, it is the family adults who are guiding their children's learning and participation, within the cultural ways of their family, and in activities that would "be impossible" for the children by themselves (Rogoff, 2003, p. 16). Within the guided participation of family adults with their young children (see Section 2.1.3), the common strategies of "mutually bridging meanings"' and "mutually structuring activities" are within the cultural ways of their family (Rogoff, 2003, p. 299). The following description of a family story time activity demonstrated this mutual bridging of meaning:

> When we read to these kids, this book here, in this playgroup building, and after, when we go home, he'll be still thinking about it … Still in his head … He says, 'Oh Mummy, tell that same story from that book' … about the boy bringing the camel, animals to the school and the teacher saying '*wiya wanti*'. He always like that book. (Family conversation, 2017)

Similarly, the mutual structuring of activities proved a helpful way of describing the tasks of the program facilitator in this program, in the context of aligning the program content from the Western culture to the ways of learning within the cultural ways of the family, so that the families could participate in the new activities with their children (see Section 4.8.4). An example of this was the cooking activities with the children (see Section 4.1), a three-way mutuality of structure so that the family adults and children could have their own experiences of the activity, yet with the child still alongside the guidance of the family adult. Another example of re-structuring was the process of translating picture story books into their Ngaanyatjarra language, to use within family story time, in order to prioritise the role of the family adults as teachers with their children, rather than disempower them in their role by using only English (see Section 4.3.2).

In this cross-cultural program, the program facilitator's frequent and informal mutual structuring of the activities and environment each day within the program was essential. In this role, when I noticed hesitancy in family participation in an activity, I immediately considered whether it was a cultural dissonance that I hadn't recognised, a learned skill that I had overestimated, a meaning that wasn't bridged satisfactorily, or perhaps something in the community outside. In response, I simply checked with the families, with a word, or a hand gesture, which allowed us to momentarily mutually re-structure the activities so that the family adults could continue as teachers for their children.

5.3.4 'Learning Within Family' Situated Within the Literature of Interventional Programs

The fact that Finding 4 confirmed this program as a learning within the family program, uncovered two differences within the literature. Firstly, disconcertingly, an important task of the program facilitator in this program that was not found in the literature, and secondly, not surprisingly, a strategy that was suggested as essential within the literature that was not found to be so in this program study.

5.3.4.1 Protection of the Purpose of the Program and the Place of the Family Adults in This Program. Firstly, the protection of both the single learning purpose, and the place of family

adults as teachers of their children, was crucial within this program, but this tacit and ongoing task of the program facilitator lacked a presence in the literature. The single purpose of this program, learning the new set of learning for school experiences that the families had not had the opportunity to learn yet, often required protection, because the majority of children and family programs for Indigenous families in remote communities were interventional, dual-purpose programs linked to addressing family disadvantage. See Section 5.2.1 (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

As the single purpose of the program of this study was completely entwined with the role of the family adults as teachers of their children within this program, it was difficult to separate the protections implemented within the program over the years, whether it was their requested purpose of the program, or their requested place within the program with their children, that required protection, but usually, it was both. For example, the purpose of the family story time activities in this program was dependent upon the roles of the family adults as teachers with their children in family story time activities (see Sections 4.1.2, 4.3.2, 4.7.2). In later years, (see Section 4.3) protecting the place of the family adults as teachers with their children in these family story time activities, using their home language, became part of my coordination role, encouraging the playgroup facilitators to maintain the set time and place for family story time in each day's program so that the family adults remained the teachers of their children in family story time, and so continue to maintain the purpose of this program for the families, that their children would learn about early literacy in Ngaanyatjarra, as they had requested (see Section 4.3.2).

In relation to the literature, I advocate that there are three underlying factors contributing to the emergent need for protection so that the families could prepare their children for school within this program. The first factor is that within dual-purpose, interventional early years programs, the family adults can be positioned as lacking (Bloch & Kim, 2015) so that they "begin inevitably from a position of dependence" (Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990, p. 26). Therefore, in these interventional programs, the purpose of the program is often to support the parents, to address the needs of the family adults (Williams et al., 2015). It has become common for interventional programs, such as supported playgroups, to be described as "'soft entry' programs that provide 'non-threatening 'soft entry' points that meet families' needs for social support while also linking them to more formal supports" (Commerford & Robinson, 2016, p. 14). Therefore, the second factor is that, with the positioning of family adults as dependent and needing support within interventional programs, there are minimal expectations of the role of family adults with their children in these programs. And the third factor, as a convergence of the previous two factors, is that there is consequently a blurring of program purposes for family adults, an uncertainty of what they are coming to, with program

purposes varying within health, parenting, and early education (Bowes & Grace, 2014). Such blurring of purposes is exacerbated within early years programs for Indigenous families in remote locations, as the literature is very much overladen by the disadvantage narrative surrounding the families (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Chenhall et al., 2011; Moyle, 2019). And, worryingly, as noted by Martin (2017), "Indigenous early childhood education will not be valued whilst it is seen as a site for child health interventions" (p. 104).

In contrast, in the study's program, the purpose was the enabling of the family adults as the teachers of their children in their requested learning for school program. My view was that protection of the role of the Indigenous family adults with their children in this program was a matter of respecting their choice to maintain their role with their children, and therefore it was my responsibility as the program facilitator to protect both their role as teachers with their children by situating of the opportunity for their role, in the purpose of each day's program. From my years of experience living in remote Indigenous communities, I suggest that every community program for Indigenous families is a service program and that it is not unusual for service providers to presume access to gathered groups of families. After a number of situations like this at the playgroup, and talking about it over time with the family adults, because the families were not culturally comfortable about saying no directly to the service providers, it was agreed that I would explain to them, on behalf of the family adults, that it wasn't a good time to talk with the family adults during playgroup, as this was the time and place for them to be the teachers of their children in the activities of their learning program, providing the simple solution that the families would visit them after the playgroup.

Sometimes this response was well received, and others not, but that was reflective of the taken-for-granted nature of programs with Indigenous families in these remote communities, within the pervasive context of overcoming disadvantage (SCRGSP, 2020). Encouragingly though, one or two nutritionists and allied health providers caught the vision of the families for their program, that they could join with the families, and add to the day's activities, eventuating in visits from these providers becoming a much-anticipated part of the program routines, in contrast to service providers who wanted to provide their service to the family adults while their children played, or were minded by others. In many ways, in the cross-cultural setting of this program, my role was as a gatekeeper for the family adults during their time at the program, because once they walked through the program gate they were not in need of support. Instead, they were family adults who were purposefully participating with their children in their chosen program of new learning experiences.

The findings of this study demonstrated that the choices of the family adults could be easily overtaken by the enormous sway of other perspectives on Indigenous families and their preparation of their children for school. But in this study's learning for school program, the families knew that the purpose of bringing their children to this program was for their children to get learned through shared participation, with their family adults as their teachers. The families knew, and for me, that was worth protecting. "Talking with a young mother, who had recently visited a regional town for a few weeks …I asked her if she and her young son went to playgroup there. She said that she did go, but didn't like it… that children don't learn like here... Here, they learn things, activities, story time" (My program journal, 2017).

5.3.4.2 Program Implementation Within Learning Within the Family Programs.

Secondly, a strategy noted as essential within the literature, was not evident in this study's program. Section 2.4.4.3 suggested that program implementation within programs for Indigenous families, particularly in remote communities, must be done differently to program implementation within early years programs within the Western school culture (Bowes & Grace, 2014, Mildon & Polimeni, 2012). However, while this statement is true, there was no need for, or consideration of, particular implementation strategies within this program. Just as the culture of the families not the culture of the program, defined the purpose, the content, and the place of the family adults in this program, the implementation of this program with the families was within their cultural ways, not the culture of the program.

This outcome occurred because the program implementation factors, such as relation-based approach, working within the cultural structure and history of the family, and the importance of the community within the development of the program, are all family-related factors, and family values and practices (see Section 2.4.4.3), reflect the culture of the family (Rogoff, 2003, Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Therefore, in this program, these factors are part of working with the families in their cultural ways, within their collectivist and relational cultural characteristics that prioritise family and relationships, in contrast to the ways of Western culture with more individual and task-focused characteristics (Hofstede, 1997; Rogoff, 2003).

Rogoff (2003) asserted that "cultural practices fit together and are connected [explaining further that] cultural practices work in organic ways, interrelating as living phenomena, not as mechanical objects that can be considered separate entities" (p. 352, 368). This explanation presented another clue as to why just adding collectivist approaches to implementation with families, in order to have improved outcomes in programs for Indigenous families and children, is unlikely to lead to program success. This is because the program itself is within the more

individualist Western culture, and yet the suggested strategies in the literature are for the implementation of more collectivist cultural approaches. But, implementing collectivist approaches within an individualist program could mean that there would be a lack of fit across the cultural practices expected within the program.

In the Ngaanyatjarra program, the ways of the families are defined by the culture of the families not the culture of the program. Similarly, the family culture, not the program defined the ways of implementing the program with the families. Therefore, I considered that it is not program implementation being done a different way for Indigenous families in remote areas that is a key to success, but, instead, it is the response to the recognition of the different families' culture to the program culture, a response that prioritises learning within the family, and doing the program within family cultural ways that is the key. In other words, this program should model implementation through the lens of the culture of the family.

In Section 2.4.4.3, in the review of literature about the implementation factors noted as needing a different approach, the cultural differences of the Indigenous families in remote communities were clearly recognised. But the response was that it was necessary to do things differently, often without suggestions of how or why, which is another example of the rhetoric, rather than evidence in response, to a recognition of cultural difference of Indigenous families (Ball, 2010). I posited that, within the suggestions in the literature, there was also little awareness of how the suggestions might result in mutually exclusive expectations across the two cultures (Harris, 1990). For example, the factor of relationships recognised the importance of working within a "relation-based approach" (Bowes & Grace, 2014, p. 22). But as Bowes and Grace (2014) and Sims (2011) pointed out, building relationships takes time, but most programs from Western culture have limited time frames, resulting in an area of tension, if not mutual exclusivity of expectations, across the two cultures. The program of this study has taken more than two decades of relationships across families and communities, and it is still just beginning to develop its own character with the families and within the communities. Additionally, in this program, as demonstrated in the significance of family adults visiting once with family children, the natural expectation that, in this culture, family adults meant extended family adults, was not understood or valued by the funding bodies, because their evaluations of the program were interpreted through the "perspectives and cultural values" of the program model (Rogoff et al., 2017, p. 877).

In conclusion, in the program study, the need for specific program implementation strategies did not arise. Naturally, within the cultural lens 'cultural practices fit together' (Rogoff, 2003) as the key to implementing this program with the families. The learning within family aspect of

this requested program, is learning within the culture of the family, therefore leading to program implementation that is also within the cultural ways of the Ngaanyatjarra families.

5.3.5 Summary for Finding 3

In this learning for school program, the family adults stated that they would be the teachers of their young children in the new experiences of this program, using their home language. Significantly, this out of home yet within family program was the first time that the families in these communities had the opportunity to learn how children in Western cultures, from birth to school entry age, become ready for school through participation in everyday activities and routines within family life.

In this program, the culture of the families, not the culture of the program defined the place and role of the families with their children. This position of the Ngaanyatjarra family adults with their children is uncommon in early years programs, but it is the families' request, and that must be protected, although this protection is likely to occur as a result of an implicit attitude within the role of the program facilitator.

The program facilitator's role aligned the activities and routines of the Western cultural program with the learning and teaching ways of the families within their Indigenous culture, so that the family adults could participate in the learning experiences with their children. The family adults guided the participation of their children within the activities of the program in their cultural ways, in their home language and within the extended family structure of their culture. Additionally, I perceived that, as the program implementation was naturally embedded within the cultural ways of the families, a focus on tailoring program implementation factors was unnecessary.

In the next section of this chapter, with the purpose, content and role of the family adults established within this program, Finding 4 discusses the tasks and the place of the program facilitator, within the role of walking alongside the family adults in the development of their learning program.

5.4 Finding 4: Walking Alongside—The Tasks and Place of the Program Facilitator

Within the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program, the Ngaanyatjarra family adults requested the assistance of the program facilitator /educator to add the educational and cultural expertise of learning for school to the shared development of their learning program, through which the family adults could prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of school.

In the study of this program, Finding 4 supports the notion that the four key tasks of the program facilitator/educator identified in Chapter 4 were integral to findings 1, 2 and 3. This final finding about the tasks of the program facilitator/educator is positioned within the relational understanding of walking alongside the Ngaanyatjarra family adults sharing the program's development. This finding allowed the researcher to make connections between the tasks of the program facilitator/educator and the earlier findings of this chapter. Secondly, I present my account of how my role as the program facilitator/educator was characterised by relationship and respectful collaboration with the Ngaanyatjarra families, and how this relationship created the essential milieu for our shared development of this Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program.

5.4.1 'Walking Alongside'—The Tasks of the Program Facilitator/Educator in This Program

From the beginning of this program, as explained in Section 5.1.2, the family adults and I have brought "different responsibilities by virtue of different expertise" to the development of this community learning program (Cole, 1985, p.155). For the families, their responsibilities and expertise included teaching their young children the new set of experiences embedded in the program, within the context of their families, community, language, and culture. My responsibilities and expertise were in the Western cultural and educational aspects of this cross-cultural program, from my experience in children's learning for school within the Western school culture as a parent, a teacher, an adult educator, and a program coordinator. Finding 4 established that it is both the tasks, and the enmeshing of the tasks of the program facilitator/educator that have enabled the development of this learning program with the Ngaanyatjarra families. This section discusses the connections of the tasks with findings 1, 2 and 3 as presented in Table 5, 6 and 7 followed by an explanation of how the tasks combine to facilitate this learning program. Significantly, the common factor in this finding is that the tasks of the program facilitator/educator actually "enabled the program [to] enable the families" to prepare their children through this program for the practices of the different culture of school.

Table 5

Finding 1: The Program as a Learning Program

Finding 1: The Program as a Learning Program	
1.1 A learning program of new experiences 1.2 An adult learning program 1.3 A learning through participation program.	Task 1—program facilitator (Section 4.8.1) Responsibility for the operation of the program within the workplace expectations of the culture of the program, so that the family adults can participate in the program with their children, as teachers of their children.

Notes:

An informal adult learning program will require the program facilitator to take on the role of adult education at times, in the context of facilitating the program.

Table 6

Finding 2: The Program as a Learning for School Program

Finding 2: The Program as a Learning for School Program		
	Task 1 plus:	
2.1 The single purpose of this program is so that the family adults can prepare their children for the activities of school 2.2 The content of this program is the learning for school activities, the repertoire of practices for the cultural setting of school 2.3 The purpose and content of this program provides an introduction to the culture of school	Task 2—program facilitator (Section 4.8.2) Planning, implementing, and modelling the sequence of 'learning for school' activities and routines within the program with the families. Modelling these activities with the family adults so that they can teach them to their children	Task 3—program facilitator (Section 4.8.3) Negotiation of cultural differences within the program, on behalf of the culture of the program. The program facilitator is recognised as knowledgeable about the culture of the program, the content of the activities, and the purpose of these activities in the cultural setting of the school.
Notes: This program is a program of new learning because the families had not yet had the opportunity to learn the school readiness activities, the repertoires of practice, for the different cultural setting of the school.		

Table 7

Finding 3: This Learning Program is a Learning Within the Family Program

Finding 3: This Learning Program is a Learning Within the Family Program	
Tasks 1, 2, and 3 plus:	
3.1 Learning within the family is the context for learning in this program 3.2 The family adults are the teachers of their children in this learning program 3.3 Learning in this program is within the cultural ways of the family	Task 4—program facilitator (Section 4.8.4) Aligning the program content within Western program culture, to the ways of learning of the families within their Ngaanyatjarra culture, so that the family adults could prepare their children for the activities of the different cultural setting of school.

Finding 4 illuminates the enmeshing and connections of the program facilitator/educator's tasks in the learning program's development with the Ngaanyatjarra families. For this new learning program, Task 1, the operation of the program, was the pre-requisite for the requested participation of the families within the program both in 1995/1996, and then consistently, within the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program model, from 2008. As both a learning program for the families and an informal adult learning program, the knowledgeable operation of the program was the pre-requisite for Task 2, the planning, implementation, and modelling of the program content which enabled the facilitation of activities so that that families could participate in the program for their learning purposes. In this cross-cultural learning program, building on the pre-requisites of an effectively operated and facilitated program, Task 3 of the program facilitator/educator, that of upholding the cultural authenticity of the program, was essential, in both the negotiation of cultural differences and the sharing of cultural knowledge about the purposes of these activities within the different cultural setting of school. Finally, because the culture of the program was different to the culture of the families in this learning program, Task 4 of the program facilitator/educator, the aligning of the program content from the Western culture of the program, to the ways of learning of the families within their Ngaanyatjarra culture, enabled the families to learn these repertoires of practice for the different cultural setting of school, so that the family adults could prepare their children for school, through their shared participation in their requested learning program.

Finding 4 is that these four tasks of the program facilitator educator were integral to the facilitation of this cross-cultural learning program with the Ngaanyatjarra families. Within this study, the literature linked with Findings 1, 2 and 3 have been noted, with the program as a learning program similar to a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), as learning the additional repertoires of practice for the activities and routines of the different culture of school (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) and as learning within the family, through the culturally constructed ways that family adults guide their children's participation in new learning experiences (Rogoff, 2003). Finding 4 presents these enmeshed tasks that underpin Findings 1, 2 and 3, with this enmeshing reflective of the requirements of this cross-cultural learning program with the Ngaanyatjarra families.

And yet, for the program facilitator/educator, while walking alongside the Ngaanyatjarra families in the shared development of this program, the contribution of these tasks of cultural and educational expertise to this program of new learning is only half the story.

5.4.2 'Walking Alongside'—In Relationship and Respectful Collaboration

A long-time friend of our family told us, that, for them, as an Indigenous family learning is about relationship, relationship, and relationship. In Chapter 1, I described how my husband's family was well known by some of the families in these communities and how our family had been welcomed into that relationship. And it was within that trusted relationship that the family adults requested my assistance to help them develop a way of providing an opportunity for them to prepare their children for school. In this last section, I offer my account of how aspects of this walking alongside the Indigenous family adults, in the shared development of their program over many years, is situated within an intangible context of relationship, knowing, respectful collaboration, time spent, and shared trust.

5.4.2.1 Relationship, Families, and Knowing. The families in these communities asked me for help with preparing their children for school, because that's what families who have known each other for a long time do, they share their experiences, learning from the experiences of families that they know, in their shared endeavour of preparing their young children for the next steps in their lives within their family. These families knew that their children had to go to school, but they had not yet had the opportunity to learn how family adults, in the Western culture of school, prepared their children for school within their family. So, they asked me to help them in this learning, knowing our family, knowing that we had prepared our children for school, knowing that, as a teacher, I would know how this within family learning would playout at school. Therefore, within this family learning program, my role was to make known to the Indigenous family adults,

how families in my culture prepared their children for school, within the everyday routines of families for children from birth to school age within their family, and, as a teacher, to share what it is that is helpful for children to know and to do, prior to beginning school.

As a result of years living in these Indigenous communities, I had some understanding of the collectivist cultural ways of the families, and so I expected that this new family program would be a community program, that my role would always be assisting the community in the development of this program for their children, community as represented by the family adults and children at the playgroup program during any session. Consequently, the concept of walking alongside reflected my learned understanding about time in the communities, that within this program it would be a walking alongside, not running, and that the development of this program would be at the pace of the families in the communities. To me, it seemed that, for any movement in the community, everyone had to move, and therefore, with over twenty years of their learning for school program in the communities, these Indigenous families knew that through family participation in their requested community learning program, their children could be prepared for the new activities of the different culture of the school, with their family adults as teachers, within their cultural ways and in their language.

5.4.2.2 Knowing, New Learning, and Respectful Collaboration. Respectful collaboration in this program, for me, means being teachable and responsive to the families in their shared learning within their requested program. Situated between two cultures, it wasn't just the children or the family adults getting learned within this program, but as the program facilitator, I was also getting learned (to use the Ngaanyatjarra expression), about walking alongside the Ngaanyatjarra families within this journey of developing a shared learning program in these cross-cultural communities. This program was new for the families, learning about the content and expectations within practices of the culture of the school, and it was new for me, assisting in the development of a family learning for school program with families of a different culture and language. I learnt, over time, how to do this program by watching the ways of the Indigenous families in their learning within this program, and early in the program realising that "my role was to keep watching and to learn by watching, as they were doing, and to guide with minimal words" (Program principles, 1996).

From my experience of working in this bilingual environment, having minimal shared language did not have to be a barrier, as it could be an enabler within the development of the program. As the program facilitator, not speaking the language of the children is an excellent way of ensuring that the family adults take the 'front seat' as the teachers of their children in the new experiences of their program. In this program, my communicative role has always been in the 'back

seat' of this family learning program, hence my waiting for family adults to come to the program before I'd open the doors in the first few years of this program (Chapter 4.1). Although, I firmly believe that family adults are the best teachers for their children and that young children do learn best in their home language, at that time in the program, my more personal concern each morning was that although my use of a few hundred single words and phrases of their Ngaanyatjarra language may have sounded adequate, I knew that it was not enough to respond knowledgeably to any questions, interactions or concerns of the young children, or to build on any teachable moments with them, in their curiosity and interest in the activities within their new program.

However, the 'respectful collaboration' in this program was both ways, and the family adults respected my values, knowing that I would not take their place as an educator of their young children, prior to school entry age, and that I would wait, on the steps with their children, for them to take their place with their children each day in this 'learning' program of new experiences. I understood that my role was to structure the learning situations, to arrange the learning activities in which the families participated each day and to informally teach the family adults so that they could teach their young children in their cultural ways and in their language.

5.4.2.3 Returning to Relationship, Knowing, and Trust. In this shared learning program, within my role as the program facilitator, after arranging, modelling, and facilitating the learning opportunities for the families, it then became a matter of trusting the family adults as the teachers of their children in the new experiences of this program:

> Soon it was hand washing and then story time... I asked the young mums to help their children with this, while I made morning tea … when I looked over to the mat there were three family groups, children on their parent's knees, all looking at books. I could hear some of the young mums trying to read the Ngaanyatjarra words. Great story time session. (My program journal, 2018)

In this program, the interaction between family adults and children was almost always in Ngaanyatjarra, and although I could pick up some words, it was not possible for me to know exactly what the family adults were saying to their children, even in story time activities, a situation to which I grew accustomed. Consequently, in this story time, for example, I knew that I had modelled it well over many years of shared group story time activities, and that I had often shared my cultural knowledge about books and my love of books and shared story times. Also, I had frequently encouraged the family adults in their roles as teachers for their children in these new experiences, often reminding them with the same words each time, that family adults are the best teachers for

young children, and children do learn best in their home language. In this program, I know that the families know that bringing their children to this learning program, in which they are the teachers for their children in their cultural ways and in their own language, will help their children's 'ease their adjustment to primary school', as they requested in 1995. Therefore, from this knowledge, and the arranging of the learning opportunity of Family Story Time, it then becomes a matter of trust - trusting the family adults that they truly are the best teachers for their young children, within their cultural ways and in their own language, in the new learning experiences of any culture.

5.4.3 Summary for Finding 4

The learning program of this study provided the opportunity for the family adults to both learn about, and prepare their children for, the repertoire of practices of the different culture of school. Finding 4 revealed that the tasks of the program facilitator/educator, enmeshed within the day-to-day operation and facilitation of this program with the families, were the enablers of this cross-cultural learning program, as noted in the tasks' connections with Findings 1, 2 and 3. However, these tasks were embedded in the context of the relational and respectful collaboration of the program facilitator/educator with the Ngaanyatjarra families, and it was within relationship that these tasks contributed to this program of new learning.

5.5 Conclusion for Chapter 5

The discussion within this chapter demonstrated that the four study findings acted as enablers, interwoven in the shared family activities, allowing these families to prepare their children for school through joint participation within their learning for school program.

Recognising that this program is a program of new experiences, from a different culture, which they had not had the opportunity to learn yet—Finding 1, confirmed the purpose and content of this learning for school program enabled those learning opportunity for the families—Finding 2, so that within the opportunity of the program, family adults can teach their children the new experiences, extending their children's repertoires of practice for the cultural setting of school, through shared participation in the learning activities, in their cultural ways and in their own language—Finding 3. Additionally, the recognition of Finding 1, that this program is a learning program of new experiences for the families, is the basis of the request by the family adults for the assistance of an educator/facilitator—Finding 4, who has the expertise and experience in the content and culture of their intended learning. this new cross-cultural learning.

The following statement illustrates how these four findings are interwoven within the practices of the families' cross-cultural learning for school program. The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program, as an assisted 'learning' program enables the family adults as teachers of their children, to prepare their children in their own cultural ways, through shared participation in the 'learning for school' practices within this cross-cultural program, alongside the enabling tasks and guidance of the cultural and educational expertise of the program facilitator/educator.

The final chapter, chapter 6, presents the alignment of these findings, both individually and interconnectedly, to the research question of this study, as the foundation for the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This final chapter draws together the contribution, and implications, of the findings of this study, at this twenty five year mark of the shared journey of the development of this program with the families. At this point in time, because of the opportunity within this learning program, these Indigenous families have a different story from their initial request for this program as described in Chapter 1. From a place of not knowing about preparing their children for school, now the family adults are in a place of knowing. "[We] bring our children to get learned while they are little, then when they go to school, they know" (Family conversation, 2018). In this learning program, in which they are the teachers for their children in the activities of the practices of the different culture of the school, the family adults confidently say, "I learn them … I explain" (Family conversation, 2017), because at playgroup, "they can learn for everything before they go to school" (Family conversation, 2018).

6.1 Summary of Findings

The four findings of this study, as discussed in Chapter 5, are that this program is a *learning* program, a *learning for school* program, a program in which the learning of these additional experiences from another culture are *learnt within the family* and that this learning program is learning alongside *experienced others*, be they the family adults of the children, or the program facilitator/educator, who contributes the cultural and educational expertise of the content and purpose of this program to this shared learning environment.

The four major findings are the enablers of this study/enablers of this program, integral to the operation of the program with the families so that, through shared participation in the program, the family adults can prepare their children for school. As identified towards the conclusion of both chapter 4 and chapter 5, these findings are interwoven throughout each aspect of the development of this shared program with the families, and, as an interwoven set of findings, together these findings contribute to answering the research question of how this program enables the family adults to prepare their children for school. Before summarising each finding, in relation to the research question, the interweaving of these four findings within every shared family playgroup activity is demonstrated within the following vignette of a family story time activity within the Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program in 2017:

It is about halfway through the day's playgroup in a remote Indigenous community and the children and family adults are finishing their group activities. The facilitator places two large mats on the floor. Some two-year-olds, who are playing in the home corner nearby, drop what they are doing and turn to help straighten the mats, and you can hear the parent saying 'Yilala'/ 'Pull it'. Then the facilitator positions the crate of children's board books in the centre of the mat. Everything is ready.

The call goes out—"Story time and morning tea!" There's a scurry of activity. Toddlers and little children, familiar with the daily routine, drop what they are doing and move inside. With little hesitation, each child goes to the crate and chooses their first book to look at with their parent. In no time there are many groups of adults and children huddled together over books. Family story time is happening. The chatter of family adults talking to children in their home language fills the room. Family adults and children excitedly point to pictures and talk about the books. Children move to other family groups to investigate what is being read. During this time, there is a constant ebb and flow of movement and then stillness as the books become the focus of children's attention and interest with their family adults.

Then the facilitator calls out gently "Pack away time" and another scurry of activity begins. Children pick up their books and toddle over to put them in the crate—then turn back to their parents, wearing a pleased smile. (Shinkfield & Jennings, 2019, p. 71, 72)

6.1.1 Finding 1: The Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Program is a Learning Program for Adults and Children

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school because it is a learning program. The activity and routines of family story time are some of the *new* experiences of the practices of the different culture of the school that the families had not yet had the opportunity to learn within their family, prior to the development of this program. With the assistance of the program facilitator/educator, for the family adults and for the children, this program illustrates a learning program, where learning through participation is the means for them learning the new experiences of this cross-cultural program. This family story time activity, through the shared learning over years of family participation within the set time and place of this activity within their program, has become a much-anticipated everyday practice for the family adults, and the children. This vignette demonstrated the confidence and enjoyment experienced by the family

adults and children during this learning activity, providing an example of learning for both the family adults and the children, within this shared activity in their learning program.

6.1.2 Finding 2: The Purpose and Content of This Cross-Cultural Program is Learning for School

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school, because the family adults *know* that single purpose for this program is to enable them to prepare their children for school, through shared participation with their children in the additional set of learning for school practices that young children, of the Western school culture, learn within their family. Therefore, this program is an introduction, by the family adults, to their young children, of the expectations of the different cultural practices of the school. The activity of family story time is one of the school readiness activities that the families initially requested, "early literacy in Ngaanyatjarra" (My program journal, 1995), and through their shared participation in this regular activity, the family adults are enabling their children to extend their *repertoires of practice* for the activities of the cultural setting of school. In this vignette, the warm ambiance of this daily out of home yet within family routine, reflects the familiarity of the family adults and the young children with the purpose, content, and routines within family story time, as well as glimpsing the children's growing interest in storybooks, encouraged and shared by their family adults. The family adults know that when these children begin school, they will already be *ninti* about storybooks and story time routines.

6.1.3 Finding 3: This Learning Program is a Learning Within the Family Program

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school because the family adults are the teachers of their children in the new experiences of this learning program using their home language, continuing to teach their children within their child-rearing ways of their culture. The vignette is a rich illustration of learning within the family, learning new experiences within the set time and place of the everyday family routines in their *out of home yet within family* learning place of this playgroup program. The family adults and the children know the intricacies of their *repertoires of practice* within their family story time activity. This vignette reveals the dynamic picture of family adults and children sharing in this much-loved regular activity, within families and across family groups and yet all learning together within their community playgroup program.

6.1.4 Finding 4: Walking Alongside: The Tasks, and the Place, of the Program Facilitator/Educator

The Ngaanyatjarra playgroup program enabled the family adults to prepare their children for school because of a trusted relationship between the families and the program facilitator/educator, which enabled the program tasks of the facilitator/educator to be positioned within a respectful collaboration, in their shared development of this program. This vignette illustrates the respectful collaboration that flows, both ways, between the program facilitator/educator and the Ngaanyatjarra families as the strong foundation of this program. In this vignette, the background tasks of the program facilitator/educator are evident. The structuring of the learning environment for the participation of the family adults and children in this familiar activity, the unspoken introduction to a transition between the regular activities, quickly noticed by the young children, and the regular set-up of the place for the family story time activity, so that the children and family adults know what comes next, confirmed by the simple, few words in English that the families hear each morning when it is time for story time. Then the program facilitator steps back, and the family adults and children share in this favourite activity together. They know what to do because they have participated in these story time activities many times. Then, a gentle introduction to the next step in the routine is given. Through the many similar sequences of structuring learning environments and then stepping back while the families learn through shared participation in the activities, the cultural and educational expertise required for these tasks is the contribution by the program facilitator/educator to the shared development of this program with the families, for their purpose of preparing their children for these new activities.

6.2 The Findings and Contribution to Knowledge

The literature review identified two gaps concerning the preparation for school of Indigenous children from remote communities. The researcher proposed that these findings would contribute to existing knowledge.

The first gap was regarding the link between the culture of the Indigenous families and their children's preparation for school. It was suggested at the end of the review that the findings of this study, would "provide fresh perspectives about the principles, the design, and the development of a learning for school program which has, as its foundation, the recognition of the difference between *the culture of the families and the culture of the school"* (Section 2.5).

For the Ngaanyatjarra families of this program the findings emphatically demonstrated that the different culture of the families, in comparison to the culture of the program, is the foundation of this program. This cultural difference is reflected in the child-rearing practices of the family, which are determined by the culture of the family, and therefore, the early experiences of the children in the Ngaanyatjarra families will not lead to readiness for school, as the early experiences of children of families in the Western culture would be expected to do. Consequently, the Ngaanyatjarra families requested an additional set of school readiness experiences as the content of their new learning program, so that they could prepare their children for the different activities of the culture of school because they had not had the opportunity yet to learn these experiences within their families. Additionally, they requested my contribution of cultural and educational expertise, within an educator role alongside the family adults in the development of this program, so that they could learn the cultural and educational content of this program, and so prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of the school.

Although there is frequent recognition of the different cultures of families within the literature as it relates to their children's preparation for school, there is little practical response to this recognition in the literature. This is due to the overarching ethnocentricity within the Western culture around preparing children for school, which makes it difficult to view these learning for school experiences as just an additional set of activities for these Indigenous children, activities to be learnt within the family, but "not necessarily to be lived by" (Harris, 1990). In the Ngaanyatjarra program, the experiences are additional to the experiences of the children within their family and culture, and so there is no correlation to the concerns within the literature that learning these school readiness experiences would replace children's learning within their family and culture. Rather, the purpose of this learning program is for the family adults to *extend* their children's repertoires of practice (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003) so that their children will be prepared for the practices of the different cultural setting of school.

The second gap within the literature review was regarding the place and role of Indigenous family adults, living within their Indigenous culture in remote communities, in the preparation of their children for school. This gap is the natural successor to the first gap because the culture of the Ngaanyatjarra family naturally positions family adults *with* their young children as they learn together in the shared experiences of the child-rearing years. It was suggested at the end of the literature review that the findings of this study would "provide valuable perspectives of the place and role of these Indigenous family adults as they guide their children's participation in this program, within their cultural ways, so that, as family adults, they can prepare their children for

school" (see Section 2.5). The findings revealed that as the culture of the families is the foundation of this program, the place of family adults in this program with their children is defined by the culture of their family, not the culture of the program. Therefore, for these family adults, from the beginning of this program, they requested that their place, and role, would be with their young children: "I have to be with my child" (Family conversation, 2018). The findings demonstrated that, as teachers for their children, the family adults guide their children's participation in the activities of the program within their cultural ways and their home language.

The combination of these two gaps, that arise from the use of the cultural lens to enable the recognition of cultural difference in children's child-rearing experiences across cultural groups, and that result in the need for a program of additional learning experiences within the cultural ways of their family, describes the shared learning of the Indigenous families of this study, in their purpose of preparing their children for the practices of the Western school. The Ngaanyatjarra families described their cross-cultural learning program as a bridge between the Indigenous culture of their Ngaanyatjarra families and the Western culture of school. Within the literature, Nakata (2002, 2007) describes the 'intersection of the Western and Indigenous domains' (Nakata, 2002, p. 5), and 'the contested space between two knowledge systems' (Nakata, 2007, p. 9), as the Cultural Interface, and suggests that this intersection, this space, can be a beginning for 'embedding underlying principles of reform' (Nakata, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, it is important to note the potential contribution of the findings of this study to more recent literature and research, such as the concept and understanding of the Cultural Interface in cross-cultural knowledge environments with Indigenous people. These findings could prove to be very beneficial for both Indigenous families and Western school educators in their shared participation in enabling Indigenous children's access to the knowledge systems of both family and school cultures.

To conclude this outline of potential contributions, in this exploratory case study of this unique program the purpose is to understand this case (Stake, 1995), rather than to make generalizations. Consequently, the manner in which I have endeavoured to document this study, as a contribution to the wider body of knowledge, is reflected in the words of Geertz (1973), "to make available to us answers that others … have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said" (p. 30). This program is the response over two decades to the request of the Ngaanyatjarra families for a way in which they could get their children ready for school, and in a sense, this case study is a contribution to these answers, as the documentation of how these families are preparing their children for the different practices of the Western culture of school through shared participation in this learning program.

6.3 The Findings and Theoretical Contributions

Sociocultural learning theory underpinned this study (Cole, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Significantly, within the findings, it is the recognition of the culture of the Ngaanyatjarra families, as the foundation of their requested learning for school program, which is the explanation for the many contrasts to preparation for school programs in the literature. There is scope for further research in this theoretical area, but four areas of potential interest are noted.

Firstly, the work of Vygotsky (1978), viewing this learning activity as within a zone proximal development, and Rogoff (2003) with the explanation of culturally constructed guided participation, supported the framework of learning in this program in the context of more experienced participants and less experienced participants within shared learning activities, through interactions between adults and between family adults and children. For the family adults, their cultural ways of interaction with their children may have been different from how family adults teach their children these activities in Western cultural families, but the same effects are achieved – their children get learned and the family adults prepare their children for school.

Secondly, framing the content of this program as repertoires of practice for the different cultural settings of school had been a significant contribution to the explanation of the paradigm shift of viewing this set of experiences as 'additional' to the experiences of the child within their family and culture (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). This framework positions these additional experiences as not having been learnt yet. Therefore, there is no link in this program to the family disadvantage or deficit, which is foundational to early years programs as interventions. In the Ngaanyatjarra families' requested program, these repertoires of practice for the different cultural setting of school, this set of additional learning experiences, just happen to also be the set of markers of school readiness which is the focus of much concern within the literature, but, viewed as repertoires of practice for the different cultural setting of school, the family adults can confidently guide their children's learning of these different practices and so prepare their children for the different cultural practices of the school.

Thirdly, viewing the learning program of this study as a community of practice for family adults and for their children is particularly useful, rather than the more common representation of similar programs as early childhood programs. Positioning this learning program as a community of practice recognises the "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 284) of family adults and children in each aspect of the activities, and the importance to these Indigenous families of "shared learning histories" within the development of this program (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.

106). Within this positioning, the learning and development of the family adults and the children could well be described as a "transformation of participation in practice" (Rogoff, 2003), as they gradually extend their practices within the program, in the light of their previous participatory experiences within the program.

Fourthly, as a community of practice learning program, the opportunity is there for this children's play and learning environment to double as an informal situated learning environment for the family adults, and creates the place and role of the educator, with the cultural and educational experience of the content and purpose of this program, as an integral part of this learning environment. To further extend this area, it was always, and only, in relationship with the community families that the place and role of the educator contributed to the development of this community learning program (see Chapter 5.4). Therefore, further consideration of other examples of Western educators living and walking alongside local family members in their community learning programs could well have productive outcomes.

In summary, with further research, there is the potential for these findings to contribute towards the development of a theory of a learning for school program for Indigenous family adults within which they could prepare their children for school.

6.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

6.4.1 Implications for Indigenous families, communities and early years programs.

In Chapter 1, I suggested that the question of what *getting ready for school* means for Indigenous children in these communities awaited answers, and noted that there is little written in the literature about how families from one culture can prepare their children for the different culture of school, by school entry age. However, the findings from the case study of this program demonstrate a possible pathway for this preparation within families of cultures that differ from that of the western culture of school, given the opportunity of this family learning program and the enabling of the findings of this study within the implementation of such a program.

In Chapter 6.1, the conclusion was made that the findings of this study were interwoven, and so enabled both the participation of the families in this program and the operation of this learning program. Therefore, implications from this study, and program, would necessarily be premised on the recognition that the cultural practices of young children within families within the Western culture are often a different set of cultural practices to those of children within Indigenous

families living in remote locations. From that foundation, the opportunity then exists for creating, with the families, this learning program of additional experiences, specifically the repertoires of practice for the different cultural setting of school. In this learning program, the family adults could guide their young children's learning within their cultural ways and language, alongside the shared experience and expertise of a trusted educator. Additionally, positioning this program within the participatory context of a community of practice learning program could fit well within many relational-based Indigenous communities, as the families seek to prepare their own children for the different cultural practices of Western school, yet to do so within their families' Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing and in the language of their own families.

6.4.2 Implications for schools, and children beginning school.

As demonstrated in the stories of Chapter 4, when Indigenous children know about the activities and routines for school prior to school, these children are ready to begin learning at school from day one. But for Indigenous children in remote and regional communities, the reality is that not all children have this opportunity with their families, and those children who have not had these experiences will not be ready to begin learning at school from day one. For the playgroup graduates, the question is how long the interest and excitement of learning will last, if the school teacher is focused on teaching children who are new to the cultural practices of schooling, to sit down or to hold a pen. This serious challenge for schools is reflected in a question noted in Woodward and Moss (2007), that "what is the point of offering early childhood programming … especially if the children with previous experience are "pushed aside, ignoring them until the others have 'caught up'" (p. 29). Interestingly, this challenge was brought to the light within the first few months of the Ngaanyatjarra program, as an early outcome of their requested program (Section 4.1.5) with my journal noting even then that "at this rate of progress, the preschool /kindy program for Aboriginal children would have to be changed to accommodate and extend these children who have the readiness skills in 'school' activities and routines and familiarity with literacy and story books in their own language" (My program journal, April 1995). This issue remains unanswered.

6.4.3 Implications for family 'learning for school' programs.

This program and other programs for Indigenous families in remote communities are responding to the desires of Indigenous family adults, to learn to prepare their own children for school, as discussed in Finding 2. However, within government-funded programs, these programs are currently within the supported playgroup model, for which parenting intervention is the

purpose. Therefore, there is the potential to investigate the possibility of a new *learning for school* playgroup program model, in contrast to a supported playgroup program. This new program model could be a family-centred, educator-led program in which family adults from any culture could guide the learning of their children, within their own cultural ways, from birth to school entry age, in the additional early experiences required for the different culture of school.

6.4.4 Implications for the sustainability of these programs.

Although mentioned only briefly in this study, the energising parallel story of the informal learning of the Ngaanyatjarra family adults in the context of this program over the years (Chapter 4.3.3), is an area of promise and potential, particularly in remote communities. The future sustainability of these programs, could be enhanced by the further development of workplace training processes for Indigenous family adults in the context of these learning for school playgroup programs, as distinct from training programs within early childhood education and care programs.

6.5 Limitations of This Study

This case study is about a particular people, the Ngaanyatjarra Indigenous families, during a particular time period in the family and cultural life of these people, 1994–2019, and therefore cannot be representative of a wider population.

Additionally, as the researcher for this study. Through my shared history and relationship in the community and the program with the families I have had the time over the years to watch and learn through the changes of this program. This research study seemed to naturally evolve in our shared development of this community learning program, and as already mentioned, the community families recognised that I was the right person to facilitate this program study both within the ongoing activities of the program and as an historical record of the development of their program at this time in their community. However, as the researcher for this study, it must be said that “the way the case and the researcher interact is presumed unique and not necessarily reproducible for other cases and researchers” (Stake, 1995, p. 135).

6.6 Suggestions for Further Research

In addition to the previous suggestions regarding implications for policy and practice (Chapter 6.2), and contributions to knowledge and theory (Chapter 6.3), there is potential for further research that would relate the research methodology in this study to the broader Indigenous research methodology literature in Australia. As the focus in this exploratory case study was

necessarily on the research processes developed with the Indigenous families and communities within the program of this study, the contribution of this knowledge to the broader body of knowledge around Indigenous research processes, methodology and cultural protocols could be productively explored.

A particular focus could be given to further research into the individualistic processes of informed consent within the context of collectivist cultures, building on the specific place-based processes documented within this study. Additionally, although it may not be a common occurrence, the challenges raised by my position as a long term, relational, but non-Indigenous researcher, particularly in the context of this program with the families over many years, could benefit from further consideration, particularly in relation to the intersection of cultures within the research process. This avenue of research would raise a different set of tensions for visiting non-Indigenous researchers visiting to Indigenous communities, where the establishment of relationships and trust with families within the research process would be a prerequisite for such research.

Finally, these areas of future research could be linked to the positioning of the cultural interface within cross-cultural Indigenous research, a potential linking already mentioned in Chapter 6.2, with regard to the contribution of this study to the understanding of the cultural interface within learning programs at the intersection of the cultural ways of the participating Indigenous families and the cultural ways of the Western educators.

6.7 Closing Reflections

The secret is out! The Ngaanyatjarra families can prepare their children for school. Indigenous families in remote communities have been expected to participate in the Western cultural school, but the families had not had the opportunity to learn how, and what, their children needed to learn to do, within the practices of such Western schools. But now, for the Ngaanyatjarra families, through their requested opportunity of this program, and their shared journey of this program development, the secret is out, and they know. The families know why they bring their children to playgroup. "…to get learned, while they are little" (Family conversation, 2018).

Given the opportunity through this program, an opportunity that they previously had not had, the Ngaanyatjarra family adults can prepare their young children for the repertoires of practice for the different cultural setting of school, guiding their children's participation in their cultural ways and in their own language, with the assistance of an experienced other who can contribute their

cultural and educational expertise to the shared development of this program, while walking alongside the family adults.

For the families, the journey of this 'learning for school' program continues. The findings in the study of this program have revealed the proven enablers of this program, enabling the program to enable the family adults to prepare their children for the practices of the different culture of the school. The significance of this program is that it is the family adults who are preparing their children for another step in their journey, that of learning at school. And, as Beryl frequently used to say, "Children are the future of our community" (My program journal, 2006).

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Appendices

Appendix A—Monash University Ethics Approval

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

Approval Certificate

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: 8772
Project Title: Case study of the Early Years Program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands
Chief Investigator: Dr Jennifer Rennie
Expiry Date: 05/09/2022

Terms of approval - failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

1. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. Amendments to approved projects including changes to personnel must not commence without written approval from MHUREC.
7. Annual Report - continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report.
8. Final Report - should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected completion date.
9. Monitoring - project may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
10. Retention and storage of data - The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of the original data pertaining to the project for a minimum period of five years.

Thank you for your assistance.

Professor Nip Thomson

Chair, MUHREC

CC: Assoc Professor Zane Ma Rhea, Mrs Anne Shinkfield

List of approved documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Supporting Documentation	Introductory information for Ngaanyatjarra Shire Council June 8th 2017	08/06/2017	1
Supporting Documentation	Shire request for information access 1 June 2017	15/06/2017	2
Consent Form	Consent Form Ngaanyatjarra Participants 4th August 2017	04/08/2017	3
Consent Form	Consent Form Ngaanyatjarra translation 4th August 2017	04/08/2017	3
Supporting Documentation	Advertisement for Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Story 8th August 2017	08/08/2017	2
Consent Form	Playgroup photo permission 2016	08/08/2017	2
Consent Form	Playgroup photo permission 2016	08/08/2017	2
Consent Form	Test doc	09/08/2017	1
Supporting Documentation	Photo Permission Form Ngaanyatjarra Participants 9th August 2017	09/08/2017	1
Explanatory Statement	Explanatory Statement Ngaanyatjarra Participants 10th August 2017	10/08/2017	5

Appendix B—Research Diary—Writing as Thinking

This process is similar to the process of 'writing as a method of inquiry' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), although I used it for many years prior to beginning this research.

In my research diary, from 2015, "writing as method of data analysis" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970) within the inductive analysis of this study

> Example 1—using writing to combine reflections on earlier program journals in relation to literature and to aspects of participant conversations
>
> June 2019—I realised that there is an expectation by the family adults that by 'being there', as parents and children participate together in the program, children will learn, parents say that by bringing them their children will get learned. This is interesting, as the parents are stating that by being there children learn, which they are. Yet, in the *Ritual Reader* article by Christie (Christie, 1993) that when it comes to school, just *being there* isn't enough for children to learn, that schooling and reading is like a ritual, something that one does, but one has no expectation of learning in it. Similar also to the comment prior to starting playgroup in 1994, by the older mother, that the children are going to school but they're not learning anything. Why is this difference, of getting learned at this playgroup noted? What is contributing to the different outcomes of being there at the playgroup program, and at school? Is it the contributions of the other two planes of sociocultural activity around the child all the time of being there? [Rogoff, 1995]. Another thought is that in family life, like the 'tacit' learning with family around [Rogoff, 1998], children being there is the key to their learning so much in an informal way. Are the children learning school info, processes and skills' in an informal being there way at the playgroup program? This would then be consistent with the parents stating that by being there children learn, which they are. Interesting thoughts.
>
> Example 2 – The heading of this writing was 'what is the main story to tell through this study? It was part of considering the findings of this study in relation to the literature of Rogoff (1995) about the observation of sociocultural activity on three planes.
>
> September 2019 - This case study is of the sociocultural activity of the program over 25 years. Is this study more about the development of the program? Of the parents? Of the children? Is the main story to tell through this study about the parent's development through participation, which enables the children to be ready for school? Is it about the

children's development through their participation in the program? Or is it about both—so that there would be findings about the personal development of children and what they are learning through participation in the program plus findings about the development of the parent's participatory role with their children. However, if this case study is more about the parents, as in the current research question, how the parents are getting their children ready for school through this program, then that may explain why I've been less comfortable with the literature on school readiness framing this emerging study. It the study is about parents, more than children—and the children's increasing school readiness is really just a great outcome of shared participation with their parents—and this is natural, as young children will play and learn in any play context especially alongside their parents. Food for more thought.

Appendix C—Permission to Access Workplace Documents

MONASH University

9th June 2017

From:
Anne Shinkfield
Warburton Community
PMB 87 Via Kalgoorlie, WA, 6430

To:
Mr.....
CEO, Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku,
Warburton, WA.

Dear Mr.....

With reference to the research project that I am undertaking with Monash University, 'A case study of the Early Years Program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands', I am writing to ask permission from the Shire to access information about the program for this project.

The information requested is:

- Attendance data for program participation of children and adults
- Reports, articles and media reports about the program
- Photo books about the program

As the first section of this research project considers the history and development of the program, the information requested would be dated from 2008 until the present time. The information will be used in a general form, looking for significant developmental milestones in the life of the program. There will not be any reference to children or adults by individual names.

If you require further information about this request, please contact me, email.....

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Shinkfield.

Appendix D—Explanatory Statement

MONASH University

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Ngaanyatjarra Participants – Parents and Community members

Project: Case study of the Early Years Program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands

August 2017

Contact details for the research:

Chief Investigator:	Student Researcher:
Dr. Jennifer Rennie	Anne Shinkfield
Department of Early Education, Peninsula Campus,	Warburton Community
Monash University, Victoria	via Kalgoorlie, WA
Phone:	Phone:
Email:	Email:

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read, or listen to, all of this explanatory statement before deciding whether or not you would like to participate. If you would like more information about any part of this project, please contact the researchers, by phone or email, as listed above.

What does the research involve?

What is the research about?

The purpose of this research is to present a case study of the Ngaanyatjarra Early Years Program, at this point in time. The study will explore how the Ngaanyatjarra Early Years Program has developed over the years, what the children and parents do at the program and what it means to the children, families and community.

This research has two parts –

- The history and development of the program will be written by the researcher. Reports, articles and personal reflective journals written about the program over the years will be used as background material to write this part of the story.

- The story of the Early Years program for the Ngaanyatjarra families in 2017 will be made by collecting stories from many families about the program and what it means for their children, family and community.

What will the participants have to do in this research?

To collect these family stories, it is planned to have conversations with about 12 Ngaanyatjarra people who have been at this program with their children for at least a few years.

You are invited to be a participant and tell your family story about the program. The family stories will be added to the history story to make the full story of the Early Years Program. There would be 3 conversations for each participant this year (maybe in September, October and November) with the researcher, Anne Shinkfield, and the Ngaanyatjarra Early Years Program advisor or their representative. Each conversation would be for about 1 hour and would be at an agreed place - their home or at the Early Years Centre. The conversations with the researcher will be mostly in English, but as a senior Ngaanyatjarra person will also be there, the conversations could also be in Ngaanyatjarra.

Some photos may be taken of the conversation group, if the participant agrees. However, these photos will only be used with the signed permission of the participant. A Photo Permission form would be signed by the participant so that they would be able to give full and informed consent for the possible uses of that photo, as listed on the Permission form.

Why are you invited to be part of this research?

You are invited to be part of this research because you have participated in the Early Years Program / Playgroup with your child / children for many years.

Source of funding

This PhD research will be carried out by Anne Shinkfield, who is the Early Years Program Coordinator with the Shire. However, the research is not commissioned or funded by the Shire.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the project

If you agree to participate in these conversations, the researcher and the Early Years Program advisor will give you an Informed Consent document to read or listen to, in English and / or Ngaanyatjarra, which you will then sign to confirm your participation, and then return it to the researcher.

The Informed Consent document will explain that agreeing to tell your story is voluntary.

You can withdraw from the conversation process at any time up until the writing up of the results. If you do withdraw, you can decide if you want any stories that you have already given to stay in the project or if you want all those stories destroyed and not included in the final story, or any further publications about the story.

The notes made from each conversation will be read to you at each following meeting for you to check and approve before the notes are added into the full story. This approval process will conclude two months after the third story collection for each participant.

Confidentiality

The final story is about the program and what it means to the children, family and community. If any parts of stories are used directly from participant's conversations (with the participant's agreement), the participant will decide if they want their name on the stories or not, or if they want to use another name.

Benefits and risks to the participants and to the community

A benefit of this research is that these conversations will give community people an excellent opportunity to talk about the Early Years program and what it means for their children and family and to be part of the development of a strong community story for this program. This story could then provide the foundation for future planning of early childhood programs in these communities.

There are minimal risks involved with this project for participants and for the community, but if participants are concerned at any time, staff at the community office and the clinic would be available to support participants at any time.

Storage of data

The conversations will be audio-recorded and then transcribed later by the researcher and the senior Ngaanyatjarra person.

The audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept safely during the project at the Early Years Centre, on password protected computers and in locked filing cabinets, and also at Monash University, on Google drive. During the project, only the researchers and the Ngaanyatjarra program adviser will be able to access this data.

The stories that are collected from the families are likely to be of interest and significance to a wider audience. Consequently, with participant and community Elder permission, the stories and recordings for which permission is obtained will be kept safely for use in the future. The stories and recordings will be kept (archived) in repositories at Monash University and possibly at an agreed place such as AIATSIS.

Results

The final story will be written as a university research report and in journals and other reports.

The story will also be written for the children and families of the Ngaanyatjarra communities in a book that will be the follow-up to the book written in 2006 about this program: 'Playgroups: Playing to Get Ready for School'. Copies of this book will be available to all community members.

More information

If you would like more information about any part of this study, please talk with Anne Shinkfield at the Early Years Centre, Warburton Community.

If you would like more information about this study from a community representative, please see..... at the community office, Warburton Community.

Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC), Monash University, Clayton, Victoria. Phone: 03 9905 2052. Email: muhrec@monash.edu

Thank you.

Appendix E—Community Information for Research Participants

The Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Story

Playgroup has been going for a long time, and this year it is time to tell the story of the program - to write it down and to share the story with others.

The Playgroup Story will be about –

What the children andparents / family do at playgroup…

What the playgroup means for the children, family and community…

How the playgroup has developed over the years...

Does your family have a story to tell?

Mrs. Shinkfield will write the Playgroup Story with the help of people who have been part of playgroup for many years, while she is doing research with Monash University.

If you would like to tell your story, please see Mrs. Shinkfield.

Appendix F—Participant Consent Form – Plain English

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM

Ngaanyatjarra Early Years Program Study Participants

Project: Case study of the Early Years Program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands

June, 2017

Contact details for the research:

A. Shinkfield

Warburton Community, PMB 87 via Kalgoorlie, WA, 6430

Phone:.....

Email:.....

I have been asked to take part in this Monash University research project. I have listened to / read and understood the information about the project and I agree to participate in this project.

I consent / agree to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to take part in 3 conversations with the researcher about the program	☐	☐
I agree that the conversations can be audio-recorded	☐	☐
I agree that the audio-recordings and the written stories made during this project can be kept safely and used in future research projects	☐	☐
I agree that photos can be taken during the research conversations	☐	☐

And

I understand that I am choosing to participate and that I can stop participating at any time

I understand that if I stop participating I can choose for any stories that I've told to stay in the project or be taken out of the project, until the end of the story collection process

I understand that I each story I tell will be written for me to read / listen to, so that I can agree to it before it is written in the final story

I understand that I can choose if I want my name to be used with my story, or not

I understand that the audio-recordings and written stories will be kept in a safe place at the Early Years Centre, and as back up at the University, to be used by the research team during the project.

I understand that because of the uniqueness of these stories, the recordings and stories will be archived for possible future use at the university.

Name of Participant:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Appendix G—Participant Consent Form—Translation

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM—Translation

Ngaanyatjarra Early Years Program Study Participants

Project: Case study of the Early Years Program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands

June, 2017

Contact details for the research:

A. Shinkfield

Warburton Community, PMB 87 via Kalgoorlie, WA, 6430

Phone:.....

Email:.....

I have been asked to take part in this Monash University research project. I have listened to / read and understood the information about the project and I agree to participate in this project.

Rawalu–rna kurlilpayi wanarranytja nyangka ngayulu pukurlpa

I consent / agree to the following: Yuwa, mukurringkula—rna marlawana puru lurrtjurritjaku wangka Ngaanyatjarra.	Yes	No
I agree to take part in 3 conversations with the researcher about the program Mukurringkula—rna marnkurrpa—rna palyalku.	☐	☐
I agree that the conversations can be audio-recorded Tjinguru mukurringkula—rna wangkamantjilku ngayula watjarranyangka	☐	☐
I agree that the audio-recordings and the written stories made during this project can be kept safely and used in future research projects Mukurringkula—rna tirtu kanyiltjaku puru marlangkatja–marlangkatjalu nyaakula kanyima	☐	☐

And

Nyangka

I understand that I am choosing to participate and that I can stop participating at any time

Ngayulu—nintilu kulira ngayulu mukurringkula rawalu palyarlkitja wangka puru wantikitjalu.

I understand that if I stop participating I can choose for any stories that I've told to stay in the project or be taken out of the project, until the end of the story collection process

Mukurringkula—rna ngayulu tjukurrpa kanyilkitja
tjinguru—rna wantiku.

I understand that each story I tell will be written for me to read / listen to, so that I can agree to it before it is written in the final story

Kulira—rna wangka ngayuku tjukarurrru ngaralatjaku.

I understand that I can choose if I want my name to be used with my story, or not

Puru—rna kulira tjinguru yini ngaraku puru yini
wiya ngarala.

I understand that the audio-recordings and written stories will be kept in a safe place at the Early Years Centre, and as back up at the University, to be used by the research team during the project.

Kulira—rna mukurringkula ngayulu—rna wangka
kumpiltju kanyima.

Name of Participant:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Appendix H—Research Conversation Guide – 2017, 2018

Research Conversation Guide – 2017, 2018

Conversation topics:

- Activities of their children in the program
    - What are the children learning through the program (how is that happening?)
    - Interaction of children with other children in the program

- The use of home language within the program
- Story time activities
    - Family story time
    - Group story time

- The role of parents as teachers for their children –
    - How parents support their children in each activity

- Why do they come to the program with their children?
    - Why does their child come?
- What are they (parents) learning through this program?

- About the program –
    - Things they like - favourite things for their child, for themselves
    - Things they don't like …
    - Things they'd like to change …

Appendix I—Conversations: Participant Cover Sheet

Research: Case Study of the Ngaanyatjarra Early Years Program

The Ngaanyatjarra Playgroup Story

Conversations: Participant Cover Sheet

Participant

- Address……
- Contact details……
- Participant's playgroup experience…….
- Participant's children at playgroup……
- Reason/ context for offering to provide a conversation…….

Conversation in Process

- Place and time, duration of the conversation……
- Other people joining in this conversation……
- Ngaanyatjarra speaker accompanying the conversation……

Conversation as Data

- Audio file of conversation – title……
- Audio file storage link……
- Ethnographic description of conversation setting – date completed…….
- Transcription – date completed…….
- Narrative of conversation (Own Words) – date completed……

Appendix J—Research Diary—Writing as Thinking and Analysis

In my research diary from 2015 - Adding the suggestion of "taking off from the data" (Richards, 2015, p. 89), using the format of that's interesting – why is that interesting – why is 'that' interesting' to inquire of the data through writing.

Example 5 - Writing as thinking, analysis, and finding connections within reflective writing about earlier program journals and data across multiple sources for this study. This writing was about the entwined nature of the program, the participation of the parents with their children in the program and the facilitation of the program that enables the participation of the parents with their children in the program.

March 2020 - Just this morning, while planning what to write today, I was writing headings re facilitation, and randomly wrote *'facilitating the place of parent participation in this program over the years'.* That comment, as others I've written, reminded me instantly of Richard's 3-part questioning of data, that I've used before.

1. *That's interesting!*
2. *Why is that interesting? … The answer that first came to my mind was "because obviously the place of 'parent participation' in this program was often at risk of being discarded, overruled, and removed, if it needed various ways of being protected over the years."*
3. *Why is THAT interesting (THAT = 'parent participation was often at risk of being overruled or discarded')?...*
   I realised that it was interesting because there was minimal expectation that remote Indigenous parents could / would get their children ready for school—by the parents, the education system teachers, and the general public, because of many factors –
   - It hadn't been done already – it wasn't seen as a need
   - Children's on-going failure at school
   - School readiness experiences not being part of children's home life
   - Home having a different language to school
   - The number of school readiness programs that don't include parents, in other communities, towns
   - The emphasis on child care / early kindy for little children, across Australia, not just in communities, which have professional educators, not parents, as teachers
   - The value of schooling to the families hadn't been established in these communities, yet the program was to enable children to get ready for school

This all leads towards a general lack of expectation about these families preparing their children for school. So, my response to the families' request, in early 95, of 'let's make it happen', could be quite unusual / significant. The families happened to ask someone to help them who believed that of course they could learn to do this, as people learn to do many things everywhere, when there is a need, just have to find the best way.

And, where we are at now, 25 years later, of course it is possible – and the families are preparing their children for the activities of school, and it did need some 'facilitation / protection of the place of parent participation' at times. So I consider that, in this study, this is the facilitation part of the story, protecting their place in this program and their responses.