

The dynamic interplay of news media and bilingual education policy in Australia's Northern Territory 1988–2008

Lisa Waller
PhD (Communication) candidate

University of Canberra, Australia

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Abstract

This study theorises the dynamic interplay between news media and the Northern Territory's policy of bilingual education for indigenous children living in some remote communities. It argues that the policy was of little interest to the news media, except when it was made a political controversy in 1998–99 and 2007–08. I conclude that, at those key moments, the media exerted considerable force in the policy process. It defined which knowledge (and audience) was of most worth and, in doing so, set up the conditions for certain truth claims about bilingual education to circulate and shape public and policy thinking. The research uses the spoken words of participants to gain access to the local experiences and perspectives of those invested in developing, influencing and communicating the bilingual education policy. Through the analysis of more than 20 interviews with journalists, public servants, academics and politicians, as well as indigenous and non-indigenous bilingual education advocates, this study argues that a range of media-related practices have enabled policy actors to penetrate the policy debate, define the problem for policymaking and public discussion through the news media, and thereby exert particular forms of influence in the policy process. In 1998–99 and 2008 the media-related practices of particular players in the policy field amplified certain voices in the news and resulted in different truth claims about bilingual education trumping others in the policy outcome. The study concludes that media power is not even, external or unidirectional. It operates in and through the different media-related practices of actors in the policy constellation, and the power of media representation shifts and changes accordingly. This research makes an innovative contribution to Media and Communication Studies through its theorisation of the Yolngu public sphere and a Bourdieuan analysis of the journalism subfield of indigenous reporting in the Northern Territory. It argues that issues of physical and cultural remoteness and the need for journalists to develop cultural competence are the hallmarks of this reporting specialisation. It identifies marked differences in journalists' relationships with government, academic and indigenous sources, and how these differences play out in the way participants understand the production and reception of media texts. This thesis also makes a significant methodological contribution. It builds theory about thinking with indigenous epistemologies and knowledges to generate fresh perspectives and insights about news media and indigeneity. I argue Yolngu social theory can be brought into balance with northern theories to build what Connell (2007) has called 'southern theory'. This dovetails with another key outcome: the development of an academic form of journalism that serves indigenous peoples' self-determinist aims for scholarly research, based in their land, culture and indigenous research methodologies.

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Introduction: Milngurr¹

Talk of Ganma brings [an] image to my mind. A deep pool of brackish water, fresh water and salt water mixed. The pool is a balance between two different natural patterns, the pattern of the tidal flow, saltwater moving in through the mangrove channels, and the pattern of the fresh water streams varying in their flow across the wet and dry seasons. Often when I describe this vision to *balanda*², non-Aboriginal people, they wrinkle up their noses. For *balanda*, brackish water is distasteful. But for us the sight and smell of brackish water expresses a profound foundation of useful knowledge — balance. For Yolngu Aboriginal people brackish water is a source of inspiration. In each of the sources of flowing water there is ebb and flow. The deep pool of brackish water is a complex dynamic balance ... in the same ways balance between black and white in Australia can be achieved. (Yunupingu, 1994)

The first aim of this thesis is to investigate the dynamic interplay of media and policymaking in the Northern Territory's bilingual education policy field through the media-related practices of a range of actors in the policy constellation. It draws conclusions about the nature of the media's involvement at key moments in the policy's history through what participants said and did in relation to media and the policy. This is achieved through an analysis of their accounts of how the media affects the way they see the policy field, are influenced by media and how it informs their actions. Couldry (2004) pointed out that this 'media as practice' methodology is more radical than it might first appear. It is a complete departure from the 'texts and their effects' tradition, a dominant paradigm in Media and Communication Studies³ that contends the end product of media production has an impact on social space (Couldry, 2004). In contrast, the media-as-practice approach treats all texts and discourses as practices, and also people's ideas and actions (Reckwitz, 2002). Couldry's (2004) call to practice-based research appealed from early in the project because it helps to conceptualise what to study in relation to the media in everyday life beyond media texts themselves. It also offers a way to build upon the already

¹ *Milngurr* is a Yolngu name of sacred spring water. In her 1999 Wentworth Lecture, Dr R. Marika told the audience it is the metaphor her father used to help her understand about learning and knowledge creation: 'When the tide is high, we are full of new knowledge, new ideas, new thinking. When it ebbs we are looking for new things'.

² *Balanda* is a Yolngu term for non-Yolngu people. It also refers collectively to the English speaking dominant culture of Australia and all other western nations. It originates from the Macassan term 'Belanda' which is derived from 'Hollander' to describe the Dutch and is still used in Bahasa Indonesian today.

³ This thesis is concerned with journalism, which I consider to be a discipline under the umbrella of Media and Communication Studies. I refer to Journalism Studies in specific instances and Media and Communication Studies when speaking more broadly of the academic field in which this work is situated.

extensive, ethnographically inspired work that has been developing for decades in *Journalism Studies*, in which references to 'practices' abound (Zelizer, 2004). Practice theorist Pierre Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research has informed the design and conduct of the study and been used to generate concepts for understanding the field. In short, this study is concerned with understanding the practices of news media and policy development, rather than their textual outcomes, and takes an interview approach that privileges the perspectives and explanations of a wide range of policy actors. It does not seek to generalise about the relationship between news and policy as so many quantitative studies have tried to do (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Instead this qualitative study follows Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer's (2010) policy-specific approach to understanding the media-related dynamics of the bilingual education policymaking field (see chapter 2).

Little attention has been paid to the role of the news media in the Northern Territory's bilingual education policy process until now. Simpson, Caffery and McConvell (2009) have pinpointed public discourse led by conservative media commentators and politicians as an important influence on the government's decision to dismantle the policy in 2008. While this is a valuable insight, this research fills a gap in understanding of the policy process through a fine-grained analysis of the media-related practices of actors in the policy constellation during a 20-year period, from 1988 to 2008. It argues that rather than news media operating exclusively as a unidirectional, external influence, 'media logic' (Altheide & Snow, 1979) has become interwoven with policymaking processes.

This study takes a multi-perspectival approach to understanding the media-related specifics of this policy field through depth interviews with 28 participants, including bureaucrats, politicians and indigenous policy advocates involved in developing, implementing and reporting the policy. They shared personal experiences of crafting, promoting, influencing and contributing to public discussion of the policy, expressed views on the role of media, and reflected on their own professional practices. Their words have been analysed in concert with the scholarly literature and theories that

flow through this study to create new theory about the interplay of news media and policymaking in the bilingual education policy field.

Bringing southern theory to Journalism Studies

Following Connell, this thesis argues that Journalism Studies '*almost never* cites non-metropolitan thinkers and *almost never* builds on social theory formulated outside the metropole'⁴ (Connell, 2007, p. 379). Connell used the term 'southern' not to name a defined category of states, or societies, but 'to emphasise relations, authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnerships, sponsorship, appropriation – between intellectuals and institutions in the metropole and those in the world periphery'. (Connell, 2007, pp. viii-ix)

This research makes a significant methodological contribution to the discipline by demonstrating how a 'southern theory' (Connell, 2007) approach that incorporates indigenous⁵ knowledges can build understanding of journalism and be used to improve reporting on indigenous affairs. A southern theory approach involves thinking *with* indigenous people, rather than *about* them (Connell, 2007). This thesis draws on indigenous research methodologies (Smith, 2004) and the social theory of Yolngu people from North-east Arnhem Land in Australia's far north who participated in the study (see chapter 3). The *Ganma* metaphor, discussed in the opening quote, and which I return to throughout the thesis, is used by Yolngu to explain the bilingual, bicultural philosophy of their school. It also provides the theoretical framework for this research. The *Ganma* concept is based in Yolngu land and concerns 'working things together' to create something distinctive and new – a specific ecology of knowledge, rather than the notion of incorporating two ways of thinking, or a transmission between two bodies of knowledge (Yunupingu, 1994).

⁴ Connell uses the term 'metropole' to refer to what is termed the 'centre' in discussions of 'centre and periphery', or as 'western', as in 'the west and the rest' or northern hemisphere as opposed to 'southern' hemisphere.

⁵ I do not capitalise the term 'indigenous', which refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is in accordance with the style of the Fairfax newspapers I have worked on as a journalist (see Saddler, K. (ed.) (2002) *Fairfax stylebook & media law guide*, Fairfax Media: Sydney, p. 120), which I believe to be grammatically correct. The Fairfax stylebook says 'indigene' and 'indigenous' are not proper nouns and should therefore take a lower case 'i'. I acknowledge that many Australian people and organisations, including governments, capitalise 'indigenous' in their documents. There are many nations of indigenous people in Australia. I try to refer to all indigenous people according to their identity based in their country where that information is available, and I capitalise all indigenous proper nouns, including Yolngu.

While it incorporates ideas of respect for both *balanda* and Yolngu knowledge systems, it is not about reconciling cultures but creating a new culture. Therefore, this study is not only an investigation of the news media's role in the bilingual education policy process. It has two methodological aims:

1. To create a new and distinct ecology of knowledge for exploring the news media's role in a specific indigenous policy field. The aim is to make a contribution to the development of southern theory and connect it with the project of democracy, which Connell (2007) said involves rethinking the land in social structure and dynamics from indigenous perspectives. It also involves rethinking the nature of social-scientific knowledge (epistemology, methods and forms of communication) 'in a context of respect for intellectual traditions from the global periphery' (Connell, 2007, p.viii).
2. The development of an academic form of journalism about indigenous people and issues that serves their self-determinist aims for scholarly research, based in indigenous perspectives and research methodologies (Waller, 2010b).

Background to the study

This research makes a significant contribution to the overarching Media and Indigenous Policy project⁶, which involves a number of Australian scholars who are investigating how indigenous policies, from the Bicentennial celebrations of 1988 to the National Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, have emerged in specific discursive environments, and the news media's role in both representing and generating indigenous issues as 'intractable' or 'wicked' (Rittel & Webber, 1973) policy problems. The findings about a specific indigenous policy field add to the significant body of data and its analysis that comprise the project, providing further compelling evidence on the nature of the relationship between news media and indigenous policymaking in Australia.

⁶ 'Australian news media and Indigenous policy-making 1988-2008' Australian Research Discovery Project DP0987457

Policies of the past shape the present and the future

This thesis must begin with an acknowledgement of the impact of colonialism and the legacy of Australia's racist past. Policies of dispossession, segregation and assimilation have created intergenerational disadvantage and trauma that hamper educational achievement for the majority of indigenous students (Gray & Beresford, 2008, p. 205). It is also important to note that bilingual education is always embedded in a complex matrix of interconnected issues, ideas and fields. Indigenous peoples' relationships with their lands, kinship and culture shape their worldview, as does their relationship with the settler culture. The settler-indigenous dimension includes intersections with the policy fields of health, housing, employment, justice and human rights. The debate also overlaps with the issue of the value, preservation and maintenance of indigenous Australian languages (see, for example, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012). The theme of self-determination is ever present and recurs throughout the thesis.

Bilingual education, also termed 'two-way' or 'both-ways'⁷ learning in the Northern Territory, is sometimes raised as part of a wider discourse that presents indigenous education as an intractable policy problem (Beresford & Gray, 2006, 2008; de Plevitz, 2007). Conservative indigenous commentator Noel Pearson has described the education field as 'the indigenous Australian education disaster' (Pearson, 2009, p. 16). This deficit discourse has overwhelmed other perspectives in both news and policymaking in recent times, including the educational aspirations of indigenous peoples themselves (Simpson, Caffery & McConvell, 2009).

The non-indigenous way of defining bilingual education is to explain that it is an approach to schooling and curriculum organisation that uses two languages as the medium of instruction in a well-planned and formally organised program (Gale,

⁷ The Aboriginal English terms 'two-way learning' and 'both-ways learning' have come to indicate the acceptance of bringing together non-indigenous and indigenous knowledge. The 'both ways' approach tends to focus on those aspects of each knowledge domain that are compatible. The Garma Maths curriculum, for example, finds correspondences between aspects of the Yolngu kinship system, (Gurruṯu), and aspects of numeracy; and between people's connections with place, (Djalkiri), and concepts of pattern and space in non-indigenous maths (http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/html/educators/07_bothways.htm)

1990; Hoogenraad, 2001). Devlin said that, in his work with Yolngu people, he has come to realise there is a deeper meaning:

Bilingual, bicultural education is a tool for survival in a fast-changing, often confusing world. It can open up new, inspiring perspectives as learners from one culture come to grips with the metaphors, the core concepts, the key insights, the poetry, the art and music of the other culture. (Devlin, 2009, p. 3)

In recent times there has been international research on the role of the news media in constructing both problems and solutions for education policymakers (see, for example, Franklin, 2004; Gerstl-Pepin, 2007; Stack, 2007a, 2007b; Hattam, Prosser & Brady, 2009). This research acknowledges that policymakers, journalists and their audiences are part of a mass media environment. Stack (2010) observed that it is an environment that frequently takes for granted the neo-liberal nature of society, that politicians are not trustworthy and that news is 'for the most part episodic, sentimental, tragic and/or conflict ridden'. She argued:

Within this framework the parameters are largely set for what makes for a good education story. For policymakers the rules of the game include an acceptance of media as what Bourdieu (1996: 5) calls a 'caucus' that is responsible for 'making' both politicians and their reputations. (Stack 2010, p. 109)

This thesis aims to make a contribution to this body of scholarship on news media and education, which points to the rise of neo-liberal discourses in shaping education policies (Stack, 2007b). Neo-liberalism involves extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action (Couldry, 2010b). The corporate-controlled media is understood to play a key role by representing public expenditure on education as 'the problem' and business and unregulated free markets as 'the answer', so business-oriented measures are recommended to solve the news media's versions of educational and national problems (Brantlinger, 2004). Harvey noted that prestigious business schools such as Harvard and Stamford in the United States, funded by private foundations and corporations, 'became centres of neo-liberal orthodoxy from the very moment they opened' (Harvey, 2005, p. 54). Their impact is global. Neo-liberal thought has affected education policies worldwide, as well as the news media, especially Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd, which promotes neo-liberal views on indigenous policy in Australia (Manne, 2011). Research on education policy, discussed in chapters 2 and 4, suggests 'media logic' (Altheide & Snow, 1979)

has an increasingly constitutive role in neo-liberal policy processes. This thesis aims to pinpoint the ways it operates in a specific policy field. The fraught relationship between the mainstream and indigenous Australia makes this a particularly rich site for investigating the range of media-related practices within a particular education policy field and for developing methodologies for examining how media power operates in specific policy contexts (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010).

A new model of academic journalism

The research and thinking presented here is in large part a response to Yolngu participants' self-determinist aims for the research, which include writing works of journalism on the subject of bilingual education for mainstream news media audiences that present their perspective (see chapters 3 and 5). This critical studies approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) has resulted in the development of a model of academic journalism based in indigenous research methodologies (Waller, 2010b). There is a significant body of literature on news media representation of indigenous people and issues, discussed in chapter 5, which documents poor reporting practices and identifies ways for bettering journalists' professional conduct and coverage. This research aims to contribute to improving the news media's representation of indigenous people and issues through the development of a journalism methodology for reporting on indigenous people and affairs. This model is based in indigenous epistemologies that emphasise the centrality of trust, reciprocity and maintaining consent (Waller, 2010b), and recent scholarship on listening (Dreher, 2010). Along the way it engages with the debate within the discipline of Journalism in Australia over what constitutes research for journalism academics. Some argue that major works of journalism, by journalism academics, are research and should be recognised as such within the academy. Australasian academic journals, *Research Journalism*⁸ and *Pacific Journalism Review*, are publishing this work as scholarly outputs. Through this study an alternative model has been developed where major works of journalism are an important part of the research but as outcomes, rather than outputs (Waller, 2012c). In other words, they can be part of the research design, a stated research aim, and are

⁸ <http://researchjournalism.wordpress.com/2010/03/12/hello-world/>

written about in traditional academic outputs. This thesis also argues such works can have an experimental dimension because they can be used to gauge whether research objectives have been achieved.

Media-related practices in the bilingual education policy field

Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research is one of the main theoretical streams coursing through this study. Bourdieu did not develop his concept of 'field' as a grand theory, but as a suite of tools, including capital and habitus, for interpreting practical problems through empirical studies (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 232). This study is concerned with the habitus and different forms of capital possessed by members of the fields that intersect in the territory's bilingual education policy field. The research has been located within a specific historical period and social space (or field) and incorporates the localised understandings of those operating within it. The aim is to analyse the media-related practices of this specific indigenous policy field at particular 'policy moments'. Working in Bourdieu's tradition of practice-based research offers a way of engaging with specific processes of mediatization in the local context to understand the impact of news media on a specific policy process and government.

Davis (2007), who works in Bourdieu's tradition, argued that to understand media power we must begin with an examination of the understandings of those groups of people who have power as well as their media-related practices. This thesis argues that the local understandings of journalists, policy advocates (those frequently excluded from the media-policy dialogue) and public servants are an important facet of the policymaking process – not only 'the people who have power' Davis referred to, such as political elites. This research builds on established approaches to elite depth interviewing (Gamson, 1992; Herbst, 1998; McCallum, 2010) through the 'media as practice' paradigm, which enables participants in the policymaking process to characterise their own experiences and perspectives about the relationships between news media and the bilingual education policy.

Journalism is a broad church that includes community, alternative and indigenous news, as well as citizen journalism. There is also a range of journalism forms found across traditional and digital platforms. This thesis has a strong focus on the practices of mainstream journalism in traditional forms, including metropolitan daily newspapers, radio and television. It focuses on these forms of journalism, as they are still understood to have the greatest impact on public opinion and policymakers (Lee-Wright, Phillips & Witschge, 2011).

Sources of scholarly inspiration

Along the way I have become acquainted with a large body of thought-provoking scholarship from the study of qualitative research, to journalism, media and communication, indigenous studies, education, anthropology, geography, sociology and political science. This has guided and informed the research closely. But there have been some outstanding sources of inspiration to acknowledge from the start. Thinking with these scholars has been stimulating, often difficult and ultimately fruitful. I was fortunate to attend a higher degree student master class with Nick Couldry of Goldsmiths, University of London, at the University of Technology, Sydney, in 2009, on his 'media as practice' approach (Couldry, 2010a), which has provided the methodological impetus for this journey. Tanja Dreher presented on her 'listening project' (Dreher, 2009) at the same meeting. Her scholarship has informed the thinking in this thesis about the relationship between journalism and indigenous people and guided the way I have addressed the issues through my research and journalism practice. Couldry's work is discussed in chapter 3 and Dreher's in chapter 5. It was a highlight to hear Māori scholar Linda Tuwai-Smith's plenary presentation at the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association conference in Hamilton, New Zealand, in July 2011, where she spoke about indigenous research methodologies. From early in my candidature her ground-breaking work on decolonising research methodologies (Smith, 2004) has provided the lens through which I have tried to see myself in relation to my research project, and provided invaluable guidance on thinking and working with Yolngu, who so generously participated in this study. This is discussed in chapter 2 and the results of working in

this methodological tradition are presented in the second section of chapter 5. Smith has challenged me, as a *balanda* researcher, to find ways to undertake research in partnership with indigenous people, which is first and foremost respectful, worthwhile and meaningful for them. Raewyn Connell gave a keynote address on her concept of southern theory (2007) at the IAMCR conference in Durbin, South Africa in July 2012. Hearing her speak that day crystallised my thinking about the way we do research in and about the global periphery and what it means for researchers and participants alike. At the same meeting I attended a presentation by Katrin Voltmer, of the University of Leeds. She advocates the policy specific and comparative approach to studying media and policy (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010) that has been so helpful for this research. It has been a privilege to encounter these fine scholars in person, as well as on the page, as part of my PhD journey.

Chapter outlines and arguments

This thesis is organised in two parts. Part 1 presents the literature and methodology that underpin part 2, which comprises the study findings and conclusions.

It is necessary to consider policies in their historical contexts because they are usually the result of adjustments to an original policy position and their evolution can explain much about how and why a policy has come to take a particular form (Bessant, Watts, Dalton & Smyth, 2006). This resounds with Bourdieu's (2005b) ideas about the importance of history for understanding how change takes place within a particular field across time. Therefore chapter 1, 'Bilingual education: Historical and political contexts', provides these perspectives on the policy. It presents an overview of the development of bilingual education policy in the Northern Territory from 1950, when public education for indigenous children in remote settlements was first introduced, through to and including the study period 1988–2008. It identifies and discusses key moments in 1998–99 and 2007–2008 when the bilingual education policy came to national news media attention. These policy moments are explored in depth in chapters 4 and 5. On both occasions the territory government announced major changes to its bilingual education policies through the news media. Chapter 1

also presents a brief history of Yirrkala school and its Yolngu pedagogy, which is highly relevant as Yolngu participated in this study and their epistemologies provide an important theoretical lens for this thesis.

Chapter 2 is titled 'Yirritja', which is the Yolngu metaphor that explains how the different bodies of knowledge from the sea and the land that come together in *Ganma* must work together and be presented so they are preserved and respected (Marika, 1999, p. 7). In other words, this chapter discusses the major theoretical streams that run through the thesis to create a new balance of knowledge. These include the *balanda* theories: Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research, as well as the key northern literature on policy and media and mediatization theory. It also introduces Connell's (2007) southern theory and the indigenous social theories this thesis also draws upon. The concepts discussed in this chapter will underpin the research design and its conduct, as well as the analysis of the themes that emerge out of participants' local understandings about media-related practices in the policy field.

Chapter 3 is titled '*Ganma*'. It uses the metaphor to describe how the northern and indigenous bodies of knowledge that are drawn upon will be operationalised through the methodologies for this study. It sets out to show how they will enable new ways of thinking about the relationship between the news media and the bilingual education policymaking field, as well as journalism about indigenous people and issues. One of the key sections of this chapter, on reflexivity, aims to show how the study is designed to preserve and respect the bodies of knowledge I work with. It introduces the practice methodology advocated by Couldry (2010, 2004), and explains the methods used for gathering and interpreting the data.

Part 2 is titled 'Remoteness and proximity'. It presents the findings and outcomes in two chapters.

Chapter 4, 'Bilingual education and the language of news', is presented in a suite of essays that explore the four major themes that resonated across the interviews with participants. Their different perspectives — from federal senator, to journalist, public

servant, academic and indigenous teacher – are worked together to tell the stories of the significant actions, structures, individuals and attitudes that shaped news and policy discussion of bilingual education policy in the territory. The first essay discusses the impact of changes in the national mood on indigenous affairs and education and how this was generated by and reflected in national policy and news media during the study period 1988–2008. It argues that the territory's bilingual education policy debate remained in close proximity to the wider, changing discursive frames identified during the study period. The second, 'The monolingual mindset', argues that indigenous languages have little symbolic capital beyond the communities where they are used. It explores how remoteness between mainstream social space and 'remote' indigenous contexts, in both geographical and cultural dimensions, affects the way indigenous languages are heard and understood in the news media and policymaking. It also argues academic experts are often seen as 'remote' by journalists and policymakers. In the third essay, 'Don't cut off our tongues', a picture emerges of how the contemporary Yolngu public sphere is constituted. This essay takes a southern theory approach to analysing the successful Yolngu campaign in the late 1990s to retain their bilingual education programs. It documents how deliberations within an indigenous public sphere were then able to connect with the wider public sphere. In the final essay, 'An intimate dialogue', the mediatization of the bilingual education policy in 2008 is theorised through participants' local, grounded understandings of the policy's demise.

Chapter 5, 'Writing black, writing back', is presented in two sections. The first, 'It comes with the territory: Remote indigenous reporting as a weak subfield of Australian journalism', argues that reporting on remote indigenous affairs in northern Australia is a distinct, but weak, subfield of Australian journalism. To understand the journalism practices involved in coverage of bilingual education, this subfield requires analysis because it is the arena in which the reportage has been generated. This section explores its logic and operations. Through the local understandings of study participants and Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research, the characteristics and practices of this subfield emerge. Remoteness is

identified as a key factor that shapes the practices of journalism in the subfield. A journalism methodology for addressing cultural remoteness, in particular, is proposed in the final section. In 'Learning in both worlds: Academic research, academic journalism', there is a return to the *Ganma* metaphor. This section documents the connections made through this project between indigenous research ethics and journalism practice, and between academic research, academic journalism and mainstream news media. The metaphor is used here to describe the mixing of indigenous and *balanda* streams of knowledge for the creation of a new ethical framework for indigenous reporting. My practice as an academic journalist and the feature article written as an important outcome of this project (Waller, 2011a) are used reflexively to argue that works of journalism by journalism academics can be valuable outcomes of research without making the claim that they are scholarly works *per se* (Waller, 2012c). The 'experimental' possibilities such works of journalism offer for 'testing' research findings, concepts and theories will also be discussed.

Chapter 6 integrates the findings from the preceding chapters. It provides the overall conclusion that, through its representation of contested voices in the bilingual education policymaking process, the news media defines which knowledge (and audience) is of most worth, and in so doing sets up the conditions for certain truth claims and regimes of truth to circulate. At the key policy moments of 1998–99 and 2008 media-related practices within the field amplified different voices and resulted in different truth claims about bilingual education trumping the policy outcome. This supports the argument that media power is not even, external or unidirectional. It operates in and through the media-related practices of the full range of actors in the bilingual education policy constellation, and the power of media representation shifts accordingly. The concluding chapter also argues that the journalism theory and practice that has grown out of my theorising speaks back to this power by listening to, and amplifying, Yolngu policy perspectives that are based in their land and their culture.

Part 1: Historical and theoretical contexts, methodologies

Chapter 1: Bilingual education — Historical and political contexts

To deny a people an education in their own language where that is possible is to treat them as a conquered people and to deny them respect. (Beazley, snr, 1999)

Introduction

All policies have a history of significant events, are shaped by particular cultural, ideological and political climates that shift over time, and operate in specific social, economic and discursive contexts. Individuals can also play key roles in setting policy directions. These factors come together to influence the timing and shape of policies, as well as their ‘evolution and outcomes’ (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 16). It is therefore necessary to consider policies in their historical context because they are usually the result of adjustments to an original policy position and their evolution can explain much about how and why a policy has come to take a particular form (Bessant et al., 2006). This chapter provides an overview of the development of bilingual education policy in the Northern Territory from 1950, when public education for indigenous children was first introduced, through to and including the study period 1988–2008. It identifies and discusses the key moments in 1998–99 and 2007–2008 when the policy came to national news media attention. On both occasions the Northern Territory Government announced through the news media that its bilingual education programs were being dismantled. Indigenous people were not consulted in the policy process, and opponents of the changes attempted to use the news media to voice their protests. This chapter also presents a brief history of Yirrkala school and Yolngu pedagogy, which is an important aspect of this study.

Indigenous education policy in the Northern Territory: 1950 to 1972

Until 1950 there was no government policy or public schooling for indigenous children in the Northern Territory, despite its relatively large indigenous population (Gale, 1990, p. 50). After World War II, explicit discrimination such as excluding indigenous children from schools became unacceptable (Gray & Beresford, 2008,

p. 207) and a policy was introduced to assimilate and integrate indigenous students (Nicholls, 2005).

In 1950, the Commonwealth began to fund mission schools, which had been operating from the 1920s, and set out a curriculum with Assimilationist aims. The first government Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory were opened in 1950, at Bagot, Amoongoona, Delissaville and Yuendumu (Hill, 2008, p. 31). The stated goal of Assimilation policies was to provide indigenous people with the same levels of education, health, employment and economic opportunity as those in mainstream Australian society (Nicholls, 2005). A statement on 'Native Education in the Northern Territory' issued in 1954 included: 'In conformity with the Commonwealth Government policy of Assimilation, English is the language of instruction in native schools' (Commonwealth Office of Education, cited in Dunn & Tatz 1969, p. 286).

The International Labour Organization Conference adopted Convention 107 concerning the protection and integration of indigenous populations in independent countries in 1957. Under Part VI, Education and means of communication, Article 23 says: '1. Children belonging to the population concerned shall be taught to read and write in their mother tongue or, where this is not practicable, in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong' (Aboriginal Affairs Information Paper No. 7, cited in Dunn & Tatz, 1969, p. 272). There was pressure both from outside and within for Australia to uphold the ILO convention. In Australia, people such as the prominent indigenous rights campaigner and highly respected anthropologist A.P. Elkin began lobbying for the use of mother tongue languages in schools (Dunn & Tatz, 1969).

The House of Representatives Hansard for 16 April 1964 reports the shadow minister for education, Kim Beazley, snr, seeking clarification of the fact 'that Commonwealth assistance is not given in mission schools in the Northern Territory unless the medium of instruction is English' (Beazley, cited in Dunn & Tatz, 1969, p.279). Reflecting on this period many years later, Dr Beazley said schools that used an indigenous language as a medium of instruction did not receive Commonwealth funding because they were:

... held to be impeding the doctrine of Assimilation. Aboriginal languages, under this doctrine, had no destiny but to disappear. Anything done which might seem to preserve them was reprehensible ... as minister for education I was later to find that the state of Western Australia had a law that if any people conducted a school in a language other than English they would be fined thousands of dollars for EVERY DAY [emphasis in original] they did it. (Beazley snr, 1999, p. 5)

In 1990 at Lajamanu in the Northern Territory, the school principal, Christine Nicholls, was told of people being hit or otherwise punished for using their own language in this period. One woman recalled that 'in those welfare days the settlement supervisors would hit us if we spoke Walpiri. They would say, "Stop talking in that Chinese language"' (Nicholls, 1994, p. 217).

Gray and Beresford (2008) said indigenous education policies throughout Australia in the Assimilation period were highly racist and destructive. They argued that these policies created alienating environments for indigenous people, excluded parental involvement, and used explanations of 'cultural deprivation' and 'compensatory education' to place the blame for 'failure' at school on indigenous people. These impacts have had intergenerational effects that continue to be major obstacles to overcoming the gap in contemporary educational outcomes (Gray & Beresford, 2008, p. 208). This view is supported by the findings of major inquiries, including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnston, 1991b), the *Bringing Them Home* report (HREOC, 1997) and *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle (Little Children are Sacred): Report of the Northern Territory board of inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual assault* (Wild & Anderson, 2007), which identified the racism of Assimilation policies as monumentally damaging to indigenous people's sense of identity and well being.

In 1964, the Federal Government received the influential Watts and Gallacher report. It made 96 recommendations and provides evidence that recognition and teaching of indigenous cultures and languages was understood, even then, as crucial to enable indigenous children to 'bridge the tremendous cultural gap which exists between their parents and the European community' (Watts & Gallacher, 1964, p. 35). The report considered the benefits of bilingual education, but opposed its introduction because of the large number and variety of languages, the difficulty of recruiting and

training teachers, and the problems of providing teaching resources in indigenous languages (Dunn & Tatz, 1969, p. 277). Hill observed that many of the obstacles the Watts and Gallacher report identified were ‘highlighted again and again in subsequent reports on indigenous education’ (Hill, 2008, p. 29). It is worth noting in particular that the inquiry’s objections have continued to be used to oppose bilingual programs in the territory throughout the history of the policy (see, for example, Hughes, 2008).

Bilingual education: Australia’s first policy of indigenous self-determination

The introduction of bilingual education programs in the NT Aboriginal communities in the early seventies was a marvellous and highly symbolic event signal[ing] a fundamental, positive, and irreversible change in the relationship between Aboriginal languages and formal educational structures in Australia. This was naïve optimism of course. Sadly, what is surely an inalienable right — to use and develop one’s native language — is not safe from forces of economic and sociopolitical contingency. (Hale, 1999, p. 42)

After 23 years in opposition, the Australian Labor Party won federal office on 2 December 1972, and immediately began to roll out a wide range of innovative educational and social reforms (Sommer, 1991). Within two weeks, on 14 December 1972, the Prime Minister Gough Whitlam launched the bilingual education policy for the Northern Territory — the Federal Government’s first policy of indigenous self-determination:

A campaign to have Aboriginal children living in distinctive Aboriginal communities given their primary education in Aboriginal languages. The Government will also supplement education for Aboriginal children with the teaching of traditional Aboriginal arts, crafts and skills mostly by Aborigines themselves. (Whitlam, 1972)

The policy was proposed by the minister responsible for education in the Northern Territory, Kim Beazley, snr. He said he made the recommendation on the basis of his observations of remote Aboriginal schools in the late 1960s when he was then the shadow education minister. Dr Beazley said when he went into schools in remote communities where the language of instruction was English, the children were easily distracted by his presence at the back of the room, but at Hermannsburg:

...where the teacher was teaching in Aranda (Arrentre) ... nobody swung around and looked at me. Their focus was on what the teacher was saying. (Beazley snr, 1999, p. 5)

On the world stage, the 1960s saw the rise of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the American Civil Rights campaign. In 1960s Australia, indigenous people organised and campaigned for their citizenship and human rights through actions such as the 1965 'Freedom Ride' through country towns. Yolngu launched the first land rights case with the Bark Petition to Federal Parliament in 1963 (Connell, 2007b; Mundine, 1999). The 1967 referendum gave full citizenship to indigenous Australians and the Commonwealth the right to make national policy and legislation in indigenous affairs (Flood, 2006). After the referendum, Assimilation was replaced by the policy of Integration, which recognised that indigenous people have the right to live their own lifestyle rather than expecting them to merge into mainstream Australia (Flood, 2006, p. 238).

General education policies throughout the world were also being rethought in this period, including new understandings of how racism, sexism and economic disadvantage are reproduced through education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1972). In Australia, this thinking saw the revision of curriculums for primary and secondary schools and the Whitlam government was to introduce free university education for all Australians.

Apart from its global and national political contexts, the bilingual education policy must also be understood within the context of the Whitlam administration itself, which was elected partly on a platform that included human rights and self-determination – the right to determine and control one's own destiny. Whitlam put an official end to Assimilation, and set a new course for Australian race relations with its policies of self-determination and multiculturalism (Flood, 2006, p. 240). In the field of education, the National Aboriginal Education Committee was established 'as a permanent advisory committee for education' (Cowie, 2002, p. 6) with a strong emphasis on the need for indigenous people to have direct involvement in the education of their children.

Implementing the bilingual policy

From the outset the Northern Territory's bilingual education policy was made a matter of national interest through news media coverage and was met with opposition from within political and bureaucratic circles (Harris & Devlin, 1999; Sommer, 1991). The federal education minister Kim Beazley, snr, described how the policy was formulated and announced:

One morning I had the thought to suggest to the Prime Minister that Aboriginal parents might choose the language of the school. I had to see Mr Whitlam at 3pm. I made this suggestion. He pounced on it and when I got back to the flat where I lived in Canberra the 5pm news announced that Aboriginal parents would have the right to choose the medium of instruction. (Beazley snr, 1999, p. 5)

Dr Beazley said the policy announcement caused 'turmoil' within the Education Department (Beazley snr, 1999). He said bureaucrats raised the problems of there not being enough teachers with Aboriginal languages and the lack of teaching resources. The Summer Institute of Linguistics was enlisted to work with educators and indigenous people on the production of resources at five communities where bilingual education was piloted.

In 1974, Geoff O'Grady and Ken Hale conducted a survey of the bilingual education pilot programs and produced a report with 25 recommendations (O'Grady & Hall, 1974). Hoogenraad notes that the 'thread running through the recommendations is a call for local control' (Hoogenraad, 2001, p. 146).

Four phases of bilingual education policy and implementation

Four phases have been identified in the development and implementation of the Territory's bilingual education programs from 1973 to 2008: the establishment phase (1973–78), the consolidation phase (1979–1986), the adaptation phase (1987–1998) and the two-way phase (1999–2008) (Devlin, 2009; Gale, 1990; Harris & Devlin, 1999; Hoogenraad, 2001).

The first five years of operation (1973–78) created a sense of excitement. Hoogenraad said 'from the beginning, Aboriginal people saw bilingual education as the first real

recognition by government of the value of indigenous language, culture and law' (Hoogenraad, 2001, p. 130) and Collins observes that government and bureaucratic proponents believed it would 'result in improved school attendance and better outcomes in English literacy and numeracy' (Collins, 1999, p. 121).

Support for the development of the new programs came from a departmental bilingual support unit called the Bilingual Education Consultative Committee (BECC) (Harris & Devlin, 1999). It employed 12 staff, including an anthropologist, ESL (English as a second language) specialists, and six linguists, five of whom were school based. Beth Graham, who was a teacher-linguist at Yirrkala from the bilingual program's inception in 1974, described the self-reliance that was required by the community and school staff to meet the challenges of setting up a successful bilingual program, from training indigenous teachers, designing curriculum and developing appropriate pedagogies, to printing books by hand:

It took several more years before we were able to sell enough drop scones, hot dogs and cooked chickens to buy a printing press and begin to produce the quantity and quality of materials that were needed. (Graham, 1999, p. 46)

Programs were started when formal evidence of community support was presented to the department. Harris and Devlin said a letter sent to the NT Department of Education requesting a bilingual program 'would typically be signed by a dozen or more community-based people' (Harris & Devlin, 1999, p. 3). Eighteen schools took on a bilingual program during the establishment phase (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009b). But despite indigenous communities' enthusiasm for the program and schools reporting encouraging progress, Hoogenraad (2001) said that from 1976 rumours began to circulate that government support for bilingual education was dissipating and could be withdrawn. He also cited a government report from 1974 that noted resistance from some teachers and non-indigenous people living in indigenous communities (2001, p. 131). Sommer (1991) and Nicholls (2005) documented the passive resistance by education officials from the policy's beginnings.

The Northern Territory became self-governing on 1 July 1978, and the NT Department of Education was established in January 1979. The period 1978 to 1986 is described as the consolidation phase (Devlin, 2009). A new advisory group was established that replaced interstate experts in a move towards becoming a local Aboriginal body (Harris & Devlin, 1999, p. 5). In 1982 the Northern Territory Government endorsed the continuation of bilingual programs officially and set out eight aims, the first of which was 'to develop competency in English (reading and writing) and in mathematics to the level required on leaving school to function without disadvantage in the wider Australian community'. This was a significant departure from the earlier statement in 1975: 'To help each child to believe in himself and to be proud of his heritage by the regular use of Aboriginal language in school and by learning about Aboriginal culture'. It represented a shift of focus from maintenance of language and culture to a transition to English (Hoogenraad, 2001). Ten schools took on bilingual programs during this time (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009b) but staff reductions and a decline in funding support for programs began to have an impact from about 1984 onwards (Hoogenraad, 2001). 'Consolidation' was understood to mean there was no funding to establish new programs in schools (Devlin, 2009).

The period 1987 to 1998 was the adaptation phase (Harris & Devlin, 1999). In 1988 BECC was formally endorsed by Feppi⁹ to receive reports and make recommendations on bilingual education. The Bilingual Unit was required to provide an annual report to Feppi and be available for questioning. Every three years, schools with bilingual programs were required to undergo an appraisal. During this period indigenous leaders in education began to take bilingual programs in new directions. Batchelor College¹⁰ was also a major influence through its community-based education programs for indigenous teachers. At the end of this period 21 government bilingual school programs were operating (Hill, 2008).

⁹ Feppi was the Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee, which oversaw the bilingual program during this period. Feppi, meaning 'rock', derives from a Murrinhpatha word.

¹⁰ It was first called Batchelor College in the 1970s when it was established to provide short courses for Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants in community schools. It became Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in 1988 and provides both training and higher education for indigenous people. It is based in Batchelor, Northern Territory and was the first indigenous-controlled higher education institution in Australia.

Australia's first national languages policy (Lo Bianco, 1987) provided support for indigenous languages, but was eclipsed to some extent by 'the narrower, economic rationalist focus on languages of economic value, English and literacy represented by the National Language and Literacy Policy (1991)' (Devlin, 2009, p. 6). In 1988, the Federal Government established the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce and the resulting report (DEET, 1988) led to the development of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* (DEEWR, n.d). Although the development of a national education policy for indigenous people was an important recognition of indigenous values, culture and pedagogy in the education system, it was up to the states and territories to implement the new policy's top priority of involving indigenous people in the decision-making process. Cowie showed how the ultimate implementation lay with individual schools and mostly non-indigenous staff, which meant opportunities for Aboriginal ownership and control of curriculum development were limited and there was no accountability as to whether or not schools were successful in implementing the policy (Cowie, 2002, p. 51).

The fourth phase, 1999 to 2008, is the 'two-way learning' phase, which began with the Collins report (Collins, 1999). Bilingual programs became 'two-way learning' and the phase ended with the Northern Territory's decision in October 2008 to mandate that the first four hours of schooling would be in English, which effectively dismantled the bilingual programs. The Collins report and the 'first four hours in English' announcement were key moments in the relationship between the policy community and the news media, and will be examined at length later in this chapter and in chapter 4.

The 'two-way' period was characterised by policy uncertainty, a decline in the number of trained indigenous teachers due to the reduction in training opportunities at Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education, and the closure of a number of bilingual programs (Devlin, 2009; Nicholls, 2005). By 2006 there were 11 'two-way' programs in 10 government schools (Hill, 2008).

In 2003, the Ramsey report (Northern Territory Department of Employment, 2004) opened the way for dismantling bilingual education programs (Wilkins, 2008). It challenged the educational reasons for supporting them on the grounds of reported concerns by indigenous and non-indigenous people about children's abilities to read and write in Standard Australian English and doubts about the value of learning to read and write in traditional languages. The need for strong ESL (English as a second language) support for the students was discussed. The report expressed respect for the identity reasons for supporting languages, but questioned whether the schools should play a role in helping indigenous peoples maintain languages. However, supporters of bilingual education were encouraged in 2005 by a report from the Northern Territory Government. The *Indigenous languages and culture in NT schools 2004–05* report (NTDEET & Glasby, 2005) recommended two models of bilingual education, which both included the teaching of speaking, reading and writing in English and the indigenous language. This was supported by a statement by then Minister for Education, Syd Stirling, who promised that the Labor Northern Territory government was:

Putting bilingual education back on the agenda. It is another important teaching methodology, with some initial evidence that results from bilingual schools appear generally better than other like schools. More evidence is being collected and evaluated. The program will be discussed within the community engagement process, not imposed on communities, and, given its resource heavy nature, will be carefully rolled out. (Stirling, 2005)

This statement was followed by the Northern Territory's *Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006–2009* (NTDEET, 2006), which included bilingual education as one way of addressing the department's key priority of delivering 'sustainable, high quality school literacy and numeracy programs' (NTDEET, 2006, p. 24). The plan recognised that bilingual programs were effective overseas and gave an indication of positive results in the Northern Territory: 'DEET will strengthen the bilingual program and improve its effectiveness and sustainability to deliver outcomes' (NTDEET, 2006, p. 25). This report also recognised that indigenous involvement in education required guidelines and procedures to ensure schools actively encouraged community participation. Hill praised this aspect of the report because '[s]tories of principals and/or teachers paying lip service to education departments on these

issues, while actively or passively resisting “outside” or community input are all too common to educators in the Northern Territory’ (Hill, 2008, p. 38). This plan was made before the Howard Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER or Intervention) on 21 June 2007, and before the August 2008 Northern Territory election and all the changes these brought for the Northern Territory’s remote indigenous peoples (Altman & Hinkson, 2007, 2010), including a new Minister for Education, Marion Scrymgour.

Two-way Learning: The Collins Report

In 1998 the Northern Territory Government attempted to abolish its bilingual education programs (Hoogenraad, 2001). On 1 December 1998, Peter Adamson, Minister for Education and Training in the Country Liberal Party administration, issued a media release, titled ‘English high priority in bush schools’, which announced ‘the bilingual program will progressively make way for the development of ESL programs’ (Hoogenraad, 2001, p. 131). Three reasons were given for the decision, according to Devlin (2009). The first was that indigenous people were said to be deeply concerned about the way the bilingual program operated, the government wanted to cut the education budget, and it claimed that bilingual schools were under-achieving in terms of outcomes compared with non-bilingual schools. However, there was no review or community consultations, and the government did not produce any data comparing bilingual and non-bilingual schools and their students’ achievements (Hill, 2008; Nicholls, 2005).

Indigenous communities and the bilingual lobby, comprised of teachers, linguists and academics, rallied in defence of bilingual education. The arguments they put forward were based on four key elements: social identity, educational outcomes, language endangerment and human rights (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 19). The bilingual lobby argued that a number of studies, including those by Nicholls (1994), Devlin et al. (1991) and Murtagh (1982), as well as the department’s accreditation reports for its bilingual schools (Devlin, 2009), provided evidence that bilingual schools performed better.

The strong community backlash culminated in the presentation of the largest petition ever received by the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. It had more than 3000 signatories (Simpson et al., 2009). Another outcome was a section in a report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2000) that clearly identified human rights concerns about the inadequate education offered to indigenous children in remote territory schools and lack of use of indigenous languages, and listed the relevant international recommendations made by UNESCO and other bodies.

In response to the protests, the bilingual lobby's arguments and the popular support for bilingual education that was generated, the Northern Territory Government backed down. At the time the announcement was made, the government had recently commissioned retired Federal Labor Senator and resident of the Northern Territory, Bob Collins, to head an independent review of indigenous education, although the issue of bilingual programs was not included in his terms of reference (Collins, 1999; Hill, 2008). However, while undertaking his review in the communities, Collins discovered that 'the people wanted to talk about nothing else' (Collins, 1999, p. 119).

The report from the review, co-authored by Collins and Tess Lea, entitled *Learning lessons: An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory* (Collins, 1999), noted the strong community support for the bilingual program and gave qualified support to continuing it, but with the name change to 'two-way learning' and a recommendation that bilingual schools undergo rigorous regular reviews (Hill, 2008, p. 46). The government acted on this part of the report and rebadged the bilingual programs as 'two-way learning'.

The Collins review made many recommendations for improvements and changes to indigenous education that have never been implemented, but have often been cited by subsequent inquiries and reviews as crucial to improving educational outcomes (Kronemann, 2007; Wild & Anderson, 2007; Yu, Duncan & Gray, 2008). In the wake of the Collins review a number of bilingual programs, including Walungurru

(Kintore), Docker River, Barunga and Warruwi (Goulburn Island) closed, usually at the request of the school principal, rather than the community. The number of trained indigenous teachers and teaching assistants continued to decline as a result of the reduction of remote area delivery of community-based tertiary training and the raising of entry requirements at Batchelor Institute (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 20).

At the policy level, advocates of bilingual education have been critical of the lack of a working definition for ‘two-way learning’, which Nicholls (2005) describes as ‘a warm and fuzzy, feel-good, semantically open concept that can mean almost anything to anyone – or nothing at all’ (Nicholls, 2005, p. 172). She argued this lack of clarity resulted in a ‘policy vacuum’ (Nicholls, 2005, p. 163) with some schools trying to maintain their bilingual programs on their own, contradictory policy directives from the department and reluctance on the part of senior bureaucrats in the department:

... to wield the big stick and condemn the bilingual programs outright, except in private ... but neither will the Education Department step in and reinstate the programs. Nor will they officially support bilingual education verbally, or in any other way. (Nicholls, 2005, p. 163)

Nicholls (2005) said that given these circumstances it was not surprising that indigenous children were failing to achieve literacy. She said increasing numbers of senior staff in the education department had no knowledge about bilingual education, which was reflected in the situation on the ground in schools being ‘pretty much a universal mess’ (2005, p. 174).

... if the state education authority itself has no real policy definition of ‘two-way learning’, how can the (often inexperienced) teachers on the ground be expected to implement this as a programme in school classrooms? (Nicholls, 2005, p. 174)

The first four hours in English

On October 14, 2008, the Northern Territory Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Marion Scrymgour announced in the news media that a ‘restructure of the Department of Education and Training ... would have a greater focus on teaching English’ (Scrymgour, 2008b). The media release did not directly mention the

Northern Territory's bilingual education programs. The only specific detail in this announcement was:

... the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English. I am absolutely committed to making the changes needed to improve attendance rates and lift the literacy and numeracy results in our remote indigenous schools. (Scrymgour, 2008b)

There was no review of the effectiveness of 'two-way' programs before the announcement. This meant that if they were not working the Government had no evidence of what problems in implementation led to failure (Simpson et al., 2009). The nine indigenous communities where the Northern Territory education department ran 'two-way' programs at the time (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009b) were not consulted or warned about the decision (Wilkins, 2008).

In a paper presented at an Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) symposium on bilingual education held in Canberra in June 2009, Simpson, Caffery and McConvell (2009) provide a detailed account of the factors that contributed to the decision and the steps in its execution. The discursive environment was identified as a major influence and, for the first time in the literature on bilingual education policy, the news media was acknowledged as playing a significant role. The 12 September 2008 release of the summary report of the first National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the intense media scrutiny of the Northern Territory's poor results were identified as the triggers for the policy change. They also demonstrated a lack of empirical evidence that schools with bilingual programs performed worse than equivalent non-bilingual schools, as claimed by the minister. These factors were also identified by participants in this study and form the basis of inquiry and discussion in chapter 4, which examines mediatization of the policy.

The decision was made in the discursive context of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER or the Intervention), which is discussed in chapter 4. The attitude towards indigenous people had changed from the understanding that they were the best judges of what should happen in their communities, including

schools, to the assumption that their communities were dysfunctional, and that common sense, as represented by government, should determine what was in their best interests. Simpson et al. (2009) argued that bilingual education experts were implicated in a negative way:

Educators, linguists and other language professionals working with indigenous people were dismissed as being part of the problem, and as thus being partly responsible for the poor level of English. (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 26)

Through their analysis of the history of the policy, Simpson et al. (2009) showed, despite the many reports and recommendations since the early 1980s, by mid-2008 it was clear that the Northern Territory Government had failed to improve teaching English as a second or foreign language for indigenous children. This, together with the confusion and misunderstanding over the aims and purposes of bilingual education, was argued to have fed both directly and indirectly into public discussion and the policy decision.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response included changes to the Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP), which threatened the positions of part-time indigenous teaching assistants and literacy workers. This concerned the Australian Education Union, which responded by commissioning a review of the needs for indigenous education in the Northern Territory (Kronemann, 2007). This review focused on the concerns raised in *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle (Little Children are Sacred): Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse* (2007) on the importance of bilingual education and improved English teaching. Its main finding was that adequate teaching and infrastructure resources were the greatest needs. The report estimated that \$1.7 billion would be needed over five years to get the resources in place to provide a proper education for all indigenous children (aged 3–17) in the Northern Territory (Kronemann, 2007, p. 36).

The union's report attracted little media attention (Simpson et al., 2009). Journalists (see, for example, Barker, 2008; Ferrari, 2008) gave far more coverage to a paper written by the economist Helen Hughes for the Centre for Independent Studies

(Hughes, 2008), which focused on indigenous students' poor results and identified many of the problems with the Northern Territory Government's delivery of education in remote communities. Hughes argued that teaching in the vernacular was a major cause of educational disadvantage. Her critics pointed out that she produced no evidence of the relation of language instruction to educational outcomes, 'quantitative or otherwise' (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 24).

Scrymgour rejected some of Hughes' claims, but within a few weeks she announced changes related to attendance and community partnerships and more teaching and infrastructure resources for remote schools. She also directed the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (NTDEET) to post the results of the first national literacy and numeracy testing (NAPLAN) and attendance figures on its website when they became available (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 25).

In June 2008 the group responsible for managing the first year of the Northern Territory Emergency Response published its final report (Gordon, 2008), which recommended greater access to education and enforcing attendance. They also recognised the importance of maintaining indigenous languages.

The catalyst

On 12 September 2008, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs released its summary report of the NAPLAN tests (MCEETYA, 2008). The results showed indigenous students in Northern Territory 'remote' schools were not achieving acceptable standards of literacy in English and numeracy. This was not new; it had been known to be the case by educators and policymakers since the 1980s (Gray & Beresford, 2008). Simpson et al. (2009) noted that literacy and numeracy were tested in English only, and that the national benchmarks were determined on the basis of students who spoke English as their first language.

The Northern Territory's NAPLAN results received extensive national media coverage (see, for example, Adlam, 2008; Arup, 2008; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2008). Simpson et al. (2009) said the results put Scrymgour under pressure to act. She responded quickly, pointing to remoteness, attendance and English language

problems as the main causes of the poor results. She announced the Northern Territory Government would recruit 200 extra teachers for remote schools and introduce programs for working closely with families (Scrymgour, 2008e).

The NT Emergency Response Review board presented its report on 13 October 2008, (Yu et al., 2008) and its assessment of the Northern Territory education system was damning:

...there is a major education crisis in many Northern Territory Aboriginal communities which should command national attention ... (Yu et al., 2008, p. 31)

The Yu review echoed the familiar complaint that the Collins review recommendations had not been implemented. It described bilingual education as one of the 'uncontested success factors' in education achievement, and blamed a lack of investment by the Northern Territory Government for its schools lacking most of the success factors it identified. The day after the Yu review was published, the minister announced her plan to devote the first four hours of each school day to English only. Scrymgour admitted to *The Northern Territory News* that the plan was put together over a few days (Langford, 2008).

Simpson et al. (2009) said media coverage of the NAPLAN results put Scrymgour under intense pressure. Ignorance on the part of the minister and her advisors about teaching English literacy in remote indigenous schools, the damning indictment of the Department of Education and Training in the Yu review and diverting journalists' attention away from the controversy over the recent departure of the chief executive officer of the department, Margaret Banks, were also seen as possible reasons 'why the one specific policy in the plan proposed by the minister and her department should be an edict that English be the sole medium of instruction' (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 28).

The aftermath

The announcement met with 'shock, fear and outrage' (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 29) from school councils, indigenous community members and both individual, community and institutional supporters of bilingual education. There was a rush of

letters of protest to both local and federal politicians, newspapers and online news sites (see, for example, de Silva, 2008) and the minister was petitioned.

There was much criticism in the news media from professionals involved in education and language (Adoniou, 2008; Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2008b, 2008d). The decision was also criticised by the previous Northern Territory Minister for Education (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2008e), by Federal Labor members for the Northern Territory (Calacouras, 2008); Northern Territory Opposition party leader Terry Mills (Mills, 2008) and by some indigenous commentators (Behrendt, 2008). The most prominent critic on the international stage and in the media was then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma (Calma, 2008a, 2008b; Skelton & Topsfield, 2008). However, the Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard provided qualified support for the policy (Gillard, 2008). She told *The Australian*: 'Every child has to come out of schooling able to read and write English ... It's the language of work, it's the language of higher learning in this country' (Maiden, 2008, p. 1).

The use of new media is not a focus of this thesis, but it is worth noting that The Friends of Bilingual Learning's (FOBL) Google group quickly became the central hub for supporters to share documents and information, discuss the issue and organise its campaign against the effective closure of bilingual programs. A Facebook group was also established for communication among a wider community of supporters.

During the three months following the announcement, journalists and bilingual education supporters kept the issue in the spotlight and pressure on the minister, who continued to defend the decision. A week after the announcement she told the Legislative Assembly resources would not be withdrawn from 'two-way' schools and that the department would support better ESL training for teachers, but did not say how this would be done. In the Legislative Assembly in November 2008 she acknowledged that the nine bilingual schools would be most affected by the policy and accepted the criticism that not enough qualified ESL teachers had been employed to teach at schools where English was a second or third language. Her

position was seen to soften when she acknowledged that the vernacular would continue to be spoken in classrooms and she emphasised the importance of indigenous teachers and teaching assistants (Scrymgour, 2008a, 2008c).

As was the case in 1998 (Nicholls, 2005), one of the main public arguments concerned the evidence on the performance of students in bilingual schools. According to the only publicly available material on the recent performance of bilingual schools (NTDEET & Glasby, 2005), 'two-way' schools had slightly better results than comparable non-bilingual indigenous schools. The department was known to hold other evidence and on 22 November the *Northern Territory News* published some leaks, including:

... preliminary results from the Evaluation of Literacy Approach (ELA) report, leaked to AAP, found that for 'active reading skills in English' students at bilingual schools achieve better results than non-bilingual schools by the time they reach grade 5. (*Northern Territory News*, 2008)

The minister responded by tabling the NAPLAN results of some 'two-way' schools in the Legislative Assembly on 26 November. Devlin (2009) said the document did not compare the results with those of comparable English-medium schools, so the only conclusion that could be drawn was that the 'two-way' schools had poor results. Devlin's examination of the document showed the data was:

... incomplete, selective, erroneous and biased. It is too insubstantial a basis on which to initiate a major policy shift that imposes compulsory changes on remote rural schools. The document does not substantiate the public claim ... that children in schools with bilingual programs are failing to perform to the same standards as children in remote English-only schools. (Devlin, 2009)

In a letter to the online news site *Crikey* on 1 December 2008 (Scrymgour, 2008f), the minister complained opponents had misrepresented her policy initiative. She argued 'two-way' schools were not doing marginally better than English-medium schools, but she provided no evidence to support her statement. However, her position on the 'four hours in English' continued to soften: 'I fully understand and expect that the English literacy teaching process is going to involve the use of regional Aboriginal languages'. However, she maintained her opposition to children first being taught to read and write in the vernacular and her comments on the 20 per cent additional

funding given to 'bilingual' schools being perceived as inequitable suggested it had been a factor in the decision (Scrymgour, 2008f).

The *National Report on Indigenous Languages in Education* (Purdie et al., 2008) was released on 5 December 2008. Its focus is maintaining and strengthening indigenous languages, not how children learn English. The minister was positive about the report (Scrymgour, 2008d) but did not discuss its key principles of community control and choice of language program type. She said 'learning an indigenous language and becoming proficient in the English language are complementary rather than mutually exclusive activities' (Purdie et al., 2008).

By mid-December, in response to criticism from federal colleagues (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2008a; Calacouras, 2008), the minister had agreed to negotiations with each school over a 12-month transition period (Robinson, 2009a). This was headlined as a back-down, but Simpson et al. said in fact it was probably nothing more than a recognition that such a major change would take time to implement properly (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 34). By 1 January 2009, the department's webpage on bilingual education programs had been removed.

Scrymgour resigned as education minister on 9 February 2009, (Robinson, 2009b) and the department continued to implement the 'first four hours' policy. On 1 June 2009, Scrymgour expressed regret over her stance on bilingual education (Calacouras, 2009). Two days later she resigned from the Labor Party.

Bilingual education at Yirrkala

This thesis has a strong focus on the Yolngu community of Yirrkala in North-east Arnhem Land, where bilingual education began in 1974. There are about 1500 people living at Yirrkala, which is 17 kilometres from Nhulunbuy (also known as Gove). Nhulunbuy has a population of about 3000 and was built by mining interests on land leased from Yolngu landowners. Yolngu people of the area are intimately connected to the Laynhapuy Homelands, which stretch 300–400 kilometres down the Northern Territory coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The schools in Yirrkala and the homelands

are collectively referred to as ‘*Yambirrp*a schools’. *Yambirrp*a means ‘fish trap’ and is a key metaphor for Yolngu educational philosophy¹¹. Thirteen clans share governance of the two schools.



Figure 1-1: Map showing location of Yirrkala in North-east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

Many of the indigenous and non-indigenous people who were interviewed for this study live or have lived at Yirrkala, or have had a close association with the community and the school for many years. I chose to focus on Yirrkala because it is widely recognised for having developed, implemented and defended a successful and innovative ‘both ways’ curriculum and for its struggle for self-determination in education and all other aspects of life. The community is passionate and vocal about the importance of bicultural, bilingual learning and has remained at the forefront of the bilingual education movement in the Northern Territory since the program

¹¹ *Yambirrp*a is used to describe how, within the Yolngu philosophy of education, the whole community works together to guide young people into Yolngu foundations for learning. Everyone helps to build the *yambirrp*a from rocks, which represent the elders, and the fish are the children. The children learn inside the *yambirrp*a. Yolngu say that sometimes big storms come from the outside which break or fragment the *yambirrp*a. They work together as a community to mend it by putting more rocks in place (Marika et al., 2009).

began. There have been a number of strong Yolngu education leaders at Yirrkala. These include former Australian of the Year and lead singer of Yothu Yindi, Mandawuy Yunupingu, and the highly respected Yolngu educator, the late Dr R. Marika. Both maintained busy public speaking schedules and media profiles and were passionate and effective campaigners for many years. Yirrkala has a strong workforce of fully trained Yolngu teachers and teaching assistants. *Balanda* from across a diverse range of fields including education, linguistics, mathematics, anthropology, art and music have made important contributions. Many of these people have worked with the community for long periods and remain connected and committed to the school and its educational philosophy.

From the program's inception in 1974, Yolngu were deeply involved in the production of classroom resources and teaching materials and there was a strong contingent of Yolngu teaching assistants and some fully-trained Yolngu teachers, but the program remained firmly in the government's control, and curriculum and other key decisions were made by department officials, the non-indigenous principal and other *balanda* teaching staff. From the 1980s, however, the community took control of the school (Graham, 1999).

Yolngu established the Nambarra School Council in 1984 so they had more control over the governance and running of the school. It included representatives from the 13 clans that make up the community, the Yirrkala community council and homeland centres. Its meetings were conducted in Yolngu matha¹². The school council quickly adopted two policies for 'aboriginalisation': self-management and self-determination. However, the school council encountered two problems early on: there was resistance from the school principal to its power, and meetings were difficult to co-ordinate and conduct because of the large numbers of people involved (Yunupingu, 1999). The community decided a smaller group was needed for achieving outcomes and the Yolngu Action Group started later in 1984, comprised of

¹² Yolngu matha, or Yolngu language, is a language variety spoken by the Yolngu in a large part of Australia's Northern Territory, including much of Arnhem Land. It is a member of the Pama-Nyungan family of languages, and as such shares many features with other languages found in Australia. The word 'yolngu' itself means 'man' or 'person' but may also refer in particular to the Yolngu people. Yolngu is divided into several mutually intelligible language varieties. Source: www.yolngu.net.

all the Yolngu in the school, including teachers and support staff. The Action Group developed a strong set of values and approaches consistent with Yolngu epistemology, including running the school as a group and using Yolngu matha for its meetings and activities. This was done to ensure the right governance processes and for achieving the kinds of educational outcomes the community wanted. All members were given equal status and all day-to-day decisions on staffing, curriculum, problem children, problem *balanda*, attendance and school activities were made by consensus (Yunupingu, 1999). While the school council remained the overarching decision-making body, the Action Group was instrumental in developing the 'both ways' philosophy and curriculum and has also been the driving political voice. For example, the Action Group was a major force behind an effective campaign during the Collins review period when the program was under threat. The campaign, 'Don't cut off our tongues', included the production of flyers, stickers, demonstrations, media coverage and high-level political lobbying (see chapter 4).

In 1986, while Manduwuy Yunupingu was school principal, the 'both ways' curriculum was refined and adopted officially in partnership with the NT education department (Marika, 1999). It emphasised Yolngu languages and culture and equal respect for both Yolngu and *balanda* cultures. It was based in the understanding that control of both languages gives Yolngu 'double power' (Yunupingu, 1999). This approach is consistent with Yolngu epistemology, which is 'unequivocally grounded in the negotiated nature of truth and meaning in Yolngu life [and has] driven the development of distinct educational practices at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy Homelands' (Watson-Verran, 2006, p. 7).

Yolngu educator Dr R. Marika discusses some of the major processes the school had to go through to gain control of curriculum development in the mid to late 1980s:

The control of curriculum, teaching, learning and literacy is all about power. We wanted the school to be a place that put together *balanda* and Yolngu learning to strengthen our culture. To do this at Yirrkala school we had to invent a governance structure that would allow us to explore alternative visions of what it means to be educated and literate. (Marika, 1999, p. 7)

In a speech given at the ceremony for Northern Territory Certificate of Education graduates at Yirrkala in 2006, former school principal Leon White described the struggle to establish a distinctive Yolngu education:

All of these significant developments were against the grain of focus of both the bureaucracies and governments at NT and federal levels ... Throughout these sometimes desperate times the Ngalapal, our leaders, never failed us in giving us leadership to both guide and direct us when necessary ... while [bureaucracies and governments] failed to 'cut off our tongues' we have regularly over the years had to suffer 'being cut down to size'.

In what Yolngu regarded as a positive move, the relationship between education and self-determination was officially acknowledged when the Northern Territory Chief Minister Clare Martin and Yolngu elders signed a local education policy known as 'the Remote Learning Partnership Agreement' with Yambirra Schools Council at the Garma Festival in 2007 (Calma, 2009)¹³. The agreement enshrined three key approaches: joint leadership or a 'two-way' approach to education with bilingual education at the core; joint decisions by the Department of Education and Training and the Yambirra School Council about staffing and specifically the appointment of senior staff; and a community development plan and resources for education from early childhood to adult education (McKenna, 2010).

This agreement was muddied in October 2008 when the education minister Marion Scrymgour announced the first four hours of school would be conducted in English. At the time of writing in early 2013, Yolngu had succeeded in their struggle to have this local policy reinstated and their international human right to educate their children in the vernacular upheld by the new Country Liberal Party government led by Terry Mills (Mills, 2012). Mandawuy Yunupingu encapsulated the community's deep commitment to its approach to education when he said:

Active participation of Aboriginal peoples will renew Australian life during the twenty-first century. But it will need Aboriginal people who are strong and balanced, rooted in their families and their land. This will depend on Aboriginal people being educated as balanced contemporary Aboriginal Australians, something that will only happen when this education is inspired by their land. (Yunupingu, 1994)

¹³ See chapter 6 for discussion of the Garma festival.

Some conclusions

The bilingual education policy has been shaped over a period of more than 30 years against a set of changing policy settings in indigenous affairs, which are discussed in relation to the news media in chapter 4. The long-running debates on bilingual education have involved complex questions about indigenous self-determination, pedagogy and approaches to literacy. However, public discussion has been quite limited, except on the few occasions when it has been made a political issue. Simpson et al. (2009) have argued that in the lead-up to the 2008 decision to dismantle the bilingual programs, conservative politicians and media commentators took a neo-liberal ideological position on bilingual education as a major contributor to poor indigenous student performance, which contributed to the policy decision. This is an important point, but this thesis is interested in broader questions about the interplay of news media and the policy. It will therefore take a multi-perspectival approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of news media in the policymaking process during the 20-year study period.

Chapter 2: Yirritja¹⁴

Ganma is a metaphor. We are talking about natural processes but meaning at another level. Ganma is social theory. It is our traditional profound and detailed model of how what Europeans call 'society' works. (Yunipingu, 1994)

I try to follow the threads of local arguments wherever they lead. That is to say, I take them seriously as theory — as texts to learn from, not just about. (Raewyn Connell (2007) on the project of theorising in the global periphery.)

Introduction

This chapter opens with the quotes above because they encapsulate the major ideas that set the thinking in this thesis apart from previous Australian studies of media and indigeneity. This chapter discusses Connell's concept of 'southern theory' (2007), which involves thinking *with*, rather than *about* indigenous people. Connell's scholarship informs my thinking about media, policy and indigenous people. Ganma is a key Yolngu theory that provides the overarching metaphor for explaining and justifying the philosophical currents this study brings together in a respectful way to create a new ecology of knowledge. These theories are Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research, which provides the tools for designing the study, and interpreting the journalism field. It also offers the kind of thinking that can generate understanding of how media logic operates in the policy field. The second strand is the key scholarship on media and policy, necessary for showing how northern scholars understand the relationship. This literature will only be reviewed briefly here, with a major focus on theories of mediatization, but will be drawn upon more broadly and extensively to interpret the findings in chapters 4 and 5. Third is Connell's (2007) concept of 'southern theory' and indigenous methodologies, which provide the thinking tools needed to accommodate both indigenous and northern

¹⁴ Dr R. Marika explains that everything in the Yolngu worldview is made up of two moieties. One is *Yirritja* and the other one is *Dhuwa*. She says: '*Yirritja* and *Dhuwa* are a bit like ying and yang. They fit together perfectly. Everything in *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa* is connected. For example, *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa* intermarry into each other and vice-versa. Everything in the Land is *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa*. *Yothu-yindi* and *märi-gutharra* are the two main relationships for *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa*. *Märi* and *gutharra* means grandmother and grandchild relationship. *Yothu* and *yindi* means mother and child relationship. Everything in our worldview is interrelated. For example, *Yirritja* land and can come together at a certain point and that land becomes *Dhuwa* and *Yirritja* [sic]. Also, *Yirritja* country being looked after by a *Yirritja* clan, that has a *mari-gutharra* connection (grandmother and grandchild). Yes, *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa* have these relationship terms, through *yothu-yindi* and *märi-gutharra*.' Source: http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/07_worldview_rm.htm

perspectives. Working with southern theory and Yolngu social theory is where this research departs from previous studies of Australian news media and makes a significant contribution to the field.

This means the idea of *Ganma* is at the centre and front of the thesis. It is the theoretical tool used to fulfill the second aim of this research, which is to create a new and distinct ecology of knowledge for exploring the news media's role in a specific Australian indigenous policy field. It has also guided the way knowledge exchange with Yolngu has generated and fulfilled the third aim, which is to create a model of academic journalism on indigenous affairs. The methods for collecting and analysing the data, which are discussed in the following chapter, have also been shaped by the meeting of these ideas.

Ganma

I have studied Yolngu social theory – *Ganma* – with elders as my teachers and through their published scholarship. This is how I have come to bring northern and southern theoretical currents together in the process of knowledge production that underpins this thesis. Yolngu have always used metaphors to discuss how to live (Marika, 2008) and argue that scholars should take metaphors seriously (Marika, Yunupingu, Marika-Mununggirtj & Muller, 2009). Demerit and Dyer (2002) said that in all cultures metaphors were used for validating social norms and processes, and Barnes (1991) said philosophical convictions were developed through the process of discussing metaphors. The *Ganma* metaphor is of crucial importance in Yolngu pedagogy because it embodies the main philosophical underpinnings of 'two-way' learning. It is also an appropriate metaphor for my research approach, which aims to produce new ways of seeing and new knowledge in partnership with research participants¹⁵.

Yolngu often use water as a theoretical tool (Mundine, 1999). The estuarine area of a river is distinctive because it has different plant species along its banks, and this

¹⁵ The Yolngu social theory used in this thesis is well documented in southern peer-reviewed academic journals and scholarly books, and it is from these scholarly sources that I draw the material used in this thesis.

ecology, notable for its constant renewal from fresh and salt water mixing and returning, is known as *Ganma* (Marika et al., 2009). Yolgnu also use water as a metaphor to describe a different kind of mixing: bringing into concert *balanda* thought from overseas (saltwater) and indigenous wisdom from the land (fresh water) to create new life and new ways of thinking. Marika (1999) said *Ganma* was first and foremost a place – Ganma Lagoon. It is a still body of water inside the mangroves near Yirrkala where the saltwater from the sea meets the fresh water from the land:

The water circulates silently underneath, and there are lines of foam circulating across the surface. The swelling and retreating of the tides and the wet season floods can be seen in the two bodies of water. Water is often taken to represent knowledge in Yolngu philosophy. (Marika, 1999, p. 7)

The metaphor is used here to describe the bodies of knowledge that are drawn upon, and how they enable the discovery of new ways of thinking about the relationship between the news media and the bilingual education policymaking field. Marika argued the bodies of knowledge must work together and be presented so they are preserved and respected: ‘this theory is *yirritja*’ (Marika, 1999, p. 7). With this in mind, one of the key sections of the following chapter, on reflexivity, aims to show how this study preserves and respects the bodies of knowledge involved here.

This approach, which can broadly be described as bringing together ‘northern’ and ‘southern’ forms of knowledge is an earnest attempt to respond to the invitation from Yolngu and southern theorists, notably Connell (2007), to embark on the need they have identified to develop the connections and the contrasts between ‘metropolitan’ social thought and ‘colonised and peripheral’ social thought. Connell argued these bodies of knowledge have as much intellectual power and more political relevance but says that ‘since the ground is different, the form of theorising is often different too’ (Connell, 2007b, p. xii). This research aims to create a new kind of knowledge for Media and Communication Studies and Journalism in particular. In attempting this work I am following others who can be described as southern theorists, including Linda Tuhiwau Smith, who has taken qualitative social research methods and combined them with Māori culture and political experience (Smith, 2004).

The balanda theories

Pierre Bourdieu, a theory of practice and investigating fields

The work of Bourdieu, and field theory more generally, has allowed me to consider both the broader structures in which the field of bilingual education policy operates, as well as the constraints it produces for individual actors' actions. Bourdieu's field tradition is a form of practice theory, which is discussed in detail in chapter 3, and is central to the design, conduct and analysis of this study. The discussion in chapter 3 makes an argument for the strength and value of this approach. In brief, taking this reflexive and theoretical perspective is an attempt to do justice to the complexity that characterises the field, which I argue is not possible using a text-based approach.

Chapter 3 discusses how Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research offers a suite of theoretical tools for analysing the media-related practices within a field and across fields (Rawolle, 2010). Scholars in Journalism Studies working in Bourdieu's tradition have drawn widely on his work and extended a number of his ideas, especially about cross-field effects (see, for example, Benson & Neveu, 2005) and the logic of fields (Stack, 2007a). Bourdieu's intertwined concepts of field, habitus and capital will be used here, as well as the work of some scholars 'thinking with Bourdieu' (Champagne & Marchetti, 2005; Marchetti, 2005; Neveu, 2007) who have drawn upon and extended aspects of his work. These approaches will underpin an exploration of how media logic operates in the bilingual education policy field (see chapter 4). It will also be used to develop understanding of the power some policy actors possess through their ability to straddle intersecting fields (see chapter 5). A Bourdieuan framework is also used to generate insights on the subfield of journalism in which reporting of the Northern Territory's bilingual education policy takes place (see chapter 5). Following Bourdieu (1990), it is argued that a fine-grained analysis of the journalism subfield is necessary to understand the reporting of a specific issue and to develop concepts that can contribute to change in reporting practices.

Bourdieu's field theory is an epistemological and methodological toolkit, which can be used to develop concepts for making sense of the world. However, it is important to acknowledge his work has been criticised by many (for example, Calhoun, 1993;

Connell, 2007b; Swartz & Zolberg, 2004) for its claims to universalism. Critics have also argued his theory of practice is in fact a theory of social reproduction that does not allow for explanations of structural change. Of relevance to this study, Connell (2007b) criticised Bourdieu's *Logic of practice* (1990) as a text in which knowledge about a colonised society was acquired by an author from the metropole and deployed in a metropolitan debate in which debates among the colonised were overlooked. She said of his theory of practice:

Bourdieu's own project of creating a universally applicable toolkit gave him no reason to search out colonial voices, because it made irrelevant the specific history of the societies through which the tools are illustrated. Nor did his toolkit require him to address a liberation struggle as a social process. (Connell, 2007b, p. 44)

I am mindful of these critical insights in my use of Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit. In fact I am mindful of these criticisms of northern theory generally. However, Bourdieu's work has much to offer in concert with Yolngu theories of knowledge and practice, which together can be employed to generate a southern perspective.

Yolngu social theory is firmly rooted in their land (Marika et al, 2009) and their concepts relate directly to real places and things in the landscape. In stark contrast, there is no equivalent material place to Bourdieu's field, although all of the people, practices, institutions, goods and services in social fields do have a physical manifestation and can be investigated (Thomson, 2008, p. 74). Bourdieu defined areas such as politics, education, journalism, science and economics as fields (Bourdieu, 1977). Within and across these fields human action is organised around relations of power. He compared these dynamic fields with physical force fields, in which the action of social agents produce reactions (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002).

One of the most distinctive features of Bourdieu's work is his insistence on joining theoretical and empirical work in analysis (Wacquant, 1989). His practice approach strived to overcome some of the dichotomies in other social theories (such as structure and agency, mind and body) and placed great emphasis on reflexivity (Wacquant, 1989). Bourdieu emphasised that there was no point outside the system from which one could gain a neutral, disinterested perspective, and so he

acknowledged that he operated within what he analysed – he was both an analyst and an actor in the fields he entered (Bourdieu, 1992, 1994).

Bourdieu's three main theoretical tools of fields, habitus and capital are used in this study, so they are explained here.

Fields

Bourdieu did not develop the concept of 'field' as a grand theory but as a means of interpreting practical problems through empirical studies. This work needs to take place 'in the field', rather than in a university office or a library (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a, p 232).

Writing about the field of television, Bourdieu defined a field as:

A structured social space ... It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated ... the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 40-41).

Bourdieu argued that to understand interactions between people or explain social phenomenon it was not enough to look at what was said or what happened (Bourdieu, 2005b, p. 1480). It must involve an analysis of the social space, locating the object of investigation in its specific historical, geographic and relational context (Bourdieu, 1993a, 1994). The previous chapter provides the historical context for this study and chapter 5 will analyse the specific field of reporting.

Bourdieu used the metaphor of social life as a game (Bourdieu, 2000), and other scholars use the metaphor of a football match to explain his concept of field. It is a useful way for describing the properties of fields – as bounded sites where games are played to a set of specific rules from set positions. It also allows us to consider how the actual physical condition of the field affects what players can do and how the game is played. According to Bourdieu, the game is competitive, with players using various strategies to maintain or improve their position. At stake in the field is the accumulation of different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

Another metaphor that is used to explain Bourdieu's conception of a social space is a self-contained world that operates semi-autonomously. It is a human construction with its own set of beliefs (Bourdieu, 2005, p.5), which rationalise the rules of field behaviour, so each field has its distinctive 'logic of practice'. This means social agents who occupy particular positions understand how to behave in the field, and this feeling not only seems 'natural' but can be explained using the truths, called 'doxa' by Bourdieu (1977), that are common within the field. Bourdieu said the doxa misrecognised the logics of practice at work in the field, so even when confronted with the field's social (re)productive purpose, social agents are able to explain it away (Thomson, 2008, p. 70). Social fields are not fixed, and it is possible to trace the history of their changing shape, operations and the range of knowledge needed to maintain it and change it. This is how Bourdieu said we can understand how change happens within fields.

People can occupy more than one social field at a time. They can be thought of as occupying a common social space, which Bourdieu called the field of power – which is made up of multiple social fields (Bourdieu, 1989). Bourdieu did not say the field of power determines what happens in all the other fields. Instead he maintained there is a mutual process of influence and ongoing co-construction, so what happens in the field of power shapes what can happen in a social field; at the same time what happens in a social field shapes the field of power and also may influence other social fields (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu argued there was the possibility of 'free play' in fields and that events within neighbouring fields and outside fields could also produce change within them. These are useful perspectives in attempting to understand the influences at play in an indigenous policy field, given the changing discursive setting in wider social space discussed in the previous chapter and in chapter 4.

Large fields can be divided up into subfields, which follow the overall logic of its field but also have their own internal logics, rules and regularities (Marchetti, 2005). Not all fields that make up the field of power are equal. Bourdieu showed how some were dominant and others subordinate (Bourdieu, 1987). To complicate things

further, Bourdieu also insisted that institutions within fields also operated as subfields (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 144). This is relevant to this study's focus on the subfield of remote indigenous reporting in the Northern Territory (see chapter 5).

Habitus

Bourdieu spoke of the 'taking in' of rules, values and dispositions of a field as the 'habitus', which he defined as 'the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations ... [which produced] practices' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78). Habitus therefore explains the underlying determinants of the practices that are available to different agents (Bourdieu, 1977). In Journalism Studies this is arguably the aspect of field theory that has been taken up and used most widely (Benson, 2004).

Neveu explained the importance of habitus to the operation of fields:

A social space comes to work as a field when the institutions and characters who enter it are trapped in its stakes, values, debates, when one cannot succeed in it without a minimum of practical or reflexive knowledge of its internal rules and logics (Neveu, 2007, p. 338).

Habitus is a core part of Bourdieu's view of the social world and 'relation' is its essence (Maton, 2008, p. 61). Practice is not reducible to habitus, but rather emerges from relations between social agents' habitus and their contextual social fields (Bourdieu, 1992, pp. 96-97).

Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus over many years and many empirical studies (Grenfell, 2004) and it is central to field theory and Bourdieu's philosophy of practice. Maton (2008) said it was the most widely cited of his concepts but was also widely misunderstood, misused and contested. Habitus does a lot of work in Bourdieu's approach, according to Maton, who said it was used in two ways. For Bourdieu, it was an attempt to overcome some of the deep dichotomies that have structured the ways in which scholars think about the world. It was also intended to provide a means of analysis of the social world through empirical studies.

Bourdieu defined habitus as a property of social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprised a 'structured and structuring structure (Bourdieu,

1994, p. 170). It is structured by one's past and present circumstances, such as upbringing and education. It is structuring in that one's habitus is systematically ordered rather than random. This 'structure' makes up a system of dispositions that generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). The term 'disposition' is crucial for Bourdieu who said it brings together these ideas of structures and tendencies:

It expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214).

These dispositions or tendencies are durable in that they last over time, and transposable in being capable of operating within a variety of social arenas (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 87). Habitus does not act alone, however. Bourdieu explained that there is an 'unconscious relationship' (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 76) between habitus and a field. He used an equation to express this formally:

[(habitus)(capital)+ field = practice (Bourdieu, 1986b, p. 101).

This can be unpacked as: practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field). This underlines the interlocking nature of the three main 'thinking tools' (Wacquant, 1989, p. 50). Practices are not simply the result of one's habitus, but rather of the relations between one's habitus and current circumstances.

Put simply, habitus is a link between past, present and future, as well as the individual and the social, the objective and subjective, and structure and agency. It focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being. It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this into our present circumstances, and how we then make choices to act in certain ways and not others. Habitus is therefore an ongoing and active process, so to understand practices we need to understand both the evolving fields within which social agents are situated and the evolving habituses which those social agents bring to their social fields of practice (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 52–65; 1991, pp. 37–42).

Habitus is the link between the social and the individual because personal experiences may be unique in their contents but shared in terms of their structure with others of the same social class, gender, ethnicity, occupation, nationality, region and so forth. Bourdieu used the analogy of a game and the idea of 'strategy' to underline the active, creative nature of practices. Each field of practice can be understood as a field of struggle in which actors strategically improvise in their goal to improve their position in the field. They do not arrive in the field with full knowledge of its workings. Instead they have a particular understanding based on their position in the field and over time and through experience they learn the rhythm and unwritten rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu spoke of a 'feel for the game', one that is never perfect and takes prolonged immersion to develop. The emphasis on the situated, practical nature of practice also underlies Bourdieu's warnings against confusing the model of reality with the reality of the model (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 29). For Bourdieu there is always a danger, because of the external, distanced view of the scholar, of turning logical terms of analysis into reality and creating concepts as phenomena (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 61). In other words, the view of the game from above is not the same as it is on the ground. In chapter 3 I outline the research approach based in field theory, which is designed to construct a view of 'the game' from the ground through depth interviews that enable participants to define their own media-related practices in a process of knowledge exchange with me as the researcher.

It is the relation between field and habitus that provides the keys for understanding practice. They are both dynamic, so always evolving and often not in step with one another. Bernstein (1996) recommended habitus as 'something good to think with, or about' because it draws our attention to 'new possibilities, new assemblies, new ways of seeing relationships' (Bernstein, 1996, p. 136). For this reason, it is a highly useful theoretical tool in this study.

Capital

Bourdieu treated capital simply as types of wealth that generate power (Bourdieu, 1986a, p. 256; 1987, p. 4). For him, the motive of social life is the pursuit of distinction,

profit, power, wealth, so his account of capital concerned the resources people use in pursuit of these (Calhoun, 1993, p. 70). The term 'capital' is usually associated with economics and financial exchange, but Bourdieu expanded it 'into a wider anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations of which the economic is only one (though the most fundamental) type' (Moore, 2008, p. 102). In other words, he used it to describe a wider system of exchanges in which different types of capital (including cultural, social and symbolic) were circulated (Bourdieu, 1987, pp. 3–4). The difference between economic capital and forms of symbolic capital that is crucial for understanding Bourdieu's concept is that economic capital is material but does not have intrinsic worth – it is self-interested and always a means to an ends, such as profit, a wage or interest, and this is quite transparent (Calhoun, 1993). Bourdieu said symbolic, social and cultural capital, which are immaterial (including educational credentials, technical expertise, general knowledge, verbal abilities and artistic sensibilities), operate in the same way, but these forms of capital deny and suppress this through their representation as being disinterested and of intrinsic value, removed from the instrumentalism associated with economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu demonstrated that symbolic capital is a type of asset that generates the same kinds of structured inequalities and power relations as economic capital and it is in terms of this logic that fields can be decoded.

The specific forms of economic and cultural capital varies within each field and, within them, individuals and organisations compete, consciously or unconsciously, to valorise those forms of capital they possess (Benson, 2004). Symbolic capital, which is obtained through reputation and prestige and depends completely on people believing the individual possesses valuable qualities, can therefore be understood as the 'energy that drives the development of a field through time' (Moore, 2008, p. 105). The relative social power of agents depends on their positions within fields and the relative position of the fields in which they engage (Bourdieu, 1977). Both symbolic capital and habitus can be approached in terms of two dimensions: accomplishment and transposability. Moore (2008) explained that some agents may be highly accomplished, but only in a limited number of fields. A person

with great accomplishments that transfer across a broad spectrum of social spaces has more symbolic capital. Bourdieu's ideas about capital offer ways of understanding how an individual can have an impact in one field or across many. This concept is highly relevant to this study, which examines how some key actors in the field are able to exert their influence across the fields that intersect in the bilingual education policy field (see chapter 5).

The concept of symbolic capital alone cannot account for the power to shape popular understanding or influence policymaking. It must be considered in terms of how it relates to state and media meta-capital, or symbolic power. In *Introduction to Reflexive Sociology* (1992), Bourdieu used the term 'meta-capital' to describe the concentration of different types of capital in the state, giving it power to decide what counts as capital in specific fields. Couldry argued that the media's power could be theorised the same way:

Just as the state's influence on cultural capital and prestige ... is not confined to specific fields but radiates outward into social space generally, so the media's meta-capital may affect social space through the general circulation of media representations (Couldry, 2003, p. 688).

Couldry (2003) explored how the media exerts power over other fields, and presented a detailed argument that using field theory is not adequate for theorising the media's power to generate, represent and settle issues in other fields. He said there is a gap in *On Television and Journalism* (Bourdieu, 1998) between Bourdieu's 'detailed discussion of how the media field operates as a field of production and his reference to the overwhelming "symbolic power" of television' (Couldry, 2003, p. 660) and proposed that it could best be filled by going outside field theory and drawing on Bourdieu's work on symbolic power found in his late writings on the state (Bourdieu, 2006), even though Bourdieu never made a direct explicit connection between his work on the media and his theories of symbolic systems or the state. This is an important concept that I use for understanding the news media's influence on public and policy thinking about bilingual education, discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Field-based research in journalism and education research

The 'rules of the game' in each field establish what Bourdieu called a 'logic of practice', which lays down what rationalities will guide decisions for those in a particular field (Bourdieu, 1989). It is a key concept for understanding how habitus operates, and has been used by a range of scholars as a tool for theorising what has been described as 'mediatization' (Fairclough, 2000) and 'media colonisation' (Meyer, 2002) of politics and policymaking, which is discussed in chapter 4. In *On television and journalism* (Bourdieu, 1998), Bourdieu's only work that deals with news media specifically, he critiqued the influence of the field of journalism in France. His main focus was describing the inner workings of this field and what separates it from other fields, but he also examined the effects it has on other social spaces, especially politics. In recent times scholars from a range of disciplines have drawn upon and extended Bourdieu's ideas on journalism's effects on other fields to develop theoretical understandings of the mediatization of policy processes (cf in education scholarship Hattam et al., 2009; Lingard & Rawolle, 2004; Stack, 2007b, 2010; Stack & Boler, 2006; Thomas, 2003). My work contributes to this body of scholarship. These studies rely on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, symbolic capital, the logics of practice and cross-field effects to reveal the structural effects of one field on another. In this way the logics of journalism can be seen to be operating 'in the offices of politicians and policy producers, thus affecting the very processes of policy production' (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004, p. 362). Other studies have looked at how changes within the field of journalism have meshed with changes in other fields, including the judiciary and medicine, to affect interrelations between the fields (Benson, 2005; Champagne & Marchetti, 2005).

Stack (2007a) explored how journalists' habitus influences the way education policy is represented and discussed, and argues that education policymakers and teachers need to understand the logic of the journalism field and the power that journalists have to shape educational policy. Stack did not subscribe to the idea that the news media and its elite sources only present one discourse about education; but she did argue there is a discourse around the use of testing as:

[a]n objective measure of success and failure which is embedded in hegemonic understandings of race, gender, class and ... is entrenched in capitalistic notions of success and failure. This discourse is exceptionally stable across political parties and media outlets. (Stack, 2007b, p. 100).

She used critical discourse analysis to study media coverage of national testing to argue that the media interpreted these test results in concert with business and electoral elites as a 'failure of marginalised students', rather than a failure of society to address systemic discrimination. Stack (2007b) found the news media presents business and government solutions as 'common sense' and alternative framings were never sought. Her insights are relevant for interpreting the Australian news media's coverage of 'remote' indigenous students' results in Australia's first national literacy and numeracy tests, discussed in chapter 4.

Stack also interviewed Canadian journalists about the way they cover education issues and found their personal experiences with education were a factor in the way they approached education issues (Stack, 2007a), which accords with findings about journalists' personal orientations informing their coverage of indigenous affairs in Australia (McCallum, Waller & Meadows, 2012). However, she argued it was the larger logic of journalism practice that determined the angle and content of the story (Stack, 2007a). Her studies (2007a, 2010) show how journalism as a field has its own common sense that interacts with other fields, such as education and politics, to create a powerful set of implicit beliefs that set the boundaries around what is and is not considered a story and who should be included in the construction of stories. Through this process they maintain the 'common sense' understanding of the aims and purposes of education more broadly (Stack, 2010, p. 114). Stack's work informs my analysis of journalists' habitus, the larger logic of journalism practice, and the importance of symbolic capital for both policymakers and journalists (Stack, 2010), which are explored from a Bourdieuan perspective in chapter 5.

Australian education scholars Lingard and Rawolle (2004) have also worked with Bourdieu's ideas on how cross-field effects are created, to theorise the interaction between two distinct policy areas using the concept of the 'logics' that guide practice in the form of a 'feel for the game' that is neither conscious or unconscious

(Bourdieu, 1977, 2000). Their case study (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004) investigated the development of *The chance to change*, a report by Australia's chief scientist that was commissioned by the Federal Government to assess the nation's science capabilities. Through their text-based examination of the interplay of the logics of the media and policy fields (cross-field effects), they showed how the mediatization of this science report worked to restructure part of the educational policy field. They also looked at how individuals could contribute to cross-field effects through their position in the structure of a field (Bourdieu, 1977). This study draws on these approaches in theorising the mediatization of the bilingual education policy and for understanding the power of some actors who are able to straddle a number of fields that intersect in the bilingual education policy constellation. However, what is most relevant to my practice approach is the work of Marchetti (2005), who has extended Bourdieu's work on journalism subfields. Marchetti's model offers a way of theorising how the remote indigenous reporting subfield operates. Chapter 5 uses this model to generate a detailed analysis of its 'common sense'. It interprets its interactions with other fields, including the wider social space, the larger logic of the journalism field, the specific education field and politics, and how this results in the logic journalists rely upon to decide what is and is not considered a story and who should be included in the construction of stories.

Other northern theories about journalism, media and policy

There is a large and important body of research that examines the influence of media on different areas of social space, including politics. It is a strong paradigm that makes a range of arguments about how media products affect public perception of issues and on political decision-makers. Early British media studies in the political economy tradition (for example, Cohen & Young, 1973; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson & Roberts, 1978) provided a textual approach to identifying the primary role of the news media in defining policy problems. These textual approaches include ethnographic and survey methods. Political Communication research has emphasised the effects of news media content on political cognition through studies of agenda-setting and framing, with an emphasis on political campaigns (McCombs,

2004; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Bennett & Entman, 2001; McNair, 2007). Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed, including survey research and content analysis. Policy agenda-setting research examines the indirect influence of media on policy elites, for whom news media coverage is a public opinion indicator (Herbst, 1998; Bakir, 2006), but such research does not fully address the complexities of the news media's role in the policy-making process. Recent surveys of scholarship on the relationship between media and policy development processes by Davis (2007) and Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer (2010a) called for a more nuanced examination of the news media's role in identifying policy problems, influencing policy solutions and disseminating policy outcomes. My research takes up this invitation.

It is argued that the policy-making field has become increasingly 'mediatized' (Fairclough, 1995), whereby 'media have 'colonised' the political process by imposing their operational logic on the institutional procedures of public policy' (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010, p. 4). Altheide and Snow (1979) coined the term 'media logic' to represent the way news workers' professional routines impact on policy processes and outcomes (see also Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2010; Couldry, 2003). Bacchi (2009) highlighted the discursive activities of governments in actively producing and representing policy problems, and Ward (2007) and Davis (2007) documented the growth of government communications and media management. Each of these propositions is relevant to this study and will be explored in detail in chapter 4, which presents a fine-grained analysis of the relationship between journalists and government.

Chapter 3 makes the case that, while approaches such as framing analysis and discourse analysis are valuable, to understand the media-policy relationship it is necessary to home in on the media-related practices of policy actors within specific policy fields, and that is best achieved through depth interviews about their media-related practices. This is underpinned by a 'media as practice' methodology (Couldry, 2004) discussed in chapter 3 and the policy specific approach advocated by Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer (2010), which has helped to make sense of the

relationships at play and informed the analysis of the dynamic interplay of news media and bilingual education policy. As this thesis draws upon a number of fields of study, including journalism, policy, education, politics, indigenous studies, and media and communication it is not possible in one chapter to bring together all of the relevant literature. My approach is to incorporate the relevant scholarship at the point where it is pertinent. For example, Habermas's public sphere tradition (1986) is discussed in the development of a theory about the Yolngu public sphere in chapter 4 and the work of Gans (1979) and other relevant ethnographic studies of news features in chapter 5, which focuses on journalism and newsroom practices. The literatures on media representation of indigenous people and on listening (for example, Meadows, 2001; Ewart, 1997; McCallum, 2010; Hollinsworth, 2005; Dreher, 2010; O'Neill, 2010) helps to establish the rationale for the development of a model of academic journalism to address the well-documented problems with reporting on indigenous people and their affairs in the second part of chapter 5.

Mediatization

Mediatization is a key concept in this study. It is most often used to describe a media-saturated culture where media norms and resources become part of everyday activities (Couldry, 2008; Silverstone, 2007). It is a process whereby 'everyday practices and social relations are historically shaped by mediating technologies and media organisations' (Lundby, 2009, p. x; Davis, 2007). However, it can be a difficult term to work with because it means different things to scholars from different fields, including history, sociology and communication, as well as within these fields (Couldry, 2008). It also presents some conceptual and methodological challenges that must be considered, so it is important to spend some time now to clarify how I will use it and attempt to contribute to scholarship on mediatization. Broadly speaking, my approach is informed by the two specific ways it has been utilised in the political communication literature. One uses the theory of mediatization as a way of understanding the growing impact of news media on political decision-making and government (Fairclough, 2000; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Schulz, 2004). The other suggests mediatization should refer to the gradual substitution of media logic for

party logic in politics and that as a consequence media considerations have overtaken substantive considerations in political decision-making (Mazzoleni, 1987; Meyer, 2002). There is also the argument that, rather than losing their autonomy to media, politicians have in fact learnt the news media's rules of engagement, out-maneuvred journalists and become largely successful in steering the media (Fairclough, 2000). These lines of thinking raise questions about the relationship between politics and journalism and what this relationship should be in democratic societies (Habermas, 1996; Voltmer, 2006). Therefore these approaches to processes of mediatization are highly relevant to considering the relationship between news media and policymaking in my specific policy area of interest (Rawolle, 2010).

It must be noted that use of the term 'mediatization' has been dominated by a group of Northern media and communication scholars who used it to discuss a more or less universal 'meta-process of mediatization' (Krotz, 2009) that describes the media's transformative powers at a society-wide level and its intensification during the last 50 years (see, for example, Couldry, 2008; Couldry, Hepp & Krotz, 2010; Lumby, 2009; Strömbäck, 2008). Lash (cited in Lumby, 2009) described it as an historical process, which is a condition of post-modernity. For these scholars, mediatization is defined as 'the meta process by which every day practices and social relations are historically shaped by mediating technologies and media organisations' (Lumby, 2009, p. x). My approach draws on Strömbäck (2008), who described four stages of mediatization. In the final stage, '...the media logic and its consequences are perceived as more or less inescapable, although inescapable does not mean unmanageable; rather, it equates to a problem that requires constant attention' (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 240). Strömbäck (2008) found that in the fourth stage of mediatization the intense media environment means governments become accomplished media managers. His findings accord with Voltmer and Koch-Baumgartner's (2010) argument that an increasingly aggressive media environment is one factor in the growing emphasis on media management within government (see also Ward, 2007). It is in the fourth phase of mediatization that media logic dominates the bureaucratic mechanics of developing, communicating and

implementing government policy: ‘... in the fourth phase, the media and their logic can be said to colonise politics’ (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 240). This is not to suggest that policymaking has become part of the media field. In fact, the media field and policy fields operate with their own distinct logics. However, the intimacy between media and the Northern Territory’s bilingual education policy field provides material for a strong case study of the mediatization of bureaucratic practice, which is explored in chapter 4.

As Livingstone (2009) pointed out, there is some slippage between the terms ‘mediation’ and ‘mediatization’, which requires me to carefully locate the theories and theorists underpinning my conceptual framework. Mediation is frequently taken to refer to a broad process whereby mediated content is presented within a specific context. The notion that politics is mediated – for example, that the language and ideas of political and policy actors are only ever indirectly experienced by audiences or other political actors – is self-evident (Bennett & Entman, 2001). Couldry (2008, p. 378) argued, however, that the concept of mediatization was the narrower of the two, and, with its focus on the ways in which an increased media presence changes specific social processes, does not account for the broader social process occurring simultaneously. He said mediation is an important term to retain as it captures the complexity of practices transforming society and politics (Couldry 2008, p. 389). He contended that mediatization is the more linear of the terms, whereby the logics of one field (the media) are imposed on all other fields. While such distinctions can be made between the two terms, there are some theorists using the term ‘mediation’ in precisely the way the term ‘mediatization’ (Lundby, 2009) is used here. In *The mediation of power* (2007a), British theorist Aeron Davis asks:

... how do media and communication shape individuals and institutions? How ... do individuals, in their use of media, inadvertently alter their behaviours, relations and discursive practices? (Davis, 2007, p.13)

This would suggest that Davis used the concept of mediatization as one device to interpret the role of media in a range of institutions of power (Couldry 2008 p. 389). Couldry has argued elsewhere that the processes of mediatization will manifest differently in different institutional contexts (Couldry, 2003). This thesis takes up

Couldry's call to consider 'in detail how the basic insights of mediatization theory can be developed within a version of Bourdieu's field theory' (Couldry, 2003).

Therefore, I need to examine the particularized mediatization experiences of different actors in a specific field. There has been little work combining mediatization theory and field theory, but there have been some studies of the way mediatization is manifested in particular institutions. Davis (2007a), Mazzoleni and Schultz (1999), and Strömbäck (2008, 2011) operationalised mediatization theory with studies of the field of politics. Briggs and Hallin (2010) investigated the increasing importance of media to health institutions, and the narrowing of the gap between health reporting and political reporting, while Lingard and Rawolle (2004) have worked in Bourdieu's field tradition in their examination of the adoption of media logic in the education field.

My interest is the mediatization of the practices of a range of policy actors, as distinct from politicians and their private staff. This is an important site, as Davis (2007) argues: '...elite understandings of, and relationships to, media and media workers are often quite different from most citizens' (2007, p. 14).

Reunanen, Kunelius and Noppari (2010) said that, on a broad conceptual level, mediatization can be seen as a member in the family of grand concepts that reformulate modernization theory, such as globalization, secularization, individualization, rationalization, or marketization. These Finnish scholars argue that such grand and abstract concepts often suggest two things: an inevitable trajectory of change and a relative similarity of evolution in different contexts. While such grand, abstract narratives are useful for capturing broad processes of social change, they also make implicit 'northern theory' assumptions about the world and the real (Connell, 2007a, 2007b, 2012). They also tend to prevent researchers from seeing or appreciating the finer points of local evidence. Working in Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research offers a way of engaging with the specific process of mediatization in the local context. Brants and Voltmer (2011) also questioned the assumption of a uni-linear trend towards greater mediatization, arguing that politicians are recognising the limitations and trade-offs of strategic communication.

They also said the idea of an inevitable trajectory of mediatization 'seems to ignore the existence of an active public and the potential of the Internet to counter the assumed linearity' (Brants & Voltmer, 2011, p. 8).

Mediatization is an institutional process, which means 'media have become integrated into the operations of other social institutions, while they also have acquired the status of social institutions in their own right' (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 113). The institutional mediatization process can be approached both on micro-social and macro levels (Reunanen et al., 2010). The macro level involves questions of how institutions relate to one another due to the intervention of the media (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 125). On the micro-social level it is a question of how the interaction among individuals within and between institutions is affected by the media. My study will focus more on this micro-social approach to gain insights into the finer points of local evidence. This approach will enable me to explore the significance of news media for the bilingual policymaking process from the perspective of a wide range of policy actors in the field and will emphasise the local contexts. Much scholarly attention has been paid to how media covers and frames politics (see, for example, Entman, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001; Scheufele, 2006; D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Less empirical attention, however, has been paid to the ways in which interaction with journalists and assumptions about the ways in which news media operates influences policy actors themselves (Davis, 2007b). My study will make a contribution to building this understanding.

Taking a policy-specific approach

The approach to studying the relationship between public policy and mass media advanced by Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer (2010) has been instrumental to this study and accords with the way it engages with theories of mediatization. Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten (2010) have surveyed the literature on media and policy to arrive at the conclusion that it is not a simple task to tease out the elements and direction of influence. After nearly a century of Media and Communication Studies, demonstrating direct causes and effects of news media content on audience, political

or policy responses remains a fraught exercise (Entman, 1993). Attempts to prove the influence of a single news story on public opinion, or impacts of news reporting on a government policy decision, have proven elusive. Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten (2010) argued that some policy areas are of great interest to the media, but in fact many are of little or no interest unless they are perceived to offer scope for a story of crisis or controversy. They also presented a compelling argument that the different temporal cycles of news and policymaking have a bearing on what policies will be considered newsworthy. However, the key idea from their scholarship that informs this thesis is that the strength of the media-policy link depends on the policy field and its 'specific dynamic' (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010, p. 4). This field-specific approach can generate precise understandings of the changing configurations of media power in particular policymaking arenas.

Of relevance to this study of key moments in the bilingual education policy discussed in the previous chapter and in chapter 4, they drew on the work of Robinson (2001). His work identified policy uncertainty and elite consensus as factors that affect the media's power to shape policymaking. Political uncertainty can make political actors more sensitive to the pressures of the media spotlight and, when policymakers are in agreement on a subject, the media's interest in the topic is reduced because of lack of conflict or controversy. Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten pointed out that 'a slip of the tongue, a leaked email or a premature public statement can damage not only a policy proposal but also a political career' (2010, p. 4). Once the media takes a strong interest, the effect is one of amplification and 'the dynamic and direction of a policy can change dramatically' (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010, p.5). This scholarship will assist in generating understanding of the dynamics of the bilingual policy change in 2008, discussed in chapter 4.

Unlike established and powerful interest groups, such as those representing churches and corporations, Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten (2010) observed that marginalised groups have less access to the formal channels of influence in ministries and bureaucracies. They said public pressure is their only source of power so they depend on the media to relay their demands (2010, p. 224). This study will

investigate how Yolngu were able to use the media in this way in the successful 1998–99 campaign discussed in the previous chapter and in chapter 4. As media engagement in the policy terrain is so uneven, it is not possible to draw general conclusions about media influence. Instead it is necessary to take a policy-specific and comparative approach that takes into account the nature of the media's involvement and in what contexts it is likely to occur (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010).

The southern theories

There is some mention in the literature of the importance of indigenous knowledges in relation to Media and Communication Studies involving indigenous people (for examples see O'Regan, 1993; Tafler, 2005; Waller, 2010b, 2012c). But following Connell (2007), a point this thesis makes is that Media and Communication scholars almost *never* look to indigenous knowledge to inform and enrich their understanding of the wider field, or to think of how it might help us in particular to do journalism differently, even though the dominant approaches have been found wanting (see chapter 5 for a discussion of media representation of indigenous Australians). We are yet to generalise rethinking of epistemology to include knowledges particular to people from specific indigenous communities. Nor have we engaged much with different ways of thinking about the physical and social worlds that are particular to these groups and how this may shape communication and its effects, although there has been some research that advances this approach (Tafler, 2005). This thesis sets out to show that indigenous knowledges have much to offer. It also argues that to take account of indigenous forms of knowledge and thinking means thinking differently about research, including the research undertaken in producing works of journalism (Smith, 2004, p. 14). This is where this thesis makes a significant departure from previous work in the field of journalism and indigeneity in Australia.

Connell (2007, p. 223) said the 'rubric' of southern theory is the 'view from below' on a world scale that requires a more engaged relationship between knowledge systems and foreshadows a mutual learning process. She argued that every significant

theoretical development in the global periphery makes some use of concepts from the global north. In this case it involves theories of ‘public spheres’, ‘listening’ and ‘mediatization’, however:

[s]ocial science in the periphery ... injects themes that are relatively uncommon in metropolitan thought. These include the social significance of the land, the experience of dispossession and loss, the discontinuities in colonisation and the metropole-capacity of the global centres. (Connell, 2007b, p. 224)

This thesis uses some Yolngu social theory, which is expressed through metaphor. A number of Yolngu scholars have published their theoretical work in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals and I draw on this body of scholarship in the discussions of policymaking and indigenous public spheres in chapter 4 and in developing a model of academic journalism on indigenous affairs (see chapter 5). These metaphors use Yolngu places and practices based in caring for country to discuss these abstract processes. Connell (2007) used the term ‘southern theory’ to underline that most of the social theory that informs social science and humanities disciplines such as Media and Communication Studies, for example, is produced in and from the perspective of the global north. Despite claims to universality, these theories are essentially Eurocentric as they fail to account for voices and knowledge from non-dominant peoples. Connell (2007, 2012) contended that a variety of knowledges and ways of knowing have been denied a voice in social theory but that they have their own contributions to make. In her words, southern theory:

[c]alls attention to the centre-periphery relations in the realm of knowledge ... [She] use[d] the term ‘southern’ not to name a sharply bounded category of states, or societies, but to emphasise relations, authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnerships, sponsorship, appropriation – between intellectuals and institutions in the metropole and those in the world periphery. (Connell, 2007, pp. viii–ix)

It is towards new ‘relations in the realm of knowledge’ that this thesis aims to move our thinking about Media and Communications research that involves indigenous people, ideas and issues.

Yolngu knowledge systems involve thinking from, and with, the land and the sea (Marika, 1999). Connell (2007) observes more generally of indigenous cultures, ‘land and sea are not just geographical co-ordinates but a concrete presence in social

reality' (Connell, 2012, p. 212). She called for researchers to 'link theory to the ground in which their boots are planted' (Connell, 2007, p. 206), describing this approach as 'dirty theory', which she defined as theorising that is mixed up with specific situations:

The goal of dirty theory is not to subsume, but to clarify; not to classify from outside, but to illuminate a situation in its concreteness (Connell, 2007, p. 207).

To think in this way is to reject the deeply entrenched habit of mind ... by which theory in the social sciences is admired exactly in the degree to which it escapes specific settings and speaks in abstract universals. (Connell 2007, p. 206)

In line with this way of thinking, this thesis examines the specific Yolngu setting through Yolngu social theory, which is based in their land. Smith (2004) observed that some methodologies regard the 'specific setting', characterised by the practices of indigenous communities as 'barriers' to research, or as exotic customs that researchers need to be familiar with in order to carry out their work without causing offence. Indigenous methodologies, on the other hand, approach these practices in a respectful and ethical way as an integral part of the project:

They are factors to be built into research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results ... and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood (Smith, 2004, p. 15).

While the Australian university ethics principles discussed in chapter 3 call for indigenous perspectives to be respected and address many of the well-documented human rights concerns about research involving indigenous peoples, they do not go so far as requiring research structures and methods such as 'indigenest methodologies' or 'liberation epistemologies' (Rigney, 1999). However, indigenous researchers working within a critical studies paradigm, which is overtly political because it advocates for those most oppressed in society, argue that indigenous people want research and its design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggle as defined and controlled by their communities (Rigney, 1999, p. 109).

Rigney stressed the importance of lived experience as a powerful research tool for achieving social justice outcomes:

[The] indigenous context of knowledge production and research methodologies is about countering racism and including indigenous knowledges and experiences for indigenous emancipation. (Rigney, 1999, p. 118)

Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its everyday realities in different ways from non-indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values (Rigney, 1999). Indigenist researchers have demonstrated that one of the legacies of scientific racialisation and its ideology has been the reshaping of construction of knowledge about indigenous people to the 'common sense' colonial view, and have demonstrated the ways in which northern epistemologies reproduce and reaffirm the cultural assumptions of 'the world' and the 'real' by the dominant group (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Jones, Lee & Poynton, 1998; Smith, 2004).

The perspectives of indigenous people are an important part of this study and throughout the project I have remained aware and taken steps to avoid the dangers of a northern-centric approach that objectifies these participants. The study design, fieldwork, analysis of indigenous participants' practices and the research outputs are informed by indigenous methodologies, especially Yolngu epistemologies and the work of Kaupapa Māori¹⁶ researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2006), which emphasises that the quality of the interaction between the researcher and participants is more important than ticking boxes or answering closed questions (Smith, 2004, p. 136). These issues are explored in detail in chapter 3, and in chapter 5 I document how I have responded to the complexities and dynamics of the researcher-indigenous participant relationship.

The following chapter explores these methodological issues in more depth and explains how the study has been conceptualised and conducted, as well as how the results are being interpreted and disseminated.

¹⁶ Māori researchers in New Zealand call 'methodology' 'Kaupapa Māori research' or Māori-centred research. Smith explains that 'this form of naming is about bringing to the centre and privileging indigenous values, attitudes and practices rather than disguising them within Western labels such as 'collaborative research' (Smith, 2006, p. 125).

Chapter 3: Ganma

Introduction

This chapter is entitled 'Ganma' because it sets out the research design for conducting the study with the aim of bringing together what Connell (2007) describes as 'northern' and 'southern' bodies of knowledge or, in Yolngu terms, the 'saltwater' and 'freshwater' currents that are worked together in a new ecology of knowledge about media and indigenous policy. This is a qualitative study that begins with three key objectives, two of which are methodological:

1. to explore the dynamic interplay of media and policymaking in the Northern Territory's bilingual education policy field through the media-related practices of a range of actors in the policy constellation;
2. to create a new and distinct ecology of knowledge for exploring the news media's role in a specific Australian indigenous policy field; and
3. the development of a form of 'southern' (Connell, 2007) academic journalism for writing about indigenous people and issues that serves their self-determinist aims for scholarly research, based in indigenous perspectives and research methodologies.

This chapter explains and justifies the methodology used for generating findings, outcomes and conclusions that fulfill these aims. It is also important to recognise that in qualitative research design the initial research questions can lead to further questions as the research progresses (Kitto, Chesters & Grbich, 2008). If this occurs the question will be flagged when it arises. This chapter begins with a discussion of the philosophical positions that underpin the research, and then describes the methods used to carry it out.

My professional background and general research area is in the field of Journalism, which takes as its paramount reality, in terms of its orientation and justification, the everyday world of its audiences (Silverstone, 2007). However, this thesis takes the

culturally-oriented, constructionist view that the 'everyday world' that journalism represents cannot be understood without taking account of how the news media affects the way people see the world, influences what they believe and guides their actions. This thesis draws on Couldry's 'media as practice' methodology (2010, 2004) to study how the news media affects the way people in the bilingual education policy constellation see the policy field, and are influenced by media and how it guides their actions. This is more revolutionary than it may seem because discourse is treated as a practice, as are people's ideas and actions (Schatzki, 1996, 2001).

Couldry's (2004) call to practice-based research was convincing from early in my project because it offers a way to understand the journalism field from within, rather than drawing conclusions based on its textual products alone. It provided a foundation to build upon the ethnographically inspired Journalism scholarship that has resonated best with me as a former journalism practitioner and scholar because of the similarities between journalistic research methods and ethnography. As early as 1975 leading Journalism scholar James Carey wrote that 'culture must first be seen as a set of practices' (cited in Bird, 2010, p. 19). As Bourdieu is a practice thinker, and his theoretical toolbox of field, habitus and capital is in use here, Couldry's approach has provided an overarching framework for the design, execution and analysis of research that employs these tools.

Couldry (2004) said a practice approach is 'disarmingly simple' in its treatment of media as the open set of practices relating to, or oriented around, media. Although media texts, the media effects tradition and production ethnographies are all important in their own right, he pointed to their limitations as general frameworks for understanding the relationships between media and society. His paradigm aimed to redirect attention to the open-ended range of practices focused 'directly or indirectly' on media:

This ... sets it apart from versions of media studies formulated within the paradigm of literary criticism. (Couldry, 2004)

To address the first research aim, this project begins with two ‘concrete and related questions’: What types of things do people do in relation to media? And what types of things do people say in relation to media? (Couldry, 2004, p. 119)

The practice tradition

Practice thinking and empirical studies influenced by the practice approach are found across disciplines from philosophy, cultural studies, history, sociology, anthropology, to organisational studies, science and technology studies (Postill, 2010). The foundations of a theory of practice are found in the work of a diverse group of important late-20th century theorists, not limited to, but including, the work of social theorists Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 2000) and Giddens (1979, 1984), cultural theorists Foucault (1976, 1985) and Lyotard (1984, 1988), science scholars including Latour (1993, 2005), and ethnomethodologists following the work of Garfinkel (1967). These theorists were seeking a middle way between, on one hand, explaining social phenomena as a result of individual actions and, on the other, the explanation of phenomena by means of structures (Postill, 2010, p. 6). They understood the human body as the site of people’s practical engagements with the world. For example, Bourdieu (1977) developed the concept of habitus to capture the ‘permanent internalisation of the social order in the human body’ (Erkisen & Nielsen, cited in Postill 2010, p. 7). Schatzki (1996) said that despite the diversity found across ‘practice theory’, the notion of a ‘field’ of practice is the crux of the practice approach.

While it is difficult to define what scholars from a wide range of disciplines pursuing different questions have meant by ‘practice’ or ‘practices’, Hobart (2010) defined practices as:

... those recognised, complex forms of social activity and articulation through which agents set out to maintain or change themselves, others and the world about them under varying conditions. (Hobart, 2010, p. 63)

Postill (2010) said there is a lot of ‘semantic slippage’ between the term ‘practice’ and other words such as ‘activities’, ‘processes’ and ‘behaviour’. More importantly, there is ‘a general lack of explicit engagement with practice theory’ (Postill, 2010, p. 6). This is true of Journalism Studies, where the study of journalism ‘practices’ is recognised

as one of the main research traditions within the discipline (Zelizer, 2004), but few scholars explicitly engage with practice theory, so the 'theoretical promise' (Postill, 2010) of this concept remains largely unrealised.

The study of journalism practices has been heavily focused on production, more so than looking to questions of how they are shaped by practices in other fields, or how they may affect different social domains. However, scholars working in Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research have pursued these questions (see, for example, Neveu & Benson, 2005). Turning attention to these concerns opens up new avenues for the study of journalism and society. O'Donnell (2009), who took a practice approach to studying the role of listening in journalism, says the suitability of this methodology for Journalism Studies requires further justification through empirically grounded and theoretically informed studies of the interplay between journalistic work and its meanings in professional and social discourses (O'Donnell, 2009, p. 509). This study contributes to that project.

Building on the practice approach to the study of media and education

Adopting a practice-based approach to analysing the mediatization of a specific education policy 'provides starting points for research based on the strategies and timing of particular journalists and policymakers over the course of media debates on educational issues' (Rawolle, 2010, p. 36). As my study concerns the relationship between journalists and journalism, other policy actors and a specific education policy process at key moments in a specific time frame, a practice approach provides an appropriate lens for examining these interactions (Rawolle, 2007, 2010; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008).

The second aim of this thesis is to create a new and distinct ecology of knowledge for exploring the news media's role in a specific indigenous policy field. There are three aspects to this. Firstly, this research is not only concerned with the practices of one or two groups, such as news media producers and policymakers (Rawolle, 2007, 2010). It can be described as a multi-perspectival practice study because it aims to build an

understanding of the different media-related practices of a constellation of policy actors who interact in the bilingual education policy field. Taking a practice approach opens up new questions and new ways of looking at these relationships (Rawolle, 2010). This includes mapping the subtleties and complexities of the interactions among journalists and others in the field; examining how media logics are naturalised and embodied by some policy actors (and perhaps not others); and to identify the role that media resources, from mainstream news media coverage to social networking sites, might play in everyday practices within the policy constellation.

Second, Hobart (2010) is concerned that Couldry's 'sociological practice theory objectivises, hierarchises and normalises Eurocentrically the subjects of study just as did its predecessors' (Hobart, 2010, p 60). It is my contention that this does not have to be the case. As discussed in the previous chapter, Yolngu concepts of practice, which are intimately linked with their land and their kinship system, are central to this study. Working with northern and southern theories (Connell, 2007) provides a way for creating a new ecology of knowledge from different streams of thought that are brought together in this research. It is grounded in the specifics of location and respectful of indigenous peoples' own theories of practice and their aims for the study, which are clearly and affirmatively written in to the research design.

Third, Connell (2007b) and others, including Grbich (2004), stressed that researchers need to examine their own practices as part of any study in order to 'avoid a skewed account of practice that applies only to the object of study' (Hobart, 2010, p. 59).

Couldry did not emphasise reflexivity as a key feature of his media as practice methodology (Hobart, 2010). However, researchers who choose to take a practice approach can look to the work of scholars who work with reflexive methodologies (Alvesson, 2000) for ways of keeping the researcher's own practices under the lens of any study and as transparent as possible. Reflexivity is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Attributes of a generic qualitative study

This is a piece of qualitative research. It has a constructionist epistemology, is broadly phenomenological, and can be defined as a piece of generic qualitative research because it does not conform to a particular qualitative research design, such as case study or grounded theory (Patton, 2002).

There is a wide range of approaches, epistemologies, understandings and a wealth of terms that come under the umbrella of 'qualitative research' (Tesch, 1990). There are also some general observations about the nature of qualitative research and how it differs from quantitative approaches. Qualitative researchers reject the epistemological position that underpins the Positivist research paradigm, including that there are 'truths' out there that can be obtained from rigorous research; that research findings should be generalisable; and that the researcher should be objective and try to exclude values from the research process (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006, p. 6). In qualitative research some of the data may be quantified, but most of the analysis is interpretive (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 10–11) with the aim of understanding complex human phenomena. Qualitative researchers seek to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2008, p. 16). This can involve immersion in the everyday life of the study setting, values participants' perspectives on their worlds, and seeks to discover those perspectives. It views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants. It is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as primary data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 11).

Epistemology

It is important to clearly articulate my epistemological perspective in reporting the outcomes of this research; otherwise 'the reader is not given an adequate basis for evaluating the study or knowing where to stand (conceptually) to judge the study' (Potter, 1996, p. 283). Epistemological perspectives relate to our views about how knowledge is best gained and reflect our ontology or perspective on what is real. In a research context ontology concerns the nature of reality – whether there is a

truth/reality out there and can we know it? Bryman (2008) said there are two broad epistemological stances: objectivism and constructionism. He summarised the objectivist perspective as:

An ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors. (Bryman, 2008, p. 19)

The constructionist perspective that underpins this thesis seeks to understand how people interpret and make sense of phenomenon within particular social and historical contexts. Fuss said:

Constructionists are concerned above all with the production and organisation of differences, and they therefore reject the idea that any essential or natural givens precede the process of social determination. (Fuss, 1989, p. 3)

My ontological position is aligned with social researchers such as Strauss et al. (cited in Bryman, 2008, p. 14) and Becker (1982) who are constructionists, but do not push this ontological view 'to the extreme' (Bryman, 2008, p. 14) as they acknowledged the pre-existence of their objects of study (such as media organisations, government departments and indigenous education systems, in the case of this research). They also recognised that formal properties within an organisation or culture have an element of constraint on individual actions (Bryman, 2008, p. 14).

Taking a constructionist approach is also consistent with Yolngu ontologies and epistemologies. The word *galtha*, meaning 'to pierce' in Yolngu matha (Christie, 1992), refers to the action of piercing the ground with a spear following the negotiation of an agreement between different groups of people about the form that a ceremony or some other group action should take. In the context of creating knowledge, *galtha* indicates the participation of people with different perspectives that are each recognised to have value. According to Christie (1992) '*galtha* emphasises that knowledge is not constituted by objective facts, but by ongoing negotiation of our various partial perspectives' (Christie, 1992, p. 33).

Research paradigm

My constructionist perspective has informed the choice of paradigm for this study. Bryman (2008) defined a paradigm as 'a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for

scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted and so on' (Bryman, 2008, p. 4). Paradigms are often described as the researcher's worldview. Constructionism is the inquiry lens for this study. This involves approaching the study from a hermeneutic, dialogical perspective. It means the researcher co-constructs understanding of the phenomenon being studied in partnership with participants and focuses on the knowledge that produces that understanding (Patton, 2002). Attention to the social and historical context of the phenomenon is crucial. This approach legitimises and emphasises the personal experiences and insights of the researcher, who is 'visible' in the text (Patton, 2002, p. 109):

Heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality not quantity; with experience, not behaviour. (Douglass & Moustakas, cited in Patton, 2002, p. 107)

The assumptions that underpin the research paradigm provide the terms in which its quality as a piece of research must be judged (Patton, 2002). The quality standards that apply to this type of research are trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Moustakas, 1990; Kitto, Chesters & Grbich, 2008).

Design framework

Design frameworks in qualitative research are used to focus and refine the study. They reflect research traditions in qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001). This study adopts a generic qualitative framework. Media sociologist Couldry (2000) argues that an eclectic approach is sensible when so many issues, especially questions of media power, remain outstanding. Generic qualitative inquiry is not guided by an explicit set of philosophical assumptions, as is the case in ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenology, for instance. But it has to be valid and apply rules and methods recognised in qualitative research – exploratory research that employs thematic analysis for understanding and discovery (Patton, 2002). This study is ethnographically informed (Bird, 2010) in that it focuses on providing a cultural portrait through thick descriptions of the setting and actors and involves fieldwork, but not participant observation, which is a key method in ethnography

(Cresswell, 2007). It seeks to make sense of the lived experiences of study participants, as in phenomenological research (Patton, 2002). As one of the primary aims is to extend and build theory, Derek Layder's adaptive theory approach is helpful. It rejects the traditional view that theorising occurs at discrete stages in the research project (Blaikie, 2010, p. 146) and means 'the notion of theorising itself has to be understood as an integral part of the overall research process as well as organically connected to the wider literature and findings of previous research and scholarship' (Layder, 1998, p. 49). Layder argued this involves the use of general and substantive theory as well as existing and emergent research data:

Adaptive theory focuses on the construction of novel theory in the context of ongoing research by utilising elements of prior theory (both general and substantive) in conjunction with theory that emerges from data collection and analysis. (Layder, 1998, p. 27)

Reflexivity

The term 'reflexivity' refers to a self-consciousness and awareness on the part of the researcher to reflect back on themselves as research tool and their *relationships with their research participants* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 182 original italics). It has been argued that it is essential to incorporate in research reports not just what the researcher knows but how they know (Reinharz, 2011). This involves integrating data that has been gathered with the researcher's understanding of how the data was mediated by their role in the research setting. To Reinharz (2011) this means more than merely reflecting on our role, it means acknowledging the 'self' in qualitative inquiry. A deep understanding is not achievable unless the reader (and the author) 'know what the researcher's attributes mean to the people being studied' (Reinharz, 2011, p. 4). Hooks challenged researchers to consider whose story is being told. She suggested that an underlying arrogance exists in much research reporting:

I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become my own. Re-telling you. I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the coloniser, the speak subject, and you are at the centre of my talk (hooks, 1990, pp. 150-152).

In this context, reflecting on how my personal and scholarly lives intersect is an important part of this project. I am a *balanda* woman whose colonising forbears began

arriving in Australia from the 1830s. There were convicts among them, but they were mostly seeking to escape poverty and the effects of industrialisation in the British Isles and they participated in the dispossession of indigenous Australians' land. My only language is that of the dominant culture – English. I was raised in the northern suburbs of Sydney and have a university education. In the early 1980s I studied Australian history at university and was introduced to the work of Henry Reynolds (1987). This was my first exposure to the indigenous history of the colonisation of Australia and it has had a profound impact on my understanding of my nation, my family and myself.

I worked as a journalist for 20 years on metropolitan and national newspapers, including *The Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review*. I am therefore familiar with the field of journalism and share its habitus with the journalists who contributed to this research. This has advantages because I understand 'the rules of the game' and am able to use my professional interviewing skills in my research. However, my journalistic habitus has the potential to make me blind to some of the workings of the field because there is much that I accept and understand without question or conscious thought. I have tried to remain highly aware of this, reflecting upon it when analysing the interviews with journalists and considering the impact of journalism generally. It has also been important to consider how study participants view my journalistic self and how this has shaped their responses to me and to my questions.

I have two postgraduate degrees in education – both secondary and tertiary – which have shaped my philosophy and practice of teaching and learning. This has involved the scholarship of Constructivists in education, especially the work of Vygotsky (1962). I share with the Yolngu teachers interviewed for this project, the Vygotskian perspective that learning must be scaffolded from what is known to the learner to what is unknown (Vygotsky, 1962). A constructionist epistemology underpins their approach and rationale for bilingual education.

In the past six years I have spent time at 'remote' Central Australian indigenous communities on the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yackjantjatjara (APY) Lands, including Ernabella and Mimili. I visited communities to run textiles workshops with Pitjantjatjara and Yackjantjatjara women who participate in the Alice Springs Beanie Festival (Hughes & Waller, 2006). Through these experiences I have developed an understanding that *language is culture*. Ernabella was set up as a mission in the early 1930s by the progressive Presbyterian medical doctor and missionary, Dr Charles Duguid. He had a deep appreciation of the importance of indigenous languages (Hilliard, 1968). Those who went to work on the mission were encouraged to speak with Anangu in their languages and Christian texts were translated into Pitjantjatjara. When the Ernabella school was established in 1940 it offered an innovative bilingual curriculum:

All teaching was in their own language, and this involved a two-way teaching. The children were the teachers of their language and they were able to learn to read and write and hear of new worlds from their teacher. (Hilliard, 1968, p. 155)

When I went to work in the Arts Centre at Ernabella in 2006 I found that the emphasis on outsiders having to learn some Pitjantjatjara continues, and the women were patient and generous in teaching me the words and phrases needed most for our work together and for socialising. I left Ernabella with a small vocabulary of Pitjantjatjara words and phrases and great respect for the life and energy of their language. The experience of being immersed in Anangu society and culture has had a profound effect on my worldview that is difficult to articulate.

Since 2007 I have worked as a lecturer in a university, so I also share the academic habitus of a number of the participants in this study (Bourdieu, 1998). Much of my reflexive thinking revolves around this position of academic researcher and how it shapes my perceptions and interactions with those who took part in the study. I make no pretence to being a disinterested researcher whose personal experience does not influence my assumptions about the world and what counts as 'knowledge'. Throughout my research I have questioned my own prejudices and assumptions regarding the topic of this research and how it affects my selection and interpretation of research materials. I cannot separate my academic research from my personal

understanding of literacy as more than reading and writing in English, the importance of indigenous languages in education, black-white relations in Australia, or my experience of being a journalist and an educator. The best I can do is to be aware of my subjectivities and make them transparent; I have tried to question how I know what I know, and accept that I may not know what I think I know.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that one way of enhancing the trustworthiness of a research account is to maintain a reflexive journal that includes insights, sampling decisions and reflections on the interview process, as well as information about the self. They argued that this strategy is comparable to the information provided about research instruments in quantitative studies. The material collated in a journal can add richness and detail to analysis and interpretation, as well as recording the more pedestrian decisions about method and procedure. I have kept such a journal since the beginning of this research project and have drawn upon it extensively.

I have experienced many dilemmas during my research and see these as reflecting my different selves (Grbich, 2004). For example, my scholarly self has often been in conflict with my personal self as I have tried to reconcile some of the theoretical concepts about journalism with my professional practice, considerable experience of newsroom culture and the assumptions inherent in that. Theory provides us with ways of seeing the world and the objects of our research while at the same time constructing these objects. Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p. 825). Not unlike the selves we bring to our research, theory and method predispose us to impose meanings on to our research that are not there in the 'data' waiting for us to 'discover'. The inevitable goal of theory and method is the production of 'knowledge', which is always connected to power (Foucault, 1976). However, this knowledge does not replicate any reality, any essence that the researcher has discovered in the objects of their study; it is always a particular construction of reality. In claiming to know some things about reality we attempt to impose our power over it and this is the same for our self-knowledge as it is for our 'academic' knowledge (Foucault, 1976). From a practice theory perspective, our

experiences are embodied and are not reducible to the language we use to discuss them or the theories we use to try to make sense of them (Schatzki, 2001).

The assumption that the people involved in bilingual education policy are in the best position to speak on their own behalf underpins this research. Furthermore, I have taken people at face value, with an interest in how they represent their own practices. My reflexivity therefore extends to being reflexive about what the participants say, sometimes reflexively (Grbich, 2004).

Method

Interviews

Gamson (1992, 1989) said textual approaches can only shed a partial light on the processes at play in the production, public debate and dissemination of specific policies. The local understandings of journalists, indigenous people, policy advocates and public servants are an important aspect of the policymaking process, but are rarely examined. To best understand the practices of journalism and indigenous policy development, rather than their textual outcomes, an approach is needed that privileges the perspectives and explanations of these policy actors. In keeping with Couldry's practice approach (2004), depth interviews were used to find out what people involved in the bilingual education policymaking field say and what they do in relation to the media. Depth interview is one methodological approach used to access the professional and personal perspectives, viewpoints and knowledge of individual actors in a particular policy field (Gamson & Stuart, 1992; Herbst, 1998; McCallum, 2010). There is a strong alignment here with ethnographic methods, which are shared between professional journalism practice and ethnographic research, including media anthropology (Waller, 2010).

This project builds on established approaches to elite depth interviewing, to allow participants in the policymaking process to articulate their own perspectives and understandings about the relationships between media reporting and indigenous policy. The interviews explored specialist knowledge in each of the participant's fields. Interview participants shared personal experiences of developing, promoting,

influencing and reporting particular policies, expressed opinions about the role of media, and reflected on their own professional practices. Interviews of between 30 minutes and two hours were conducted between May 2009 and August 2011 with more than 20 individuals to explore these themes. Most of these were face-to-face meetings but some interviews were conducted on the telephone and on Skype. Topics were listed to guide the interviews (see appendix 2) but the process was fluid and questions emerged during the interchange between researcher and participant (Berg, 2004). Researchers need to be able to 'think on their feet' for this interview style, picking up on themes and responding to the participants' ideas. My 20 years' experience as a newspaper journalist ensured a high level of skill in semi-structured interviewing. One drawback of this method is that collecting systematic information across the participant group can be a lengthy process. All interviews were recorded on a digital device and transcripts were prepared for analysis.

Power relations in interviewing

All the interviews inevitably involved power relations between the researcher and the interviewee(s). Any interviewee will to some degree monitor the impressions (s)he is giving to the interviewer (Denzin, 1970, p. 127) and this will be affected by power differentials, or other perceived differences. For example, in her examination of the methodological issues surrounding research interviews with journalists, Bowd (2004) suggested familiarity with the techniques of interviewing can affect the research process when the journalist is the source of information. Bateson and Ball argued 'where researchers have privileged, if transient admission into the physical and ideological home ground of policy elites, there is close proximity to the well trodden dangers of "going native" and being persuaded to see it as "they" do' (1995, p. 202). It is impossible to remove all power differentials, as some are inherent to the interview situation (Fairclough, 1989, p. 167). In this research, some interviewees regarded me as 'part of the news media' because of my professional background. It is the reproduction of this very power nexus that I aim to analyse. Where this seemed a very significant factor in the interview, I noted it. I anticipated from the beginning

that the power relations I am studying might be reproduced through the interview situation.

Selecting participants

I used theoretical sampling to identify potential participants as the study progressed, which according to Glaser and Strauss is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses the data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop theory as it emerges. This process of data collection 'is controlled by the emerging theory, whether substantive or formal' (1967, p. 41). Bryman (2008) said this definition emphasises that theoretical sampling is an ongoing process rather than a distinct and single stage. Members of the policy network, who were the only people who could provide the necessary information and insights, were identified over a two-year period, first through media and government reports, then recommendations from other network members and by tapping into the online group, The Friends of Bilingual Learning. The sample, which is comprehensive, included indigenous people, current and former federal and territory politicians, their advisors, bureaucrats, education department employees, academics, journalists and activists.

This approach was adopted for gaining insights from people who have been involved with the policy process from particular fields to gain a multifaceted vision of the bilingual education policy field and, by doing so, be able to interpret the differences in practices that result in the unevenness in relationships between the media and parts of the policy community. The selection of participants reflects the potential sources journalists can draw on in their coverage of the issue and can show where they take their information from and how other members of the policy community make sense of the news media's role and their interactions with journalists.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted in Darwin and Yirrkala (North-east Arnhem Land), in the Northern Territory, Canberra (the national capital), Geelong and Melbourne in

Victoria, and Adelaide, in South Australia. Some of the interviews were conducted on the telephone or Skype. The fieldwork was funded by the Australian News Media and Indigenous Policymaking 1988–2008 ARC Discovery project.

Research ethics and indigenous participants

A National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) was completed for this project and was approved by the Committee for Ethics in Human Research at the University of Canberra in June 2010. All participants have the right to remain anonymous and some chose this option. Others, including a number of journalists, elected to be identified in the study. Another group said they wanted to view their quotations being used in the thesis and would decide then whether they wanted to be identified or not. In some cases they have not been identified.

This study involves a number of indigenous participants and careful consideration has been given to ensuring the study accords with the National Medical Health Research Council's (NMHRC) guidelines for research involving indigenous people (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007). The sections of the NEAF that relate to indigenous research require researchers to provide detailed accounts of how their project incorporates the principles of ethical research in indigenous studies contained in the NMHRC guidelines and the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies (AIATSIS) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2010). The overarching aim of these ethical frameworks is to ensure that research with and about indigenous peoples is based upon a process of meaningful engagement and reciprocity between the researcher and the indigenous people at every stage of the process. Working within this ethical framework is discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Co-constructing the research design with Yolngu participants

The Yolngu community of Yirrkala in North-east Arnhem Land was selected as the site for exploring indigenous perspectives on the news media and the bilingual education policy process for a number of reasons. The community has run a strong bilingual program for more than three decades, employs a number of Yolngu

teachers and has succeeded in defending its programs against attacks by the Northern Territory Government by using media campaigns. Yolngu have a lot of experience dealing with both mainstream and indigenous media. During my stay, an ABC crew was in town to make a film clip of a local band and Costa Georgiadis's gardening program was filming an episode for the national multicultural public broadcaster SBS. I attended a music festival at Nhulumbuy where some of the research participants were keen to have their photos taken by the local paper for the social pages. Music, art, culture, environment and politics at Yirrkala interest many different local, national and international media outlets and journalists, and photographers and filmmakers visit regularly.

I spent eight days at Yirrkala in November 2010. It took many months to negotiate entry to the community, find someone in Yirrkala who was willing to offer me accommodation and help me to navigate the complexities of Yolngu society, and to make the necessary preparations for the trip. The negotiations included liaising with non-indigenous people based in Darwin first contacted through the online group The Friends of Bilingual Learning (FOBL). Many of these people have strong ties at Yirrkala. I had a number of discussions in which members of this group gave valuable guidance on how to approach potential Yolngu participants. They also offered their insights and experience to help me to understand some of the history of the policy, the school and Yolngu culture, and learn about the people who had been involved in the school for decades. I attended a face-to-face meeting of the group in Darwin in September 2010. Through these connections the next level of contact with both *balanda* and Yolngu within the Yirrkala school community was established. I made a trip to the Otways in south-western Victoria in late September 2010 to meet with a group of *balanda* and Yolngu teachers from Yirrkala school who were holidaying in the area. We had lunch and a long discussion and an important Yolngu contact was made that day. It was after this meeting that concrete plans could be made for my visit to Yirrkala, including establishing contact with teacher-educator Ros Wheatley, who had offered me a room in her house at Yirrkala and had most

kindly agreed to help me get to know the community and establish contact with potential participants.

Ros Wheatley has lived in the community on and off for more than a decade and was able to make the right introductions to the most appropriate Yolngu in the right way when I arrived (Marika, Yunupingu, Marika-Mununggirtj & Muller, 2009). It took many phone calls and emails over about 10 months to arrange to go to Yirrkala. I felt at times that I needed to explain and justify my research very well to enlist support and guidance, and importantly be considered someone trustworthy and sympathetic. A number of people in the Friends of Bilingual Learning group are employed by the NT Department of Education and were uncomfortable about speaking in case their views became public and they could be identified. They feared repercussions because of the way some employees who were openly supportive of bilingual programs had been managed by the department in recent times (Waller, 2012). Friends of Yolngu are also careful about giving their endorsement and sponsorship to *balanda* wishing to enter the community to conduct research. I do not believe there would have been an opportunity to go the community if these *balanda* gatekeepers had not met me on several occasions, questioned and observed me and decided my research was worthwhile and my personal style would be acceptable to both *balanda* and Yolngu at Yirrkala (see chapter 5 for discussion of 'two-way capital').

After a few days, a *balanda* teacher said some Yolngu had been asking, 'Is she quiet? Is she discrete? Is she an anthropologist?' It was reassuring to have passed the test, but the anthropologist remark was a reminder that 'research is a dirty word' in the indigenous world (Smith, 2004). It took many visits, meals, trips into town, walks around the art gallery and cups of tea on the veranda to get to know Yolngu and to construct and work through the research process together.

Not long after arriving I was taken to meet two senior women from the same family. They knew I was coming, was a journalist and was interested in bilingual education, and my host Ros Wheatley has a kinship relationship with their clan. Their view of me as a journalist first and foremost did not change throughout the project, although

I tried to distinguish between my research self and my journalist self. Yolngu were keen for me to put on my journalistic hat and write about what was happening at the school from their perspective. This was agreed as a key aim of the research and was written into the ethics application months before the visit (see chapter 5).

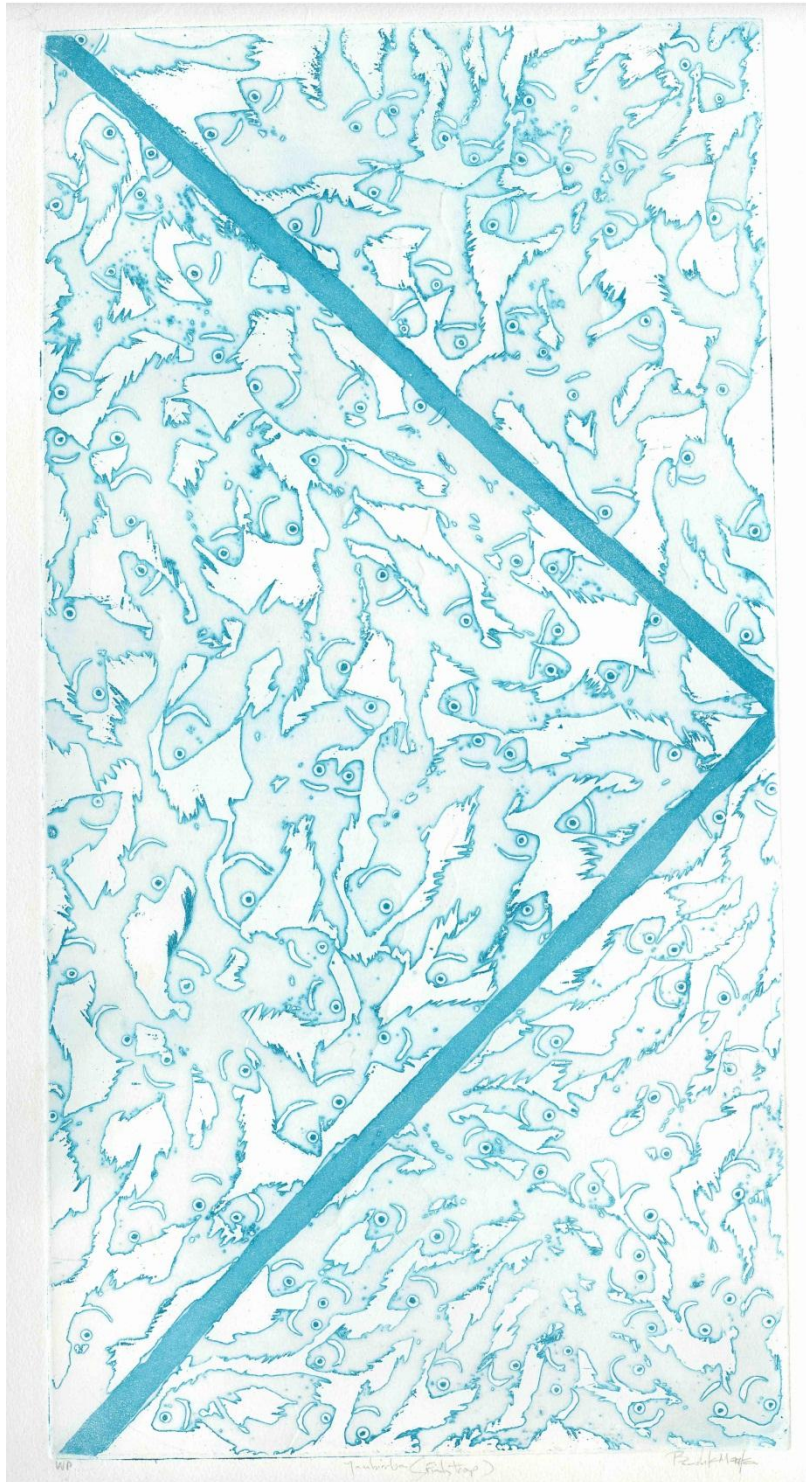


Figure 3-1 Yambirra (fish trap) etching by Banduk Marika

During my stay I was introduced to current and former Yolngu teachers and linguists associated with the school. We had many conversations about the bilingual program, their concerns about it being abandoned and the policymaking process. They also welcomed me to their country, introducing their families, explaining kinship relationships and important metaphors they wanted me to understand. After five days a group of five Yolngu came to the house where I was staying so we could record some interviews. I had arranged to purchase an etching offered to me by a senior woman that represented the *Yambirrrpa* metaphor, which is used to describe the school and Yolngu philosophy of education (see figure 3-1). She spent considerable time explaining the symbolism of the relationship between the land, the community and the school. It was an honour to be offered the etching and the exchange was part of building trust and reciprocity. This artwork is an important research tool for explaining Yolngu epistemology and ideas about governance when presenting the study findings. Using the print in this way was part of the negotiations for the purchase. There were three other *balanda* present for most of the four hours we spent together that evening. Their presence was important because they assisted the interview process. The *balanda* initiated and maintained a long conversation about my life and my research while Yolngu listened. Yolngu then began to ask questions and voice their views on the policy decision, how it was represented in the media, what they wanted from journalists and how the 2008 policy decision would affect their community and the school if fully implemented. One Yolngu woman played some songs by Yirrkala's most famous citizens, the members of the band Yothu Yindi. They told me the songs were about the importance of 'two-way' learning and the school's place in the community. None of this conversation was recorded because Yolngu were still asking questions about my research and writing about bilingual education from a Yolngu perspective for the mainstream media. It did not feel appropriate to ask them to sign consent forms when it was not clear that they were consenting to participate and be recorded at that stage. I began to feel anxious that they were not comfortable to be interviewed and no data collection was occurring. I had to tell myself to relax.

After about an hour, the most senior woman rose to her feet and asked me to go inside with her for a 'private interview'. We sat down together and she told me she was familiar with research protocols and was happy to read and sign the consent form, and for me to turn on my recorder. She made an eloquent 10-minute statement that summarised the points that had been made in the wide-ranging discussions held over previous days and several hours that evening with the wider group. The other Yolngu gradually came inside and listened to the end of her statement. Afterwards they showed me a presentation they use to explain the school's philosophy and curriculum at conferences and other *balanda* forums. They emphasised that it was important I understood how the bilingual program worked and why it was so important to their community.

My journal shows that immediately afterwards I was unsure of what had occurred in a research sense. In my notes I say I felt I hadn't 'got much'. I was concerned I had made a great effort to get there and the data collected was insubstantial. The following day I discussed my concerns with a *balanda* woman who had been present at the meeting, knew the participants well and has a good understanding of Yolngu ways. She assured me the process had gone very well. Everyone had had a say. There was plenty of discussion and even some disagreements. Everyone participated, ate and enjoyed socialising. She told me that the senior woman who spoke into the recorder on behalf of the group was the most appropriate person to do so. In *balanda* terms she was the right person because she was not involved in the school and not vulnerable to any feared departmental reprisals for speaking. In a kinship way she was the most appropriate person to speak on behalf of her clan (Marika et al., 2009), who have made a major contribution to the bilingual program and the school. She said that was why the senior woman had come along, to fulfill that role. On reflection, every interaction on every level with this group of participants had contributed to my knowledge and understanding of their perspective on the issue of bilingual education in relation to their land, culture and language, and as a political issue. The interview that was recorded that evening provides rich data in the context in which it was produced.

Two days later I travelled to a Yolngu homeland called Garrthalala (also known as Blue Mud Bay), which is about a 90-minute drive from Yirrkala. I spent most of the day with a Yolngu woman I had met earlier in the week at Yirrkala who had participated in the first interview meeting. She introduced me to her family and showed me around the school before agreeing to a formal interview.

The many background discussions, interactions and social experiences with Yolngu were a crucial part of the research process because they established a rapport between me and the participants. Spending time getting to know people – driving into town together, having some lunch, going for a walk around the community garden, meeting family – was how I discovered what is important and began to understand how Yolngu discuss things. For example, on my last day in Yirrkala the senior woman I interviewed took me to the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre to see the bark paintings made in 1962–63 for display in Yirrkala’s church. They were produced to assert the authority of Yolngu power structures and to show that there was no inherent incompatibility between Christian and Yolngu belief. They were also made to reveal the designs that underpin the Yolngu claim to land and sea (Mundine, 1999, p. 22). They foreshadowed the 1963 Bark Petition for land rights that hangs in Parliament House in Canberra and has been described as Australia’s Magna Carta (Mundine, 1999). The Bark Petition is written in both Yolngu and English languages and respectfully worded. It communicates to the Australian nation that Yolngu were not consulted and did not consent to the destruction of their lands by bauxite mining giant Nabalco. The petition led to the appointment of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Grievances of Yirrkala Aborigines (Mundine, 1999) but did not prevent the desecration of important sacred sites or secure their land and sea rights. The woman’s father was one of the clan leaders who had painted the Yirrkala church panels and then the Bark Petition, and been a prominent leader in the protest for land rights and compensation, as well as the arts. The petition presents the Yolngu claim to their lands in their law, or *rom*, through their art and language, as well as English. In my notes I have recorded that the elder told me she wanted me to understand that their languages are not only crucial to Yolngu people’s culture and their world view

but are one of their most important and powerful tools for defending their lands and their culture *on their own terms*. Through this experience of viewing the church panels and listening to the elder discuss their creation and importance, it was clear that Yolngu are experienced political campaigners and defend their land and culture in their own ways and on their own terms. Elders expect contemporary and new generations of Yolngu to have the language skills to assert their *rom* in the world.

Towards the end of my time in Yirrkala, the Yolngu participants started to ask me when I would be returning to their community. I have undertaken to do so after the research has been completed to discuss how they would like to use the findings. Smith (2011) said 'just hanging out with people' is a good indigenous research process for a number of reasons, including getting a sense of their communication style. She advised not all answers come because a question has been asked. On the contrary, she argued that they come through familiarity with the people because just by being there the researcher will know what to ask. She advised that it takes patience and a demonstration that you have something to offer to engage meaningfully with indigenous participants.

I have maintained ongoing Yolngu consent for the project by staying in touch with people in the community via phone and email, providing updates on the progress of the project and maintaining a practical interest in their struggle to keep their school bilingual. Early findings of the project were fed back through a webcast of a seminar presented at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in March 2011 (Waller, 2011c) and through a published report (McCallum, 2012) and website which present the findings of the Media and Indigenous Policy (MIP) project. I wrote a 2500-word feature article that presents their perspective on bilingual education policy for the mainstream media in both online and newspaper forms (Waller, 2011a, 2011b). Yolngu and key *balanda* at Yirrkala read and commented on it before it was published. (The creation of this piece of journalism and the development of a model for academic journalism on indigenous issues is discussed at length in chapter 5.) Yolngu will also have information about all, and

access to most, published conference papers and journal articles via the MIP website¹⁷.

Working with journalists, policymakers, academics and language activists

Journalists were the most difficult group to recruit as participants. Reporters who had been or were based in the Northern Territory were approached, as well as political and education specialists based on the eastern seaboard who had covered the territory's bilingual education policy during the study period. In some cases journalists were not able to participate because of travel and work commitments, but a number who were contacted via email and telephone did not respond or said they were unable to take part without providing a reason, which makes it difficult to know what the barriers to participation were.

Interviews with journalists were conducted in newsrooms, cafes, hotels, on Skype and via telephone. These journalists were highly reflexive about their reporting practices and about the research interview process. While Bowd (2004) has argued that journalists have a tendency to take charge of the interview situation because they see themselves as 'the interviewer', some of my respondents were reflexive about the power they ceded to me as the research interviewer and commented on my journalistic interviewing skills. One wrote in an email¹⁸ within hours of an interview:

It was good to meet. I must admit, though, that I had a little panic attack while driving home, thinking about some of the things I said ... Please do not publish any of what I said until I have had a look at it (in fact I must insist on it). I know you wouldn't but I just wanted to make sure so I can sleep well at night.

My journal records my thoughts about working with journalist participants, what they said about their experience of being interviewed and of my role as the interviewer. For some I was a peer they felt they could talk to easily, as we had colleagues in common and they recognised I shared their habitus. In other interviews I was perceived to be using my professional skills in a powerful way. Some of the journalists I interviewed expressed surprise by what came out in the interviews –

¹⁷ <http://www.canberra.edu.au/faculties/arts-design/research/active-research-groups/Indigenous-Policy-making>

¹⁸ Personal communication, September 10, 2010

their frustrations, anger and feelings of inadequacy in covering 'remote' indigenous affairs. All participants have access to the interview transcripts and the power to redact any comments they wish. I have also ensured the participant whose email I quote above, and others who have made similar requests, see any outputs from this research in which they are quoted before publication.

All of the academics in the fields of education and linguistics and the language activists who were invited to participate accepted. They were identified and recruited through their published scholarship and by tapping into their social media networks on Google Groups and Facebook. I met with a number of them at a public forum on bilingual education at Charles Darwin University in September 2010 and then at a smaller, less formal meeting in Darwin later that week. Interviews with academic participants were conducted in Darwin, Adelaide, Canberra and Melbourne. My journal shows that what I perceived as the main challenge in these interviews was maintaining the focus on their media-related practices. They were much more interested in explaining and discussing *the issue* of bilingual education policy, which is their area of expertise. My journal entries about these interviews use the word 'passion' and 'passionate' frequently to describe the feeling of the interview.

Current and former public servants and politicians were also relatively easy to recruit, which my journal entries show I had assumed would be difficult. Public servants who were interviewed recommended others I should speak to, which was extremely helpful, given the 20-year time frame of the project. Former politicians also provided contact details for former advisors and public servants. Some current public servants did not want to be identified because they feared repercussions from the Northern Territory Education Department. Others did not object to being identified. I was especially surprised when some very senior public servants were highly reflexive about their media-related practices. I had assumed they would not want to participate at all, or would be tight-lipped. The former Northern Territory Minister for Education, Marion Scrymgour, did not respond to my invitations to participate in the project. My journal notes describe my concern that her viewpoint

was very important to the study. I have done my best to include her voice through her statements in media releases and news media reports that are drawn upon in the findings chapters. The Media and Indigenous Policy website provides access to the project findings for all participants and interested people.

A phenomenological approach to interpretation

This study takes a phenomenological approach to interpretation, which means it is based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity that emphasises the importance of participants' perspectives and interpretation (Moustakas, 1990). It is consistent with Bourdieu's heuristic approach, which has an affiliation with phenomenology (Postone, LiPuma & Calhoun, 1993). The interviews conducted for this study have been undertaken to generate a specific, multi-perspectival understanding of the media-related practices of actors in the bilingual education policy field. They are used to gain insights into people's motivations and actions and to cut through 'conventional thinking' (Wilson, 2002) about the interplay of news media and policy. An important aspect of the interpretation is identifying when participants are being reflexive and extends to me being reflexive about what the participants say – without getting 'too postmodern' (Grbich, 2004). This has enabled me to consider what constitutes the conditions of media experience in the first place (Postone et al., 1993). It has also allowed me to address the question of how the political configurations of discourses and inherited dispositions (*habitus*) prefigure people's mediated actions.

The reason for taking a phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific – to identify 'the phenomena' through how they are perceived by actors in the situation (Schutz, 1972). This study interprets the deep information about subjective experiences and perceptions that has been gathered through the interviews and presents these from the various perspectives of those who participated.

The participants drove the process of identifying the themes that are explored in chapters 4 and 5 through what they said about their media-related practices.

Following Layder's adaptive theory approach (1998), the scholarly literature was

worked in conjunction with the theory that emerged from the data throughout the research process with the aim of developing new concepts. I used an Excel spreadsheet to record my first level coding of the interviews and to pull out and list relevant quotations. As part of the reflexive approach, thoughts drawn from my research diary were recorded next to the codes and added thoughts that came to mind during this process alongside these, including reflections about the interpretation process itself (Grbich, 2004) and which bodies of literature could aid in the interpretation. This coding phase took about three months in 2011 and involved labelling, separating, compiling and organising data (Charmaz, 2006). The interpretation involved a movement from generating codes that stayed close to the data to more selective and abstract ways of 'conceptualising the phenomenon of interest' (Bryman, 2008, p. 543). During this phase I was especially interested in interpreting how the practices of people from the different fields that comprise the bilingual education policy constellation connected with or disconnected from the practices of journalists and news organisations that covered the topic. The chapters that follow present the patterns and directions that have emerged from the data and build theory about key aspects of the field, including indigenous public spheres, local understandings of mediatization and remote indigenous reporting.

Part 2: Remoteness and proximity

The findings are presented in the two chapters that follow. Chapter 4, 'Bilingual education, language and the logics of news', is presented as a suite of four essays discussing the influences participants have identified as shaping public and policy discussion of bilingual education policy during the study period. The first concerns the changing discursive frames on indigenous affairs and education during the study period. These provide the wider social and political contexts for changing public and policy attitudes towards bilingual education. The discussion then moves to Australia's 'monolingual mindset', the role of academic experts and evidence-based policy and how these have shaped the policy and news coverage. The key policy moments in 1998–99 and 2007–08, when territory governments tried to dismantle the bilingual policy, are analysed in essays on indigenous public spheres and the mediatization of bilingual education policy.

Chapter 5, 'Writing black, writing back' is presented in two essays. The first uses a Bourdieuan framework to examine and define the subfield of remote indigenous reporting in which bilingual news coverage is generated. The second essay is a reflexive response to the research process and findings. This section proposes a model of academic journalism designed to decolonise reporting of indigenous affairs. It draws on southern theory (Connell, 2007), indigenous research methodologies and insights from veteran indigenous affairs reporter Tony Koch, as well as my own journalism practice. It aims to address what participants have identified as shortcomings in the subfield, which involve the ways in which journalists interact with indigenous people and represent their perspectives.

Chapter 4: Bilingual education, language and the logics of news

Introduction

The four essays that follow here and the two essays that comprise chapter 5 have emerged from the spoken words of study participants who are closely connected to the bilingual education field. This begins at heading level. Phrases they used – such as ‘overlays’ to conceptualise the complexity of indigenous affairs policymaking, ‘writing black’ to describe the practices of stereotypical indigenous news coverage and ‘intimate dialogue’, which is how one participant theorised relations between the state and the media at the local level – are used to denote ideas and define sections of the essays. Participants’ words drive the narratives and the arguments at sentence level and connections are forged with the wider literature. The field is not flat or even because the participants who inhabit it have a range of media-related practices and different habituses. Some have been involved for more than three decades, while others are relatively new to it. Some are fluent speakers of Yolngu matha and have lived in North-east Arnhem Land all their lives, or for part of their lives. Some have lived and worked in ‘remote’ communities, others come from outside the Northern Territory. They bring their different habituses, in Bourdieu’s terms, to the research process as they come from a range of fields including the Yolngu world, the news media, the public service, the political field, the education field and several academic fields. The theory constructed in this chapter has been formed from and reflects this uneven ground.

The essays theorise the themes that echoed across participants’ talk in interview after interview, from federal senator, to journalist, to public servant, to Yolngu educator. All the participants are involved in telling the different stories the essays present – creating an ebb and flow of understanding across the bilingual education field, which Marika (1999) described as the process for knowledge creation. Taken together, the interviews provide a persuasive argument that the bilingual education policy and its media representation have been shaped by wider discursive contexts,

Australia's monolingual mindset, and the ways Yolngu use the media. In essay 4, 'An intimate dialogue', the logics of journalism can be seen to be operating in the offices of politicians and policy producers, thus affecting the very processes of bilingual education policy production.

Discursive overlays 1988–2008

Like a number of the study participants, including Labor Senator Trish Crossin, academic Frances Morphy and journalist Bob Gosford, senior Northern Territory public servant Ken Davies lived and worked in 'remote' indigenous schools in his younger days. He went on to hold key policymaking positions in the territory's education department for many years, where he oversaw the bilingual program. At the time of our interview in February 2011, he was heading up the controversial \$672 million Federal–Northern territory funded Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) that was a key part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. SIHIP has been the subject of intense media scrutiny and criticism, with scores of damning headlines such as 'No corner turned on indigenous housing' (*Crikey*, 2012) and 'Failure of indigenous housing policy in the Northern Territory' (*The Australian*, 2009). Davies described the ways in which media-related practices had increasingly become 'a necessary part' of his day-to-day policymaking practices (see section 4.4 of this chapter).

Davies used the term 'overlays' to describe the social and political attitudes, and related policy issues that he understands to contribute to the intractability of indigenous policies. He explained that 'overlays' offered a way of thinking in horizontal terms that helped him 'to peel back and consider the complexities' that had to be accommodated in the policymaking process, rather than trying to 'cut through them' in a vertical way of thinking. I am using Davies' term 'overlays' in this section for conceptualising participants' localised understandings of how changes in the wider discursive context have contributed to shaping the bilingual education debate and policy over its lifetime.

Davies identified national media and public discussion of indigenous affairs in the Intervention period as a key overlay on bilingual education policymaking practices. For example, he said the Northern Territory Government's media-related practices in 2007–08 were a direct response to the discursive overlay of the Northern Territory Emergency Response:

Media management and media interaction just became a necessary part of the functions, and particularly in terms of dealing with indigenous remote contexts with all of the overlays more recently around that with the Intervention and so on. Then there's a heightened level of interest both nationally and internationally from the media about what's going on in remote schools. I mean remote education in particular.

Adapting to what are perceived to be the media's interests and priorities is a strategy to respond to what are believed to be the preferences and demands of the public (Herbst, 1998). Voltmer and Baumgarten (2010) observed that political actors routinely evaluate and shape policies in view of the reaction they might trigger in the media before pursuing them through the legislative process. Davis found evidence of such 'anticipatory news media effects' (2007) in his study of British politics. Using the media might give policymakers some control over the public agenda but they can only achieve this by accepting the media's rules of the game. The literature shows this affects the process, and to some extent even the outcome, of policymaking. (This is discussed in detail in section 4.4 of this chapter.)

Bourdieu said to understand any field it is necessary to begin by examining its contexts and history (Bourdieu, 1977), which is investigated in chapter 1. He also offered the insight that the broad discussions taking place in social space (the field of power) can be seen to influence other fields, which in turn play back into the field of power (Bourdieu, 1989). I argue that this form of influence can be seen at work over the lifetime of the bilingual policy. Therefore this essay will examine the four broad discussions about indigenous affairs and education identified by participants, which they related to the evolution of the policy. These are self-determination, reconciliation, the Intervention and the literacy wars. A number of interviewees said these discursive overlays had a strong influence on the policy's evolution and its media representation.

Self determination

The first discursive overlay, self-determination, dominated from the Whitlam era in the early 1970s when the policy was adopted, through to the late 1980s of the Hawke-Keating Labor Government when the study period begins.

Peter Jones was an education advisor in the bilingual office of the Northern Territory Education Department from 1985 to 1989 and principal education officer for bilingual education from 1989 to 1991. Reflecting on the early years of the policy when self-determination informed the government's approach, he said:

Aboriginal people could not believe that here was a government saying this program actually values and recognises, uses your own language, and to run the program we're actually going to employ some of your people ... So people are just stunned by it, what an amazing idea. Yeah, they were rapped.

In 1975 the Commonwealth Government released the film, *Not to lose you, my language* (Reading, 1975), to educate the public about the aims and operation of the early bilingual programs. It has been used in a number of subsequent television news features (see, for example, Whitmont, 2009) to illustrate the optimism and self-determinist ethos of the times. There is no narrator; instead teachers, linguists and indigenous people speak to the camera directly. Indigenous people are shown to have much agency as educators of the non-indigenous teachers, as well as their students. The emphasis is placed on depicting indigenous people taking leadership roles in their bilingual schools.

However, the early excitement about the possibilities offered by self-determination policies was relatively short-lived. More than thirty years later, some study participants who were involved in bilingual education during this period expressed some amusement at their youthful idealism¹⁹. They were highly reflexive about the ways in which they saw the world at that time, especially 'remote' indigenous Australia. Several described their vision of Whitlam's indigenous affairs policy as 'utopian'. For some, including Francis Morphy, who is now an academic but had been a teacher-linguist at Yirrkala in the early days of the bilingual program, it is still

¹⁹ Three of the study participants were teachers in the first years of the bilingual program and appeared in the documentary film *Not to lose you, my language*.

difficult to accept that progressive attitudes about indigenous affairs ‘could be gone back on’:

We first arrived in Australia just after Whitlam got into power and we stayed for 10 years. Then we went back to the UK for 10 years and so I had this assumption ... that the Whitlam era was the way Australians thought about indigenous affairs ... Then we left just after Hawke had got in and we came back just after Howard had got in ... it was the beginning of the attack on Aboriginal institutions that went on for a decade. It was such a shock. It was like indigenous affairs policy and thinking had gone back 20 years in the 10 years we were away ... All that stuff that happened during the Whitlam era — that seemed so rock solid and couldn’t be gone back on — things like the Land Rights Act and so on ... all just becomes negotiable again. The thing to me that it speaks to is the power relations in this society. Aboriginal people have to fight so, so hard to make small gains and those small gains can just be cut out from under them so easily.

Reconciliation

The announcement that bilingual programs would be scrapped and the Collins review took place towards the end of the decade of Reconciliation (1991–2001). It began with the 1991 *Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Johnston, 1991b), which was a watershed moment in indigenous affairs in Australia. The inquiry documented individual and institutional racism and made strong recommendations for change. It identified underlying reasons for facts such as that indigenous males were 28 times more likely than other males to be taken into custody. Forms of racism and disadvantage — such as much lower life expectancy for indigenous peoples, a higher rate of alcoholism, larger families and lower than average education — were found to be products of the history of dispossession and social marginalisation. The Royal Commission concluded that the cycle of poverty, poor health and little education had trapped indigenous Australians in a reality vastly different to most other Australians. For these reasons, the Royal Commission in its final recommendation suggested:

That all political leaders and their parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided. (Johnston, 1991a)

Soon after, the Commonwealth Parliament voted unanimously to establish the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation with the aim of promoting a process of reconciliation between indigenous peoples and the wider Australian community (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 2000).

It was an era of consultation designed to improve cross-cultural understanding and by the end of the decade, Reconciliation could be seen to have entered the hearts and minds of the Australian people. For example, by the mid-nineties, 'acknowledging country' was being practiced widely. The most passionate expression of commitment to Reconciliation was the formation of the grassroots movement 'Australians for Reconciliation', which organised a number of large-scale social and political actions. 'Sorry books' were signed by thousands across the country, 'seas of hands' were planted and 'journeys of healing' were undertaken, in which more than one million people participated in bridge walks for Reconciliation. Despite this grassroots support, a conservative prime minister, John Howard, was elected in 1996. The decade of Reconciliation culminated in Corroboree 2000 at the Sydney Opera House, where Howard was presented with the 'Australian Declaration and Roadmap Towards Reconciliation'. Among its key points was respect and recognition of indigenous Australians' right 'to self-determination within the life of the nation' (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 2000).

The decision in 1998 to drop bilingual education and instead teach English as a second language was aligned with the neo-liberal educational values of the Howard Government (which are discussed below), and the ideology of the territory's conservative government. It is important to note that by this stage Howard had engineered a shift in the political discourse on indigenous affairs through his leadership of the neo-conservatives in the 'history wars' of 1996-97 (McIntyre & Clark, 2004; Curthoys, Docker & Peters-Little, 2008)²⁰. The teaching of Australian history became highly politicised when Howard seized on the phrase, coined by eminent historian Geoffrey Blainey, of the 'black armband' view of history to challenge what he described as the 'soft left's' view that most Australian history since 1788 'has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination'. In his 1996 Sir Robert Menzies lecture, Howard continued:

²⁰ See section 2 of chapter 5 for a discussion of the 'Media Wars' that involved some of the key conservative protagonists in the History Wars. The 'Media Wars' broke out in the same period as the History Wars and have had a significant, and arguably damaging, effect on the scholarly discipline of Journalism in Australia (see Harrington, 2012).

I believe that the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed.

Study participant Tess Lea, who worked on the Collins Review and co-authored its report, *Learning Lessons*, said of the decision to scrap bilingual education in 1998:

Why was it being axed, compared with what? It was being axed because [then chief minister] Mike Reid hated all the sort of, the advocates for bilingual education tended to be pro-indigenous autonomy and pro land rights and pro a whole lot of other things, so they came as a bit of a package deal in terms of their politics, and I reckon that got right up his nostrils.

This backlash was at odds with the official national policy of Reconciliation and its wide public support. The Northern Territory Government's subsequent back down on bilingual education can be understood as an acknowledgement of this. As part of their campaign, opponents of the decision employed an indigenous media relations specialist and were successful in attracting wide public support and strong national media interest in the issue (See section 3 of this chapter).

Discussing the consultation process behind the *Learning Lessons* report, Tess Lea described the success of the bilingual lobby in garnering public support and pushing the issue to the top of the inquiry's agenda:

Wherever we went people were lobbying us as if we had this role in axing or not axing bilingual, when the decision had actually already been made. So we took that on, as it was a responsibility to try to find some kind of middle path where they wouldn't just dismantle everything ... the issue gazumped us. Everywhere we went people were lobbying us.

Indigenous people had not been consulted in the policy process, which effectively excluded them from official forums. Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten (2010) said that in such instances the media are an important alternative route to have their voice heard and even to get a hold in the relevant policy institutions, such as independent inquiries:

Successful policy entrepreneurs use emerging 'windows of opportunity' to mobilise public opinion when their own framing of an issue merges with the dominant media discourse. As a consequence, they might be able to change the course of policy to their own advantage and implement their aim in the policy arena. (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010, p. 9)

The bilingual lobby was successful at this point arguably because it used the 'window of opportunity' offered by the inquiry to align its case with the spirit of Reconciliation that was dominant in public discussion at the time. It argued that bilingual education exemplifies 'true' reconciliation because it involves knowledge exchange – indigenous and non-indigenous people sharing knowledge, space and friendship, working together to build understanding and respect of both cultures, and provides meaningful educational and employment opportunities for indigenous people. Nicholls (2001) said:

The philosophy and the practice of bilingual education for indigenous Australian children provided a virtually unparalleled opportunity, and a perfect template, for genuine ... reconciliation. (2001, p. 326)

Commenting on how the spirit of Reconciliation inspired positive public and media interest in the issue in 1998–99 and contrasting it with attitudes in the Intervention period, ANU linguist Professor Jane Simpson said:

I think at that time people generally weren't aware in the mainstream media of just how bad Aboriginal education was, and I think there was more tolerance towards Aborigines. I mean, there was more acceptance of Aborigines having the right to maintain language and ways of living.

Despite their success in mobilising public support, the move to the 'two-way learning' policy was not regarded as a victory by supporters of bilingual education at the time. Some schools closed their programs and most of the relevant Collins report recommendations were never implemented (Yu et al., 2008). The fuzziness of the policy, coupled with the withdrawal of support and funding were understood as 'death by a thousand cuts' (Nicholls, 2005, p. 160) for bilingual education and laid the groundwork for further erosion of the programs.

The Intervention

A decade after the 'history wars', the Howard era had run its course, and both public and policy discourse about Reconciliation had been shut down (McCallum & Reid, 2012). But Howard was not finished with indigenous affairs. In the final days of his administration in 2007, he brought down the most radical policy departure in the

history of Australian indigenous affairs – the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

In June 2007 the ‘Little children are sacred’ report (Wild & Anderson, 2007) presented a distressing picture of child abuse in the Northern Territory that attracted intense national news coverage. The report recommended consultation and discussion with communities, and investment in education and communication. It linked poor attendance with teaching children in an inappropriate language and recommended implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Collins Report (1999) and the *Indigenous Languages and Culture Review* (NTDEET, 2005). These reports highlight the importance of using local languages and strengthening teaching English language. The Northern Territory Government did not respond to the ‘Little children are sacred’ report until late August (Toohey, 2008, p. 47), when the Chief Minister, Clare Martin, and the Minister for Families and Community Services, Marion Scrymgour, promised more teachers and infrastructure. They glossed over the report’s recommendations on language, saying the *Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006–2009* (NTDEET, 2006) had overtaken earlier reviews.

The NT Government’s long silence on the ‘Little children are sacred’ report provided the justification for the Howard Government to launch the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) in the Territory’s remote communities (Toohey, 2008). This heavy-handed approach ran counter to the recommendations of the ‘Little children are sacred’ report, and one of its authors, Rex Wild, QC, described it in the news media as ‘sending in a gunship’ (Alberici, 2007).

The Northern Territory Emergency Response marked a huge shift in federal and state policy regarding indigenous people – one that moved away from self-determination towards imposing state control (Altman & Hinkson, 2007). *The Racial Discrimination Act* (1976) was suspended to allow the Federal Government to roll out its policy agenda. Government-appointed business managers took administrative and financial control of communities. Community councils, which had been the seats of local decision-making and activism, were disbanded and most local government

responsibilities were taken over by newly created shires. Housing management was taken away from local groups. Social welfare payments were 'quarantined' so that half of a person's social welfare payment had to be spent at government-approved shops on government-approved items. The Federal Government also tried to deny communities the right to block unauthorised access to their communities by scrapping the permit system (Toohey, 2008). The Northern Territory Emergency Response reduced the control that indigenous people had over managing their own affairs (Altman & Hinkson, 2007). There was no recognition of the need to communicate with indigenous people or to consult them about the changes to their lives.

The scholarly literature suggests remote indigenous communities are understood as operating as, and at, an exotic limit, and their remoteness and difference is emphasised in news media reports (Macoun, 2011; Meadows, 2001). Writing about Aboriginality and the Northern Territory Emergency Response, Macoun observed:

Communities prescribed for Northern Territory Emergency Response are described paradigmatically in media reports as 'remote Aboriginal societies', 'this other Australia', 'the remote world', and as 'a distinct domain' (Rothwell 2007). There is a preoccupation with areas that are 'most remote' and 'too far away' to be easily serviced from settler communities (Kearney 2007). This focus is significant, given that indigenous communities are often represented in the settler imaginary as 'set apart from the body of the nation'. (Macoun, 2011, p. 528)

The national news media gave strong support to the Northern Territory Emergency Response, led by *The Australian* (McCallum & Reid, 2012) and some indigenous leaders, such as Noel Pearson and Marcia Langton (Maddison, 2009). Those who opposed it were represented as suffering from 'do-goodism' involving 'saccharine sympathy' or 'self-redemptive legal and political crusading' (Sutton, 2009, p. 11). ANU Professor Jane Simpson said linguists who specialise in indigenous languages were viewed in this way:

It was very difficult for us [linguists] because ... we were positioned as people who want to preserve Aborigines as museum pieces. So that what we said was discounted immediately and that was both by the education department and by the media.

The sidelining of academic experts is discussed in essay 2 of this chapter. Indigenous communities were portrayed as dysfunctional, and Aboriginal men as child abusers

(Toohey, 2008). Some journalists who participated in this study observed that, at the height of the Intervention, reporters pursued predictable, stereotypical images and stories of indigenous shame and dysfunction and that much of the media representation was racist (see section 1 of chapter 5).

While many indigenous people welcomed tougher controls on alcohol and more effective policing, many were upset by the loss of control of their lives and communities, the negative representations of their lifestyles, and the lack of promised improvements, such as new houses (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2008c).

A number of participants said the way the 2008 decision to dismantle bilingual education was made was 'interventionist' in that no consultation took place and the decision effectively took away indigenous communities' agency in their children's education. They also observed that the Northern Territory Emergency Response had affected indigenous peoples' energy and ability to mount an effective campaign to retain bilingual education. Former NT public servant Peter Jones described people living in 'remote' communities as being 'very much under the pump'. He also referred to their cynicism about the cyclical nature of the policy process:

The Intervention, which is the Commonwealth Government, the introduction of shires, which is the Northern Territory Government, and now this Aboriginal languages bilingual education thing, changes in homeland centre policy and that's by the Northern Territory Government. It's just one thing after another, after another, after another ... So they can see a whole stack of money's being spent, but they know that that won't be sustained because it never is, and of course they haven't been part of the process ... and in the end there'll be a change of government policy or a change of ... something.

Participant Ken Davies observed that the Northern Territory Emergency Response had received much national media attention and remote indigenous education had been part of that focus. But he said the specific bilingual issue had failed to garner much media interest outside of the Northern Territory:

The Intervention's been a big issue for the media, quarantining has been a big issue for the media, the outcomes around the Intervention has been an issue to the media. The bilingual discussion has largely been internal to the territory.

The reasons for the lack of national interest in the issue are discussed in section 1 of chapter 5, where the importance of news routines and values, as well as 'imagined audiences' (Matthews, 2008) is explored. Professor Simpson said attempts by academic experts in indigenous education and languages to interest the national media in sponsoring discussion had failed:

... and we tried, a number of people tried writing opinion pieces and tried getting them published and they were just knocked back one after the other.

'Literacy crisis'

When the Howard Government came to power in 1996, it declared there was a literacy crisis in Australian schools and that it could only be remedied by teaching children a fixed set of basic numeracy and literacy skills (Snyder, 2008). This 'crisis' was the first manoeuvre on the part of conservative politicians and commentators in the battle that continues over the kind of knowledge that young Australians need to participate in life as informed citizens and in which the news media has been identified as playing a central role.

The conservative critics, who have a straightforward message for the public about the literacy wastelands of Australian schools, have been able to promote their views, not just in the tabloids and on talkback radio, but also in the more respected newspapers ... the attacks have had repercussions for policy decisions and funding. (Snyder, 2008, p. 9)

In the late 1990s, neo-conservative politicians and media critics accused progressive educators of 'dumbing down' the curriculum, attacked the teaching profession and teacher education and were highly critical of the emphasis on cultural diversity in school curriculums, arguing that instead schools should promote a common national culture (Snyder, 2008). For example, in January 2004 Howard criticised Australian state schools for being 'too politically correct and too values-neutral' (Riley, Doherty & Burke, 2004), and in June that year the Federal Government announced a controversial \$31 billion education package in which funding was tied to a National Values Framework and included the installation of a 'functioning flagpole' to fly the Australian flag in every school (Clark, 2005).

Supporters of progressive approaches to literacy acquisition, such as a number of participants in this study, viewed these kinds of initiatives and attitudes to literacy as

dangerous threats to cultural diversity and freedom of belief and expression in which English is assumed to be the superior language. They accused the neo-conservatives of viewing literacy as a simple skills acquisition process that can be delivered in a programmed way, in a short period of time, in a language not used by the learner in their speech community and achieve comparable outcomes to mainstream standards. For those who understand literacy as a social practice rather than something limited to the classroom, the focus on schooling, benchmark testing and attendance ignores the broader social and cultural factors in 'newly literate contexts such as the remote indigenous world':

From this perspective initiatives to increase literacy also need to take account of broader issues such as the connection between language and identity and what people actually use reading and writing for in everyday life, beyond the parameters of schooling. (Kral, 2008)

Tess Lea said attendance was not recognised as a key issue in remote indigenous education until the *Learning lessons* report was released in 1999 and that it had subsequently been given too much emphasis in both education policy and media discussion:

If I have any regrets we made [attendance] an issue. I really regret that because it's become the, it's become the sinkhole of all explanation. So all responsibility rests on parents to get kids to school and until we have attendance right, what can we do ... so it absolves systems of any further explanation really in the general mind's eye and the media don't deconstruct it either.

The sharply opposed views of literacy in the 1990s bore many resemblances to the debates that were raging at the time in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the United States these took the form of the 'reading wars', and former president George Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, which had a narrow focus on mathematics and reading test scores. In the United Kingdom, when Tony Blair came to power in 1997, he declared that education was a top priority for his Labour government. He introduced standardised testing of mathematics and literacy and a national literacy strategy that included a controversial 'National Literacy Hour' (Snyder, 2008).

The ways in which the literacy wars played out in both the Australian education policy arena and the national media became an increasingly significant aspect of the discursive context of the Northern Territory's education policies between 1998 and 2008. A major theme in the bilingual education debate has always been how best to teach Standard English to indigenous students who come to school speaking their mother tongues (Devlin, 2010; Harris & Devlin, 1999). The intensification of the literacy wars with the introduction of standardised national testing and the national news media's representation of the failure of indigenous schools to meet national numeracy and literacy benchmarks in 2008 put intense pressure on the Northern Territory Government to be seen to be addressing what was framed by the news media as the comprehensive failure of its indigenous students, especially those in remote schools, to meet these standards (Simpson et al., 2009). The findings of this study provide evidence that supports Stack's (2007b) argument that media interpret test results in concert with business and electoral elites as a failure of marginalised students, rather than a failure of society to address systemic discrimination.

The same style of 'league table' mentality in education reporting seen in Australia with the introduction of NAPLAN has been identified in the United Kingdom, with Franklin (1999, 2004) criticising journalists for pursuing predictable and narrow agendas dominated by reporting school league tables. He argued that politicians' 'preference for sound bites above sustained policy debate' (2004, p. 256) showed how central the news media has become for politicians to inform, shape and manage public discourse about policy and politics. This was understood by Strömbäck (2008, 2011) as the fourth dimension of mediatization, which is concerned with the extent to which political actors are governed by media logic or political logic. Cook (2005) argued that by adapting to or adopting the media's standards of newsworthiness and logic 'politicians may then win the daily battles with the news media, by getting into the news as they wish, but end up losing the war, as standards of newsworthiness begin to become prime criteria to evaluate issues, politics and politics' (Cook, 2005, p. 163).

The former chief executive officer of the Northern Territory Department of Education Margaret Banks said in our interview:

The pressure was on the Northern Territory with the start of the NAPLAN, so I guess the influence of the broader Australian media through the use now of the Internet, the fact that the results of the literacy and numeracy outcomes of the children of the Northern Territory were going to be public for the first time, and not only public, but compared with other states ... and all the way down. *So that was absolutely a critical lever in the series of events that then impacted on the bilingual program* [author's italics].

Meyer, who argued that politics has been colonised by the news media, concluded:

Politicians feel themselves to be under ceaseless pressure to stage-manage in order to get access to the media. They hope that if they master the rules governing access to the media stage, they can thereby increase their leverage over the way the media present them to the public ... consequently, the sphere of politics falls under the influence of the media system. (Meyer, 2002, p. 71)

Federal Labor Senator for the Northern Territory, Trish Crossin, drew a similar conclusion to Banks when she said that the government's policy change was a direct response to the news media's negative coverage of the territory's NAPLAN results:

There's been so much pressure in the media about school outcomes and achieving and passing the national NAPLAN test and improving what happens in schools ... that's what I think has driven the Northern Territory Government to go down this line of having English only for the first four hours of every day.

Strömbäck said such perceptions of media influence provide valid evidence related to the media's actual influence but, 'even if perceptions of the media's influence may not be correct, it may provide evidence related to the media's influence, as these perceptions are highly likely to shape politicians' actual behaviour (Strömbäck, 2011, p. 427).

Stack (2007a) was critical of the discourse around the use of literacy and numeracy testing as an objective measure of success and failure. She said it is embedded in hegemonic understandings of race, gender, class and 'is entrenched in capitalistic notions of success and failure. This discourse is exceptionally stable across political parties and media outlets' (Stack, 2007b, p. 100). Stack argued that in her study the news media presented business and government solutions as 'common sense' and did not seek alternative framings. There are strong parallels between Stack's (2007b)

finding and criticisms of the coverage of the bilingual education policy decision and coverage in 2008 (Simpson et al, 2009).

Study participant and journalist Bob Gosford wrote a number of critical feature articles on the 'first four hours' decision for online news and opinion site *Crikey* (Gosford, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). His insights resounded with the links made by Gutierrez et al. (2002) between politics, language, race and education in constructing problems for policy. He argued that 'the status quo camouflaged as colour-blind, becomes the uncontested baseline of educational reform' (Gutierrez et al. 2002, p. 336). Gosford said that instead of making a hasty, ill-conceived policy change, Scrymgour should have challenged the 'common sense' media framing of the NAPLAN results as the failure of remote indigenous students and instead pointed out the discriminatory nature of the test itself:

The NAPLAN stuff just struck me as being crazy. It was sort of apples and oranges ... the tests weren't administered in a sense that was culturally relevant to kids on the ground. So the kids ... in Aboriginal communities were being drilled with questions ... their peers in towns like Darwin would have been getting ... I think that [education minister] Marion [Scrymgour] perhaps would have been better there to have been saying, 'Well, you know ... NAPLAN's a good program but it doesn't tell us much about what's happened on the ground in the bush because the tests aren't culturally specific or community specific enough'.

The NAPLAN tests do not recognise or cater for the needs of students whose first language is not English (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012) and the 'First Four Hours' policy announcement made no mention of bilingual education programs being affected (Scrymgour, 2008b). Gutierrez et al. argued that in the neo-liberal political climate, language and ability have become surrogates for the larger category of race:

The key device is to reframe the project using code words, phrases and symbols which refer indirectly to racial themes, but do not directly challenge popular democratic or egalitarian ideas, such as justice and equal opportunity ... for example, these various initiatives never mentioned race or racism directly, but instead proposed these changes as sound and fair-minded public policy leading ultimately to economic development through the most efficient economic means (rational choice decision making). (Gutierrez et al., 2002, p. 340)

The 'first four hours' policy announcement is an example of language and ability becoming surrogates for the larger category of race, as Gutierrez et al. (2002) described.

The monolingual mindset

Many participants expressed the belief that the nation's 'monolingual mindset' (Clyne, 2011; Wilson, 2011) devalues indigenous languages generally and has formed the basis of ideological objection to bilingual education programs since they began. In his discussion of the need for Australia's indigenous languages to be formally recognised and supported by governments, indigenous commentator Noel Pearson has written that:

... notwithstanding the richness of this country's linguistic heritage, there is almost no public recognition of this national priority. To find an eloquent expression of the preciousness of this heritage you would need to go back to W. E. H. Stanner's Boyer lectures of 1967. Since Stanner there have been no prominent voices. (Pearson, 2007)

Study participants said this lack of recognition and respect for indigenous languages generally was an important element in both government and the news media's lack of interest in bilingual education and reinforces the way the issue is represented in policy and public discussion. In Bourdieu's terms, these languages can be understood to possess little social or symbolic capital in social space — that is, outside the physical indigenous communities where they are spoken and the academic field of Australian linguistics. This phenomena was described as 'linguicide' by Denzin and Lincoln (2008). They said it was a powerful global force with hegemony of English and other globalised languages threatening indigenous languages and the language rights of those who speak these languages or feel pressured to speak, read and write in English. They emphasised that many indigenous concepts do not accurately translate into English (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 39). At the time of writing, a federal parliamentary committee released its report on indigenous languages in education, supporting bilingual programs for remote territory communities and urging all Australians to take pride in the nation's indigenous languages (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012). The authors of the report said Australia

needed to debunk the myth that it is a monolingual country, just as it acknowledged the doctrine of *terra nullius* was a fiction with the 1992 Mabo High Court decision²¹ (Waller, 2012d).

Wilson (2011) described monolingualism as a form of language imperialism. He said Australians generally are monolingual, and in fact the English-speaking world, with some exceptions, is generally monolingual. This has engendered what is now often referred to as ‘the monolingual mindset’, which is described as the belief that monolingualism is the norm and that we should therefore concentrate on teaching and using English and not waste resources on other languages (Wilson, 2011). The monolingual mindset was seen by participants to be operating at every level in Australian society, from prime ministers to media consumers. Academic Tess Lea said:

I was invited off to ... the 20/20 Summit ... and I had none other than [then prime minister] Kevin Rudd sitting opposite me saying what would you suggest? I said well, here’s what I’d suggest ... I know you’re interested in having Australian school students learn more than one language, we have Australian languages, they need to be invested in, we could be learning from them. We could be in fact, bilingual in Australian languages first, and he said ‘cost too much money’ and he moved off the table.

Former public servant Peter Jones said Prime Minister Julia Gillard would not offer federal support to the use of indigenous languages in education:

... she’s just not interested. In terms of her radar indigenous stuff in general is just ... probably an Aboriginal language is a ‘certainly not’, so I think she’ll be a dead loss.

In his account of reporting on the politics that took place in the lead-up to the announcement of the ‘first four hours in English’ policy, journalist Bob Gosford said:

It was while Gillard was federal education minister — around that time. And there was a particular statement that she made ... and the NT Government really didn’t have much option other than to follow ... I think [she] was basically saying, get rid of [the bilingual program], it doesn’t work, go mainstream otherwise ...

²¹ In the Mabo case the High Court determined that indigenous peoples should be treated equally before the law with regard to their rights over land. It rejected any position in law that would discriminate against indigenous peoples by denying the existence of rights that had been enjoyed freely before colonisation and continued to be exercised. In this way, it has been said that the myth of *terra nullius*, which asserted that the land belonged to no one, was rejected. The idea that no rights existed in land except those granted by the ‘Crown’, or the sovereign governments, was also reassessed. Source: <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/digitallearning/mabo/info/definingNt.htm>

Chips Macinolty said he had used indigenous languages in his graphic artwork since the late 1970s as a way of affirming the importance of language for indigenous people and ‘a way of confronting the rest of Australia that there are all these languages floating around’. He said it was rare for journalists to incorporate any indigenous languages into their stories:

I reckon I’m one of the very few that have used it in sort of like pages of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and so on. You know, like reporting when Mandawuy [Yunupingu] got his Australian of the Year [award].

This comment underlines that Australia’s first languages are not only overlooked as a subject of media discussion, they are rarely used in news media texts, which reinforces their ‘foreignness’ from mainstream media audiences. This silence denies wider Australian society the opportunity to become familiar with the sounds and scripts of Australian indigenous languages. This contrasts with the national approach of New Zealand, which declared Māori as an official language in 1987 and established the Māori Language Commission. Māori is taught in schools, is used extensively in public documents and circulates in the wider social space every day (Māori language information, 2011). Macinolty said there was not much discussion about any languages other than English in Australia:

I mean, we’re the most monolingual country I can think of, I can’t think of another country that’s more monolingual with the possible exceptions — I can’t think of an exception, and that’s despite huge migration programs and so on.

Gosford said the monolingual mindset was prevalent in the wider community and was reinforced by mainstream Australia’s geographic remoteness from indigenous communities in the Northern Territory:

We are a monolingual country. The idea that, I mean, most people in Australia would never have heard an Aboriginal person speaking their own languages, so there’s no sort of connect.

Gosford described reporters, editors and producers as reflecting and reinforcing this:

I don’t think anyone in the media is interested in languages. It’s just not a very sexy topic for the media so I can’t see that it’s going to get any more than a bleep.

Senator Trish Crossin said it was a ‘fixation’ of the mainstream that ‘we’ve got to teach these kids to operate in a non-indigenous world’:

... and the way we do that is we've got to give them English as soon and as quickly and as early as possible. They're just fixated on kids will never be able to cope in our society unless they've got English.

Fairfax journalist Lindsay Murdoch offered the insight that the mainstream's monolingual mindset made the first four hours policy politically palatable:

And politically it's an easy thing to sell in the policy ... this is Australia and they will learn English for six [sic] hours of the day ... they get political points for being tough ... we're not going to have these people not being able to speak English but, the reality's different. It might be OK ... down south, more east, but up here, in those sort of remote communities the people ... they're adamant that you've got to teach them in language first ... otherwise it doesn't work.

This political use of the 'monolingual mindset' can be understood as a hegemonic strategy to direct the interpretation of the bilingual debate (Peet, 2007, pp. 14–15). Hegemony is Gramsci's term for how the dominant culture tries to 'fix' the meaning of signs, symbols and representations to provide a 'common' or 'common sense' world view which disguises relations of power and privilege (Gramsci, 1971). Hegemony involves simplification – that is, it 'reduces the complexities of what it describes' (Couldry, 2010b, p. 6). It presents as acceptable, unequal distributions of resources and power by foregrounding some things and excluding others entirely from view (Couldry 2010, p. 6). Couldry made a strong connection between hegemony and neo-liberalism, which presents the social world as made up of markets 'and spaces of potential competition that need to be organised as markets, blocking other narratives from view' (Couldry 2010, p.6). Indigenous commentator Noel Pearson argues for 'the time from early morning to early afternoon be dedicated to explicit instruction in basic numeracy and English literacy' (Pearson, 2009) as a strategy for addressing indigenous socioeconomic disadvantage, as does the economist Helen Hughes (see section 4.2 for further discussion of think tanks and the policy). This means improving remote indigenous students' ability to compete in the mainstream by equipping them with English as the language of social and economic capital:

I think this is just about ... making indigenous people function in a non-indigenous world. That's where the pressure is ... and I'm going to be brutally racist here because I think this is what most people think. The only way these blackfellas are ever going to get on in life is if they can learn to function like we do, and that means they've got to have English. (Senator Trish Crossin)

Crossin and Murdoch's insight was that this hegemonic monolingualism overlooks the specific culture and daily reality of life in remote Northern Territory communities, where local languages dominate and are valued intrinsically. A number of journalists who participated in this study said many of their colleagues did not fully understand that English was not widely spoken in remote communities. Macinolty observed that journalists did not make an effort to learn any language either:

... there's also an assumption that it will all be in English ... there's a sort of vague 'yes, yes there are other languages' but not a really refined understanding of that ... I don't know any journalist since I've been here ... who has made an attempt to learn an Aboriginal language.

Some, including Lindsay Murdoch and Murray McLaughlin, were reflexive about their own lack of indigenous language as an obstacle to good reporting:

The big problem ... in reporting in indigenous communities is just the language barrier. It is a huge impediment to cutting through and being able to talk to people. It really is. (Murray McLaughlin, journalist, ABC)

People who are fluent in Yolgnu matha and Standard Australian English have social, economic and symbolic capital within Yolgnu society as teachers, politicians and communicators. At the intersection between the indigenous sphere and mainstream services that cater for indigenous people and issues, they are also in great demand. Interpreter services, which are crucial in the justice and health systems, for example, rely on a workforce with excellent indigenous language skills (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012). However, there is a well-documented shortage of skilled interpreters (Asher, 2011; Prior, 2010). Several journalists described having the services of a good interpreter as 'a luxury' (for further discussion of cultural competence and journalists see chapter 5).

As most Australians are unfamiliar with remote indigenous societies where English is a second, third or fourth language, the importance and value of literacy in indigenous languages is not well understood or appreciated:

When you're in a community, like all those North-east Arnhem Land communities ... you don't speak English at the store, anywhere other than the classroom. So, it really is second and third language. (Syd Stirling, former Northern Territory education minister)

The hegemonic proposition that all indigenous students must learn in English also downplays the 'bi' in the pedagogy of bilingual education. In an open letter to then education minister Marion Scrymgour, former Yolngu teacher Yalmay Yunupingu explained:

Using Yolngu matha helps children understand difficult ideas in English. This helps them learn English concepts better. This is a very important part of bilingual education. (Yunupingu, 2008)

The bilingual programs have as strong an emphasis on teaching English as the mother tongue and are founded upon a large body of evidence that people learn English better once they have literacy in their own language (Devlin, 2010; Hoogenraad, 2001). The English-only approach also ignores indigenous Australians' human right to educate their children in their own language (HREOC, 2000).

A number of participants commented that failing to understand using your own language as a human right, and monolingualism generally, was symptomatic of a wider cultural disconnect between mainstream Australia and 'remote' indigenous Australia. As Gosford commented, the 'average Australian' in Sydney or Melbourne has never heard indigenous languages being used in daily life. This means when the ideas that everyone should have the same (rather than equal) educational opportunities and everyone should learn in English are promoted in policy and news, they appear to be 'common sense' approaches to addressing the 'gap' between the mainstream and remote indigenous students. In Bourdieu's terms, it is understood as the best means of building remote indigenous Australians' economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984).

Standard English is a 'global' language with significant economic, social and symbolic capital in social space generally, while Australian indigenous languages are particularly local and possess very little economic or symbolic capital outside the communities where they are valued highly. Gosford said he was concerned that, unlike New Zealand, the Australian Government's lack of official acknowledgement

and investment in building the symbolic capital of its indigenous languages, and especially language education, will have a range of negative effects on people from 'remote' Northern Territory communities:

You know, our situation [the Northern Territory] is unique, there are languages here that are spoken every day that are ... intrinsically part of people's lives ... And if we take this away ... it is really going to have catastrophic effects later on down the track in all sorts of ways unrelated to education, that are entirely foreseeable. But just because ... governments ... can't sort of think outside of that box ... It's a terrible state of affairs.

Academics, think tanks and the problems with expert opinion

One of the ways in which the monolingual mindset can be seen to operate in the policy field is through the voices that were amplified in news media and the policy process in 2008. This part of the essay will therefore explore some of the ways that the 'common sense' of the field of journalism interacts with the fields of education and politics to define and patrol the boundaries of what is and is not included in public and policy discussion and who is included in the construction of news (Stack, 2007b).

Public servants and journalists have some things in common: for both fields a strong 'evidence base' is a mantra for good professional practice. Both groups look to independent 'experts', including academics, to provide or verify the evidence they rely on; however, this evidence-based approach can present challenges and the relationships between the fields can be uneasy. In his discussion of the problems of evidence-based policy, former Productivity Commission head Gary Banks (2009) described cultural differences between public servants and academics. He said there was a perception among senior public servants that academics can be very hard 'to do business with', or that they are too slow, or lack an appreciation of the 'real world'. He said, while there may be some validity in these perceptions, they may also reflect an unrealistic view by public servants of how much time is needed to do good research; and perhaps a lack of planning. Perhaps also a desire for greater 'predictability' in upholding a certain viewpoint than many academics would be willing to countenance (Banks, 2009).

Some participants in this study said policymakers did not rely on the international body of scholarship on bilingual education, or conduct their own research on what approaches and resources were required for it to work most effectively. Nor did they consult with academic experts in the policy development process. They said the news media gave prominence to the views of conservative think tank experts during this period, paying little attention to other perspectives, such as the research on indigenous education in the Northern Territory conducted by the Australian Education Union (Kronemann, 2007).

The literature on journalists and their sources has long emphasised the importance of the relationship with 'experts' (Lippmann, 1921) and empirical evidence in the construction of news. Some journalist participants stressed the importance of this:

... [you've] got to include them, the evidenced based and outcomes based. I mean, you can't waste money and people's time and people's lives on bullshit stuff that's not evidence-based. (Tony Koch, journalist, *The Australian*)

Language activists said there is a wealth of international and Australian research that provides evidence of the benefits of bilingual education for indigenous children who start school only speaking their mother tongues, and this is reflected in the literature (Grimes, 2009). However, academic commentators (Devlin, 2010; Hoogenraad, 2001; Nicholls, 1994; Simpson, Caffery & McConvell, 2009) and some study participants say this substantial body of evidence was largely overlooked by politicians and the news media in 1998–99 and again in 2008–09, when they announced the Northern Territory's bilingual education programs would be set aside, without research or consultation with affected communities. Furthermore, participants said that in 2008 the news media did not probe the evidence for the policy change cited by the government, or seek comment from relevant academic experts. Journalists explained that the government withheld the relevant data. Some participants said editors were not interested in publishing academic experts' submissions to the opinion pages of leading newspapers (see section 2 of chapter 5 for further evidence and discussion of editors' attitudes). One academic said:

... OK, some of them may have been badly written, there are all sorts of reasons for rejecting ... I got one rejected by *The Age*, saying something like, 'well, we've had our fill of Aboriginal stories for a while, we just can't take another opinion piece on it'.

Participants offered their experiences and observations of policymakers and the news media's unwillingness, or inability, to grapple with what they admit is complex data and concepts. They said they felt academics were seen as distant from educational and political 'realities' and that their potential contribution to the debate was easily dismissed. This group of participants' media-related practices can be understood to lend weight to Negrine's contention that the news media are ultimately unable, unwilling, and often unprepared 'to confront and make sense of the complexity of causes and effects which surround events and happenings in the contemporary world' (Negrine, 1996, p. 16).

This essay argues that in 2008 the kinds of 'politically palatable' views espoused by think-tank experts, who oppose the use of indigenous languages in schools, were preferred by policymakers and the news media to those of linguists and indigenous education experts. As Fairfax's Northern correspondent Lindsay Murdoch said, 'politically it's an easy thing to sell in the policy ... this is Australia and they will learn English for six hours of the day'.

Some study participants believed Helen Hughes, of the neo-conservative think tank the Centre of Independent Studies, and Noel Pearson of the Cape York Institute exerted a strong influence on public perception of the issue and in the minds of both territory and federal policymakers. Hughes wrote several reports on indigenous education (Hughes, 2008; Hughes & Hughes, 2009) and Pearson wrote a *Quarterly Essay* (Pearson, 2009), preceded by a comment piece in *The Australian* (Pearson, 2007), in which he argued that while respecting and preserving indigenous languages is crucial, it should not be the remit of schools to teach them. Instead, indigenous children should be taught their languages in the home. Both Hughes' and Pearson's writings received a considerable amount of public attention and discussion. The literature on the power of think tanks, which is discussed later, has found tracing or measuring the impact of think tanks on government policy or news media outputs is difficult but 'traces' of their ideas can often be discerned. Bacchi's (2009) concepts for

understanding policymaking can assist in explaining how these ideas became part of the policy conversation. She challenged the idea that governments react to pre-existing problems and instead argued that they are reactive in creating or producing those 'problems'. In making this claim, Bacchi was not arguing that the issues or experiences to which a policy refers are not real, but rather that calling those conditions 'problems' or 'social problems' fixes them in ways that need to be investigated. Arguably, the views espoused by Hughes and Pearson represented bilingual education as a 'problem' that needed to be fixed and their proposed policy 'solution' was politically appetising at the height of the Intervention discourse.

Competing views of the 'problems' of remote Indigenous education

Participants commented that these think-tank experts, who opposed bilingual learning with a simple message that indigenous children must learn in English, were preferred by the news media to other credible sources on indigenous education in the Northern Territory, including a detailed report by the Australian Education Union (Kronemann, 2007). This review followed up on concerns documented in *Ampe akelyernemane meke mekarle (Little children are sacred): Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse* (Wild & Anderson, 2007) about the importance of bilingual education and the need for improved English teaching in remote indigenous schools. It estimated that \$1.7 billion would be needed over five years to put the teaching and infrastructure resources in place to provide a proper education for all the indigenous children in the Northern Territory (Kronemann, 2007, p. 36).

Despite its significant findings and recommendations, the Australian Education Union report attracted little media attention. Far more influential was the monograph written by Hughes for the Centre for Independent Studies (Hughes, 2008). She highlighted the poor results of indigenous students, and underlined some real problems with education delivery in remote Northern Territory communities. She also claimed teaching in indigenous languages is a major cause of educational disadvantage, but did not produce empirical evidence to support her statements (Simpson et al., 2009). Ignoring the fact that only nine out of 119 schools had

bilingual education programs, and that those programs start teaching English early, she wrote that, 'In the Northern Territory, children are still initially taught in a vernacular language, despite the research that shows that the ability to learn languages recedes with age' (Hughes, 2008, p. 8). Simpson et al. (2009) point out this was also misleading, because the homeland school which prompted her complaint, Yilpara, like other homeland schools, does not have a bilingual education program.

Hughes also claimed, again without providing empirical evidence, that:

parents ... are clamouring for their children to be taught the mainstream curriculum in English from kindergarten onward. They are confident that they can teach their children their language and culture at home and in the community. (2007, p. 9)

Even though Hughes is not a specialist in education or languages, her position attracted media attention and support (Barker, 2008), especially in *The Australian*, which is the flagship of Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd operations in Australia. (See section 1 of chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of *The Australian* and its 'campaigning journalism on indigenous affairs policy' (McCallum & Reid, 2012).)

ANU Professor of Linguistics, Jane Simpson, said the news media preferred to 'recycle as news' the opinions of Hughes and Pearson, rather than those of academics who *could* provide empirical evidence to support their claims:

... they were certainly not coming looking for us, and it was quite understandable that they didn't come looking for someone like me because I didn't have a profile, but they didn't go looking for people like Christine Nicholls, who did have a profile, or Brian Devlin who has been a major bilingual education figure in the Northern Territory.

In declining an invitation to participate in this study, Hughes said 'I regret that the subject you propose is not an area of my expertise'²². This is despite having written two extensive reports on the subject (Hughes, 2008; Hughes & Hughes, 2009) and participated in news media interviews in which she was highly critical of bilingual education, accusing the programs of producing students who were 'non-lingual' and advocating strongly for English as the language of instruction in all remote indigenous schools (see, for example, Barker, 2008; Ferrari, 2008)

²² Personal communication between the author and Helen Hughes, 4 April 2011.

Several other issues related to the question of expert opinion and empirical evidence emerged from the interviews. Journalists who covered the 2008 decision to dismantle bilingual education programs in the territory revealed the problems they encountered getting access to the relevant government data on school performance. They explained how this tended to skew the coverage (see section 4 of this chapter).

Intellectual voices not heard

Several academic participants, including Dr Frances Morphy of the Australian National University and Dr Christine Nicholls of Flinders University, commented on the lack of media attention for intellectuals in Australia generally, as opposed to northern nations, such as Great Britain and France, where they said some scholars enjoyed a celebrity status. Connell used the notion of 'northern theory' (2007a) to explore the ways in which modern social science celebrates the viewpoints, perspectives and problems of metropolitan thinkers as universal knowledge. She argued this has the effect of marginalising thinking from outside of these centres, including in their own countries and institutions. Australian universities look to their famous northern counterparts in the United States and Britain, their journals and their conferences as the measure of academic excellence and success (Connell, 2007).

In the Northern Territory context, participants observed that in general there was a lack of local intellectuals and who were available for public comment:

Despite having had a university for 20 years there's no local commentators you can go to for stuff on politics or history or whatever. I mean, at the moment there's one former Labor politician who gets asked about things, he's no intellectual giant and is a failed politician. (Chips Macinolty, former journalist)

A senior Northern Territory bureaucrat also commented that local news outlets tended to seek expert opinion from 'outside' institutions from 'down south':

... the other contributing factor for the NT is the difficulties it seems to have in constructing a local point of view or perspective.

Inclusion in the news media as a source of information lends prestige and an air of credibility (Soley, 1992), so who and what the news media present as expert sources and knowledge on remote indigenous education informs public understandings of who are credible education researchers and what is reliable education research

(Haas, 2007). Taken together, the news media influence who the public pay attention to as scientific sources of education research, as well as the problems those sources contend are worthy of attention and the solutions they advocate (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). This often translates into which educational approaches and programs are identified and put forward as deserving of public resources. In this case, the Northern Territory's own Charles Darwin University experts on bilingual education such as Brian Devlin and Michael Christie were not heard, but Sydney-based economist Helen Hughes and North Queensland lawyer Noel Pearson were.

Lack of understanding between fields

Academics who were interviewed were reflexive about the gaps in understanding in their relationship with journalists and the media relations units within universities. For example, one observed the problem of journalists finding the right academic expert to comment on any given topic:

Well, I mean, to be fair, it is hard for them to find — basically they ring up a university, the university says 'Oh, that's the Linguistics Department, they get put through to someone in the Linguistics Department, and that's how it happens.

While the field of academia may be close to the journalistic field in terms of the education and social class of their members, there are distinct differences. This can be understood to relate to differences in habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). For example, both journalists and academics commented on differences in their temporal cycles, with journalists requiring quick information and easy access to academics. A Charles Darwin University academic said while he 'sympathised' with journalists' need for a quick comment due to time pressures 'especially when it's something to be recorded on air, I don't like doing it on the hop because I'm not very good at speaking off the cuff like that'. Academics said they wanted time to consider the questions being asked and to carefully craft their responses, as their expert reputations depended upon providing accurate and up-to-date information that was carefully interpreted. They also said their working day meant they were busy teaching, or they may be engaged in research activities in the field, which meant they were not easily contactable said:

I certainly don't want to be on the public record on something that I'm not an expert on, and even if it is an area that I feel I could say something about, it may be something that I would need an hour or a couple of hours' time to have a look and make sure that what I was saying was right. And if you do that in a midst of a teaching day when you're off to prepare a class, it takes lower priority. (Academic, Australian National University)

The disconnection between journalists and academics was also revealed to manifest in other ways. This included practices such as journalists using 'find an expert' directories on university websites. Linguists who specialise in indigenous languages said they were contacted regularly by journalists looking for a comment on a subject such as the prime minister's accent, which they were not qualified to comment on. They said the journalist had simply sought a linguist, without considering their expertise may not be in the area of linguistics in which they wanted an expert opinion. Negrine (1996) said journalists are not seeking information but sources, and this can lead them to ignore less exciting but sometimes more illuminating government documents or academic research. By routinely avoiding the tedious, the difficult to find and comprehend, news organisations reduce the readily available pool of information, and filter it through their screens for newsworthiness.

A number of academics also said they had never been approached by the university's media relations team to discuss the kinds of expert opinion they could provide. Nor had they been offered any kind of media training. They said this meant universities, governments and the public were not benefiting from their expertise.

Journalists who were interviewed were reflexive in their accounts of how the issue did not fit easily with their news production norms and routines because of its 'dry' academic nature (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). Some said this made it a topic that failed to make the news list as it was difficult to present well as a television news story. Murray McLaughlin of the ABC said he covered the issue in 1999 but in 2008 he found it was 'too abstract and difficult to narrate visually'. Print and radio journalists said space and time limitations made it difficult to explain the context and complexity of the academic arguments about which educational approaches work best (see chapter 5 for further discussion). In other words, in 2008 the production requirements of news affected whose voices would be heard in reports, whether it

was an issue that would be given coverage, and how the issue was represented (Cottle, 2003; Dreher, 2010).

Participant Professor Jane Simpson said in 2008 journalists were not interested in academic perspectives on bilingual education:

They didn't want an academic viewpoint, they wanted a point of view from someone from a community, but that could have been a white teacher or an indigenous person.

Journalists were criticised by some participants as lacking adequate knowledge about education generally, not having the time or skill to comprehend academic research and of poor numeracy skills that are necessary to interpret quantitative data on school performance. Poor numeracy among journalists has been documented as a widespread problem internationally, and a barrier to good reporting (Maier, 2002). This lack of specialist knowledge is discussed in section 1 of chapter 5, which examines the journalistic subfield.

Academics also expressed disappointment that governments, which fund their research, often ignored their expert advice and their study findings. This emergent theme requires further research, which is beyond the scope of this project. It is important because, as participants commented, their research is federally funded and in their opinion the nation should benefit from academic research that informs public policy.

The rise of think tanks

Think tanks are defined generally as organisations that have significant autonomy from governmental interests and that disseminate, synthesise or create information, research, ideas or advice to the public, policymakers, other organisations (both private and governmental) and the news media (Haas, 2007). Openly political conservative think tanks, such as the Centre for Independent Studies, outnumber and outspend both liberal advocacy-focused think tanks and nonpartisan research-focused think tanks (Reese, 2002).

As a group, think tanks are a challenge to long-standing practices of scientific knowledge production. They are not bound by either tradition or professional

affiliation to adhere to university or other guidelines of professional conduct for education research (Weaver & McGann, 2002). The extent to which they conform to these standards and procedures – such as national ethical research standards and blind, peer review – is voluntary. Think tanks can present themselves as researchers and research institutions that produce and disseminate research studies regardless of how they actually conduct their activities (Howe, 2002).

Simpson said think tank experts were popular with policymakers and the news media because:

[t]hey write accessibly, they write to the point, they write in a place [policymakers] can get access to easily. [They] don't have to fish around and they understand confidentiality.

She contrasted this relationship with traditional academics:

It's a feeling that academics are distant, that we have vested interests. We're too theoretical or whatever. It seems to me absurd given the taxpayer is paying us a lot to think about these issues ... and the media and the policymakers aren't actually interested in hearing what they're paying us to do.

The observation that think-tank experts' opinions were of more interest to, and had more influence on, policymakers and the news media in relation to bilingual education accords with international studies that show the growing importance of think tanks in the policy process (Ahmad, 2008; Haas, 2007). In their study of the power of think tanks in British politics, Ball and Exley said:

There is a sense that academics remain unhelpfully out of touch with real and practical policy problems; that they are detached, cynical and more concerned with peer review, the Research Assessment Exercise and spending time *thinking* than with getting on and doing (author's italics). (Ball & Exley, 2010)

They argued that there has been an overall shift in the types of knowledge that are regarded as valuable in relation to policy, away from academic expertise and towards simple messages that can easily be understood by politicians, policymakers and the public via the news media.

Tess Lea of Charles Darwin University spoke of the challenges of making academic research accessible to a lay audience and not offending funding bodies:

If you're going into the public domain you are very conscious of translating the stuff so that it sounds relatively interesting ... but that's just a real side thing. The serious disincentive is how these days all academics have to scrub for money, and if we alienate ... you get in trouble very quickly.

However, with regard to influence on government policy, tracing or measuring the impact of think tanks on government policy or news media outputs is difficult, as others have pointed out (Ahmad, 2008). Stone (2000) has argued that 'the agenda-setting capacity of a think tank (if any) is intangible' and 'think tanks do not have extensive paradigmatic influence over official thinking' (Stone, 2000, p. 219). Ball and Exley (2010) argued that what occurs is perhaps a process of 'attrition and infiltration', with 'versions or traces of think tank ideas being written into state documents' (Ball & Exley, 2010, p. 158).

This offers the best way of interpreting the influence of think-tank experts Hughes and Pearson on the policy solution put forward by the territory government in 2008, which echoed their position that all teaching must be in English.

The proximity between think-tank experts and the news media can be traced, with the news media giving their position credibility through its coverage of Hughes's and Pearson's reports and essays, and the think-tank experts referencing sympathetic news media, as Hughes and Hughes did in their 2009 report:

Nobody disputes the right of indigenous children to speak their own languages at home. But as *The Australian* editorialised, 'Mr Calma and others need to recognise that lack of basic skills, including English language proficiency, is holding his people back from better lives and job opportunities.' (Hughes & Hughes, 2009, p.10)

Future directions

As the digital age evolves new technologies will perhaps transform relationships between public servants, experts and journalists. There are also recent challenges to the study of policy that have the potential to reshape our understanding of policy processes. For example, Bacchi (2009) is critical of the current orthodoxies of evidence-based policy. She sees this paradigm as reliant on positivist, rationalist assumptions, and argues that because it purports to treat policy as a neutral, technical process it is depoliticising and potentially regressive. She seeks to shift the focus from problem-solving to problem questioning – to ask, 'what is the problem

represented to be?', which has the potential to transform the role of academics and journalists in the process.

Some research participants raised questions about future academic engagement in the online policy environment. For example, some policymakers commented that they go directly to academic sources for discussion of policy problems and potential solutions now that they are online, rather than relying on mediated policy information. This could give academics more of a policy agenda-setting role, rather than being consulted once the problem has been defined in other forums. For example, one senior public servant said:

The availability of information over the Internet has been the big change. Now we can get a more diverse range of information, rather than just relying on the mainstream newspapers to learn about public discussion of indigenous issues. For example, I read the publications put out by CAEPR [Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research] that are available online.

However, the general public is less likely to seek out these sources and will therefore continue to rely on mainstream media to provide the perspective. Many participants said the issues are complex and emphasised the need for them to be presented in ways that will raise public awareness, or bring people to an understanding to share the solutions. One senior Northern Territory policymaker said discussion of indigenous issues was polarised between relatively inaccessible academic channels and sensationalist media coverage. She identified the importance of academic contributions to well-moderated public discussion that contributes to policies that improve the lived experience of indigenous Australians, thereby enriching the entire nation. However, she was cynical that such an outcome was achievable:

We need to get everybody on board to participate in the debates, and not just have it thrashed out in university institutes, or ... in an international journal. And then, on the other hand, some trite front page or page 5 story in the *NT News* ... We've been laughing about it for some years, but it will be hard for an alternative to emerge.

Don't cut off our tongues

Circles imply reciprocity, they do not just flow one way, but around and are open for negotiation around the group. When our ancestors the *Djan'kawu* travelled through the land they made waterholes. These waterholes were perfect circles. Our *gurrutu*, kinship, structures are also circular ... traditional owner clan groups gather around the fire in a circle and have equal decision making power to each other. The fire in the middle is the

hearth, it represents a place where people talk, where the fire burns. This is the home, where you feel most comfortable. The coals, *lirrwi*, date you back to the land, this is the connection. The mind is on the land, not in the clouds. This is a system connected to the ground and curved around signifying level headedness. It represents collective, consensus thinking. (Marika et al., 2009, p. 404)

Yolngu use the metaphor above to describe and explain the operation of their governance processes, or what can be understood as the traditional Yolngu public sphere (Hartley & McKee, 2000). These circular processes are intimately connected to their land and their practices of caring for country (Marika, 1999). Research participants emphasised the importance of their land and their traditional practices for discussion, debate, decision-making and action in their campaigns to retain their bilingual curriculum. Through their accounts of their media-related practices, a picture emerges of how the contemporary Yolngu public sphere is constituted. It is important to note that indigenous cultures, like all cultures, are emergent, not static. They are the products of contestations, divisions and the mobilisation of resources by particular agents within the terms provided by cultural and social systems. To fail to accord them that much is to fail to recognise their transformative capacity and therefore to regard any indication of cultural transformation on the part of indigenous communities as becoming less indigenous, more modernised, westernised. Writing on indigenous television culture, O'Regan observed that the contours of contemporary indigenous cultures are also necessarily defined by what indigenous traditions and the sets of practices associated with them allow to be transformed, what the settler culture permits indigenous people to do within the wider culture and to appropriate as their own of the settler culture (O'Regan, 1993, pp. 180–181). This needs to be acknowledged so as to recognise their transformative capacity and leave behind any idea that cultural transformation means they are in any way less indigenous or more westernised (Alia, 2010, p. 8).

I will argue in this essay that the Yolngu public sphere incorporates traditional governance practices, indigenous-owned and controlled media outlets and their active audiences, and is based in their land (Connell, 2007). Following O'Regan (1993), I emphasise that Yolngu governance processes need to be considered as central to the operation of their contemporary public sphere. Participants also

revealed how activities in the indigenous public sphere influenced media and policy discussion of bilingual education in the wake of the 1998 decision to axe the policy, which was overturned subsequently. In 1998–99 Yolngu orchestrated the ‘Don’t cut off our tongues’ campaign to save bilingual education, which is discussed in chapter 2. One participant recalled how the campaign got its name:

They developed a post card type thing, yeah, a post card and it was called — it was about cutting off their tongues basically. And that was the slogan, if you’re going to do this, you’re going to cut off our tongues and they used that very effectively.

The postcard campaign and the petition with 3000 signatories (the biggest petition ever tabled in the Northern Territory parliament at the time) are evidence of the continuing importance and effectiveness of traditional circles within the contemporary indigenous public sphere. These were grassroots strategies that began within Yolngu councils and worked outwards through a system of circles into the wider indigenous public sphere and into the mainstream. They flowed through communities within North-east Arnhem Land, across the territory and the nation by hand and via ‘snail mail’, as well as a website. These strategies relied on personal connections, community and organisational networks, and links with ‘outside’ organisations such as reconciliation groups and unions.

The ‘Don’t cut off our tongues’ campaign provides evidence to support Meadows’ theory about the importance of indigenous spheres, both within indigenous Australia and for interacting with the wider public sphere:

Indigenous public spheres can be seen as providing opportunities for people who are regularly subordinated and ignored by mainstream public sphere processes. They enable indigenous people to deliberate together, to develop their own counter-discourses, and to interpret their own identities and experiences. The deliberations are then able to interact with the wider public sphere — in theory. (Meadows 2005, p.38)

It also offers insights into the constitution and operation of a specific indigenous public sphere, building on the work of Tafler (2005) who has documented the formation of an indigenous public sphere on the Anangu lands in Central Australia. Participants provided precise local understandings of the functioning of the Yolngu public sphere, including the central role of indigenous media experts and media outlets in building grassroots support for the campaign, influencing mainstream

media coverage and ultimately the policy. They detailed their media-related practices within indigenous public spheres and the ways in which these articulated with the mainstream public sphere. These media-related practices were closely tied to local forums where people meet to deliberate together, including the school council and the community council. Participants said slogans were devised, media strategies were planned, media professionals were recruited and indigenous people across the territory discussed the issue through indigenous media outlets. These mediatized political practices provide evidence that Yolngu use news media to participate in the democratic processes of politics when they are denied other forms of access, such as formal policy consultation with government. Under such circumstances Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer said: 'they depend on mass media to relay their demands; public pressure is their only source of power' (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010, p. 244).

Mainstream journalists who have the cultural competence to negotiate indigenous public spheres have been identified as playing a crucial role as fulcrums in the articulation from indigenous public spheres to the wider public sphere (McCallum, Waller & Meadows, 2012). This is discussed in chapter 5, which argues that indigenous reporting in Northern Australia is a weak but distinct subfield of Australian journalism. Cultural competence for negotiating indigenous public spheres is the hallmark of this specialised field of reporting.

Indigenous public spheres

A number of studies have examined the way indigenous peoples develop their own public spheres, and have actively promoted and responded to issue frames (Avison & Meadows, 2000; Hartley, 2003; Hartley & McKee, 2000; Meadows, 2005; Tafler, 2005). Working in Habermas's (1986) public sphere tradition, Hartley and McKee (2000) coined the term 'indigenous public sphere'. They argued that indigenous people are not passive recipients of media representation; rather, they produce their own media and actively use it for self-representation and community building. Hartley (2003) argued for a rethinking of the concept of the public sphere to 'one that emphasises the way communities can come together, define identities and

“represent” themselves in a virtual sense, in and through the media’ (2003, p. 46). However, this research is concerned mainly with how indigeneity is constructed within the wider public sphere. Other studies (Avison & Meadows, 2000; Meadows, 2005; Tafler, 2005) offer ways to understand how indigenous people ‘make themselves’ within their own public spheres, and the implications that flow from this – including how these deliberations are then able to interact with the wider public sphere (Meadows, 2005, p. 38). Avison and Meadows drew on Fraser’s (1993) critique of Habermas’s (1986) theory of the public sphere to argue that rather than there being one totalising public sphere there are ‘parallel and overlapping public spheres, where those with similar cultural backgrounds engage in activities that stem from their own issues and interests’ (Avison & Meadows, 2000, p. 347). In this way, they develop distinctive discursive styles and generate their own angles on issues that are then brought to a wider public sphere where they are able to interact ‘across lines of cultural diversity’ (Fraser, 1993, p. 13).

These are all valuable but abstract understandings of indigenous public spheres that are not rooted in specific places and do not take account of First Australians’ relationship to land and the significance of land and kinship to their conceptualisations of their public spheres, or ‘the complex dialectic of place and power’ (Connell, 2007, p. 209). For these reasons the concept of indigenous public spheres requires further refinement. Connell (2007, p. 223) said the ‘rubric’ of southern theory is the ‘view from below’ on a world scale that requires a more engaged relationship between knowledge systems and foreshadows a mutual learning process. She argued that every significant theoretical development in the periphery makes some use of concepts from the metropole. In this case it involves Northern theories of ‘public spheres’ from thinkers working in Habermas’s tradition (Habermas, 1974) and Yolngu social theory:

Social science in the periphery ... injects themes that are relatively uncommon in metropolitan thought. These include the social significance of the land, the experience of dispossession and loss, the discontinuities in colonisation and the metropole-capacity of the global centres. (Connell, 2007b, p. 224)

The centrality of traditional governance structures

Indigenous Australians had their own communication systems for tens of thousands of years before colonisation and continue to use them in a wide range of contemporary ways (Tafler, 2005). One dimension of this is the development of indigenous media — a worldwide phenomenon in which media is used as a tool in the struggle for cultural and political change — allowing the marginalised to ‘speak as well as hear’ (Girard, cited in Avison & Meadows, 2000, p. 348). Indigenous media has a number of aims, including countering negative stereotypes, addressing information gaps in non-indigenous society, and reinforcing community cultures (Meadows, 2005).

In the campaign to retain bilingual education in 1998–99, many circles within the wider Northern Territory indigenous public sphere were active and connected. These circles include local Yolngu bodies, a wide network of indigenous organisations and communities throughout Arnhem Land and the rest of the Northern Territory. These spheres are related through land, kinship systems and personal connections, organisational networks, common interests, and indigenous media outlets.

The importance of collective, consensus thinking is evident in traditional Yolngu forums, where decision-making powers are shared between clans and represented by a circle:

In our community, solutions come from the ground up — from the relationships, practices and shared or negotiated understandings that arise from working together. The real decision-making is done outside of formal *Ngapaki* structures, through Yolngu relationships and processes making sure that the right people make the decisions for the right country. (Marika et al 2009, p. 406)

This Yolngu perspective echoes Tafler’s (2005) observations on the constitution of the Anangu public sphere in Central Australia:

The real negotiation transpired not in the foreground of the community meeting, where the speakers gathered at the microphone, but in the background among the small clusters of individuals seated around the community. In those smaller groups, people listened to the speakers, conversed, and either reached consensus or, at the very least, defined the issues. All of the myriad components of the environment — the freely roaming children, the freely roaming dogs, the passing vehicles, the drinks and cigarettes, helped mediate the conversation. (Tafler, 2005, p. 168)

Tafler did not make reference to indigenous research methodologies *per se* but he drew on Anangu social theory and approaches the 'specific setting' on their lands in a respectful and ethical way as an integral part of the methodology of the 'Rolling Thunder' study (Tafler, 2005). They are factors he has taken into account, built into his research explicitly, thought about reflexively and declared openly as part of the research design and discussed as part of the results (Smith, 2004, p. 14). This study aims to do the same.

Strategies in indigenous and mainstream media

Participants said the 'Don't cut off our tongues' campaign involved a number of media and political strategies. There was direct lobbying of politicians and the Collins review of indigenous education that was being undertaken. Yolngu also utilised a range of media strategies and initiated other public campaigns. This included the school council employing an experienced media consultant to run a mainstream media campaign:

The school employed Ursula Raymond who now works for NITV, and she did work for the ABC at one stage. She's in Darwin ... we employed her as a media consultant. (Leon White, former principal, Yirrkala school)

Leon White, former Yirrkala school principal, explained that the school council initiated, organised and led the local campaign to retain bilingual programs. This included lobbying government, organising the postcard campaign, the petition, and several large demonstrations in centres, including Nhulumbuy and Darwin. He said the community's media strategy was a key feature of the campaign. While Raymond handled the mainstream media, Yolngu dealt with local, territory and national indigenous media outlets directly.

Raymond can be understood to have 'two-way capital' in the bilingual education policy field (see section 2 of chapter 5 for discussion of 'two-way capital'). 'Two-way capital' is a concept that extends Bourdieu's concept of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). It has developed through this study as a way of understanding a distinct ecology of knowledge comprised from *balanda* and indigenous traditions. Raymond is well known, well regarded, experienced and skilled in both local indigenous circles and

the territory's *balanda* media and political fields. She has worked as a reporter and a media consultant for a number of mainstream and indigenous media outlets, indigenous organisations and territory politicians. She can be understood to have significant 'two-way capital' because of her standing in both indigenous and mainstream media, public relations and politics, and her power to straddle these fields. Her education and training in journalism and significant experience in the field has given her the habitus of a mainstream journalist with the knowledge and understanding of an indigenous woman. She said she was trained by the ABC and worked there 'for probably 15 or 16 years after I left uni'. At the height of her career in mainstream journalism she worked for Radio National as a producer on the national broadcaster's long-running indigenous program *Awaye*. She described how she became involved in the bilingual campaign:

I was asked. I got rung up by the — because I know a lot of people out at Yirrkala and I was rung up by the school and asked if I'd be interested in working the campaign with them and so I said yes.

Raymond said her job was made easy because, through their traditional public sphere activities in the school council and community council, Yolngu had discussed the issue at length, developed the positions they wanted to take in the debate and devised detailed strategies for challenging the government's decision to axe their bilingual programs. This included employing Raymond to liaise with the mainstream media. She said that through their governance processes 'they were unified on the issue and very clear', so their position could be presented clearly and successfully in media releases and in interviews with mainstream journalists.

Marika, Yunupingu, Marika-Mununggiritj and Muller (2009) shared two Yolngu metaphors — *Ngathu* the cycad nut and *Yambirrp* the fish trap — to explain the decision-making practices that ensure unity and clarity. These can be understood to underpin their public sphere activities:

Ngathu identifies the need for right process, to make sure that the cyanide is leached from the cycad nut so it can be prepared into sacred bread. If decision making, like the *ngathu*, has not gone through the right processes, the poison will remain. *Yambirrp* is about working together in partnership because if one of the rocks in the fish trap is removed, the fish will escape. (Marika et al., 2009)

Indigenous media and indigenous leaders

Participants emphasised the central role of indigenous media outlets as extensions of their traditional forums for people to deliberate together and advance their own policy discourses. Tafler (2005) argues that this represents a broadening and deepening of democratic practice. The indigenous media system moves information horizontally, rather than it having to follow the traditional vertical flow down from the elders. Participants said that indigenous community radio in particular allowed people across Arnhem Land and throughout the Northern Territory to follow the issue as it unfolded and provided everyone with an opportunity to speak. Tafler observed that media technologies accelerate the speed of discussion, which helps to crystallise the issue:

It permits all individuals to participate at all times from their respective location across the lands. Space (location) becomes immaterial. Nobody has to organise the forum and everybody can have the capacity to stay informed. Information passes across the lands in horizontal waves in defiance of the traditional vertical order. In a community-based system where nearly everybody knows everybody else, every voice has an audience. (Tafler, 2005, p. 164)

Raymond said Yolngu were confident in their ability to work with indigenous media on the 'Don't cut off our tongues' campaign because they interacted with them all the time:

They're doing that stuff through their own local media networks, indigenous radio, the national indigenous radio service and their own Koori radio, radio Larrakia, CAAMA, those sorts of places.

She said her role in the campaign did not involve dealing with indigenous media outlets as Yolngu activists were capable and enthusiastic about liaising directly with people they knew within indigenous media organisations. They were confident about speaking to these journalists and discussing the issue with indigenous audiences:

The people out there, they utilise indigenous media a lot of the time off their own bat anyway. They knew them and they just worked them.

News is constructed through cooperation between journalists and their sources who maintain close contact and shared values (Soley, 1992). Participants described the

relationship between indigenous media organisations and their sources from the Yolngu community in terms of the same confidence and familiarity.

Indigenous leaders

Established indigenous leaders can exert considerable influence in public and policy discussion through their use of both indigenous media and the mainstream news media. Both provide platforms for advancing their agendas and taking on their opponents (McCallum et al., 2012). Participants identified effective leaders as those with well-developed media skills:

There are some like [Yolngu leader] Gullaruy Yunupingu who's incredibly sharp and knows how to work the media. (Ursula Raymond)

The indigenous public sphere plays an important role in the development and continuing authority of indigenous leaders. On a practical level, it provides emerging leaders with the opportunity to become more widely known for their ideas and actions within their own communities, to develop their political skills as well as media skills. Perhaps more importantly, continuing engagement with indigenous media is necessary for tuning in to public opinion (Habermas, 1986) and having dialogue with the community as a way of legitimating leaders' authority to speak. In developing a southern theory of a specific indigenous public sphere, it is crucial to acknowledge that Yolngu leaders' legitimacy to speak is directly related to their relationship to land and kinship structures:

On Yolngu land, people have their own leaders, people look after those places. We have to talk to the right people for the right place. We talk about communal decision making through the metaphor of berley, the berley you use when catching fish. The right people hear of that berley and come in their own time to talk. Time is flexible. Disagreements are discussed, often in family groups, there is not one person making the decisions. (Marika et al., 2009, p. 409)

This kind of 'traditional' process of deciding who can speak may not apply to all indigenous leaders in Australia, underlining the importance of place and the history of dispossession (Connell, 2007, p. 224) and how these factors play out unevenly in the lives of individuals and specific communities across the country.

Prominent leaders sometimes have two roles in the mainstream media. They are busy actors on the political stage and therefore often-quoted news sources. Some have also developed strong profiles and influential voices through the opinion pages of the national press. Some are regular contributors, such as Noel Pearson, who writes for *The Australian*, while others, such as Marcia Langton, Warren Mundine and Gullaruy Yunupingu, appear as guest columnists and opinion writers. One participant observed that:

Noel [Pearson] used media with a stunning success and really did engage the eye of mainstream Australia, really.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Pearson wrote extensively on indigenous education and advocated against the use of indigenous languages in the classroom in 2007–08. His commentary in the national media has been identified by many participants as too dominant in both public and policy discussions. Chips Macinolty identified three indigenous voices as louder than all others in national media discussion of indigenous affairs — Marcia Langton, Warren Mundine and Noel Pearson:

One of the problems — this is a national problem is this overwhelming desire for simplicity as such that the only Aboriginal people journalists sort of can talk to are sort of Noel Pearson ...

Journalist Lindsay Murdoch said these commentators were closely aligned with *The Australian* newspaper:

... the Oz is, well you know you battle against it because as soon as you stick your head up they're like attack dogs. Marcia Langton, see there's a whole nexus. Marcia Langton ... Nicholas [Rothwell], Alison [Anderson], Pearson, Gullaruy [Yunupingu], they're all part of a big ... They're all, NT politics, they like to shape it.

Another participant said of *The Australian*:

... they've got a particular ideological bent over Aboriginal affairs, they don't actually allow any other voices to be heard.

In his essay on *The Australian*, Manne observed:

... there has been a near-complete absence of contrasting indigenous voices ... the neglect of such voices itself represents a kind of distortion. (Manne, 2011, p. 12)

The Australian's strong position in the Australian indigenous reporting subfield is analysed in section 1 of chapter 5.

A *lack* of strong indigenous leadership can make it difficult to penetrate the mainstream public sphere. Former Yirrkala principal Leon White said in 1998 Yolngu had leaders with national media profiles, including Yothu Yindi lead singer Mandawuy Yunupingu. In 2008, when Yolngu experienced difficulty attracting media attention for their campaign to save bilingual education, these leaders were no longer in the community due to death or ill-health. Reflecting on the success of the 1998 campaign, White lamented:

We also had people like [internationally renowned Yolngu educator] Dr Marika who's now passed away and Mandawuy's wife and others who took leadership of this. They're no longer with us.

Media logic

Altheide and Snow (1979) were the first to use the term 'media logic' to identify the specific frame of reference of the production of media culture in general and of the news in particular. They define media logic as a way of seeing and interpreting social affairs. In the political communication field, media logic is seen by some as the engine behind the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). For example, Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer (2010) discuss how politics has increasingly adapted to media production routines and values. Successful politicians have to be media-genic and media savvy; personalised leadership has become more important than parties (and ideologies); election campaigns tend to be media-driven and voters get their image of politics and politicians from the media's representation, which responds primarily to media logic. These trends are indicators of the power of the media to shape political reality that both indigenous and non-indigenous politics and politicians can hardly resist. For people such as Yolngu, who have no other means of access to the centre of political decision-making:

They have little choice but to use the media to communicate their concerns to policymakers. They depend on the mass media ... to establish themselves in the political field and put their concerns on the political agenda (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010, p. 224).

Yolngu people's media-related practices during the 'Don't cut off our tongues' campaign provide evidence of their understanding that media logic can work to amplify certain issues, topics, and events through the news by framing them to fit the

production routines and news values of news organisations (Strömbäck, 2008). For example, participants said they staged events to attract media attention, including a march and several colourful demonstrations.

Yolngu draw on a range of media expertise from within their own spheres to represent their interests in the mainstream. They have developed their own communication channels, have access to expert media advice and provide media training. This includes teaching people to use digital technologies to create and operate their own 'media hubs', to providing spokespeople with formal media training. Several participants gave examples of Yolngu organisations investing in the services of indigenous media consultants such as Raymond, with skills and experience in mainstream media to co-ordinate specific campaigns and strategies. Others pointed to large indigenous organisations Yolngu are closely associated with, including the Northern Land Council, which has in-house media services that perform a range of functions. These include producing *Land Rights News*, and closely managing relationships between indigenous leaders and journalists, just as mainstream politicians' minders do. An indigenous media advisor who worked for the Northern Land Council described a media briefing as:

A media love-in where we introduce journos to the chairman and staff and stuff. Just trying to create some kind of relationship.

The same media advisor explained how she and the Northern Land Council chairman had managed a journalist who was interviewing the council chairman for what they regarded as a controversial and negative story:

At first she tried to get me to leave and I said well, no, it's my job to stay here, you're the journalist. I'll stay here and then she proceeded to try and interview him about this thing. And you know, he's not a stupid man. He just went 'I'm not going to say what you want me to say, and I don't want to talk to you. This is not what we've agreed to talk about.' So she left in the end.

This account demonstrates how a media-savvy leader and an experienced political minder took control of a potentially damaging interview, just as their counterparts in the political mainstream could be expected to try to do in order to manage the media and minimise negative coverage (Vultmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010). The participant said the journalist had not been able to write the story she wanted.

Engaging mainstream media

Participants identified engaging with the mainstream media as a key strategy for influencing the bilingual policy debate and amplifying the Yolngu position. They pointed to two mechanisms for engagement: the first was employing a media professional with 'two-way capital' to generate mainstream media interest and manage interactions; the second was people on the ground using media logic to promote their message. Participants made direct links between having an excellent media strategy and success in influencing the policy process.

Raymond attributed the effectiveness of the bilingual education campaign to her Yolngu clients being 'media savvy':

They understood the media, they understood the messages that they wanted to get out so they knew how to work that ... They were very open to talking to the media. They had their key spokespeople identified and prepped and ready to go.

Trying to ensure their perspectives are heard loud and clear in the mainstream media is crucial for marginalised groups such as indigenous people who want to counter their political opponents (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010). One participant expressed the importance of using the same media tactics as other policy actors to advance indigenous policy positions:

... in the same kinds of formats and in the same kind of arenas where they chose to take us on ... I think what they expected was that we wouldn't have a voice to give back, but in fact a lot of us were influential in *The Age*, in *The Weekend Australian* and in our own media, and I think, we were very successful.

Journalists with the cultural competence to negotiate indigenous public spheres understand the continuing importance of more traditional forums for taking the political temperature and gathering news. These journalists maintain contacts within local decision-making bodies and attend key meetings and functions held by indigenous organisations:

Every community's run by a council and so ... you keep in contact that way ... you attend conferences and they come to Brisbane or to Townsville or Cairns regularly and so you meet up. (Tony Koch, journalist, *The Australian*)

There is also recognition that indigenous media are able to break stories into the mainstream media. Former editor of the *National Indigenous Times* Chris Graham

reflected on the role that indigenous media outlets often played in the relationship between news media and indigenous policy issues:

One of the things we did well and the reason we survived and thrived is, we would use the media to break a story, knowing full well if we broke a great story it would make a heap of difference. Because if the mainstream media didn't pick it up, the government wouldn't — it wouldn't influence anything government did and we knew that from day one, that to get change it had to go nationally, if you like, or it had to get a big run in the media because politicians are so easily influenced by what the media say.

This examination of how Yolngu engaged both indigenous and mainstream media during their Don't cut off our tongues' campaign offers some precise insights into the constitution of their contemporary public sphere and the mechanisms through which it interacted with mainstream public spheres. These include media logic, leaders' abilities to penetrate mainstream discussion and the role of indigenous media in facilitating community engagement and shaping the wider news agenda.

Relationship to land, kinship and traditional governance structures are central to Yolngu contemporary public sphere activities and, as Marika et al. (2009) suggested, the circles within it do not just flow one way, but around. This echoes Tafler's (2005) findings on indigenous media's democratising role as it enables horizontal rather than vertical transmission of news and debate.

The capacity to construct close relationships in the community through their own governance processes and media, as well as certain mainstream journalists, bureaucrats and politicians brought the Yolngu public sphere into mainstream news and policy processes in 1998–99. However, Yolngu who participated in the study expressed deep concern about the difficulties of feeding into mainstream public spheres in the wake of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Lack of consultation in policy processes, including the 2008 bilingual education decision, and being *talked about* rather than having *opportunities to talk* in the eastern seaboard media were recurring themes in interviews for this research. Yolngu scholars argued 'remoteness' can prevent people from acknowledging their public sphere activities or seeing outside their own cultural frameworks:

The application of 'white' bureaucratic procedures and impositions in so-called 'remote' areas is of significant concern to us. The structures and processes framed by governments operating at a distance position 'others' as ... in the case of indigenous

people in the Northern Territory, as 'remote'. Indigenous specific cultural and decision-making structures are then also imagined as being 'remote' from the 'mainstream'. For indigenous Australians, however, it is connection to country, to our physical and spiritual homelands, that makes one feel 'in place'. We are not remote, but at home on our country despite its distance (geographically and ontologically) from 'mainstream' administrative centres ... we argue that bureaucrats, policymakers, researchers and others wishing to work with indigenous people need to learn to see outside their own cultural frameworks (Marika et al., 2009).

An intimate dialogue

So you become part of this environment, and it is so passionate, it's easy to be swept up in it. You can be there to 2am pumping out responses and making sure things, this kind of potential crisis, which has always got media attached to it. You're always trying to manage what the media will pick up or won't pick up, is being tended to and you'll be there 'til the early hours ... doing that. But you just need to distance yourself from it and be out in the field for a little while and realise that that is some other world. It's another planet in terms of how [indigenous] people are living their lives, so there's this amazing disconnect. (Tess Lea, former ministerial advisor, discussing the mediatization of indigenous policy)

Tess Lea was one of a number of participants who described policymaking and the news media as 'feeding off each other'. This suggests mutual influence (Champagne & Marchetti, 2005; Darras, 2005; Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). In other words, that the ways in which news media report an issue provides a backdrop for development of policy, and that policy actors play a crucial role in the way media reports on those issues. The insight from participants that news media is part of the dynamics of the policy process resonates with the major finding from Walgrave & van Aelst's study:

... media are part of politics, and they are the marketplace/arena in which political ideas and proposals are launched, tested, scrutinised, and contested. All political players communicate internally as well as with each other via the media and consequently they react on media's issue coverage and seem to adopt media issues. (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006, p. 100)

Some participants identified the news media as a direct influence on the Northern Territory Government's 2008 move to dismantle bilingual education. To understand how this influence operated, participants' media-related practices will be interpreted in concert with the literature on the relationship between the policy process and news media to offer insights into its general and policy-specific workings.

Recognition of the importance of news media to the policy process

As Neveu observed, politics has been enriched by a relatively new form of specialty 'constituted by the mastery of media, the ability to anticipate reception and media imperatives' (Neveu cited in Darras, 2005, p. 169). Bourdieu described it as an era in which struggles for control of scientific and intellectual fields are enacted through action in the media:

No one today can launch any action without the support of the media. It is as simple as that. Journalism ends up dominating the whole of political life, as well as scientific and intellectual life. (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 327)

Senior public servants with many years' experience working in government said they had witnessed growth in the awareness of, and investment in media management over several decades:

Operating ... with the media, being able to tell good news about education ... being able to sort of implement government policy all requires good media links and good media management ... Media management and media interaction just became a necessary part of the functions, and particularly in terms of dealing with the indigenous remote context. (Ken Davies, Northern Territory bureaucrat)

According to Strömbäck (2011), mediatization refers to a process whereby the media has increasing influence within political institutions and the ways in which the behaviours of political actors are shaped by the media's increasing influence (Strömbäck, 2011, p. 424). Participants described the growth of the communication unit within the Northern Territory Education Department and its increasing centrality in the policy process over the study period. Participants also described media logic at work in their everyday policymaking practices. This involves sophisticated strategies to pre-empt, manage and respond to mediated discussion of indigenous education. Expansion of the communication section within the department suggests media logic had become increasingly important in the policy process:

I think in the education realm there has been necessarily quite a growth in the whole communication areas of particularly my agency certainly, and so that was based around the need to communicate, to get messages out. (Ken Davies, Northern Territory bureaucrat)

Former chief executive officer of the Northern Territory Education Department Margaret Banks described the department's media operation as playing a 'fundamental' role in implementing policy:

... from an internal bureaucratic perspective, we recognise the importance of the media for positive communication ... of course in the Northern Territory, we had in the department a really well developed media team and ... the role of the media was seen as fundamental.

Meyer (2002) said the media has 'colonised' politics by imposing their operational logic on the institutional processes of public policy. He described this phenomenon as 'media democracy', which allows politicians to withdraw proposals, reformulate them and then re-introduce them into the public arena. Using the media for strategic purposes gives policymakers some control over the way policies are represented, but doing so requires them to accept the media's rules of the game (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). For example, they devise media campaigns and events and package carefully timed announcements in formats and language designed to fit media production needs and values (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004). They also use the media to monitor their opponents and to measure their own performance. This knowledge is used to make adjustments to their strategies, including finding ways to distract attention from unpopular moves, reframing proposals or issues and using the media as a vehicle for attacking their opponents (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010).

Adversarial reporting and tight drip feeds from government

The participants quoted above emphasised the news media's importance for communicating *positive* messages about the activities of government departments and ministers. A different picture emerges from participants' comments about negative coverage and fear of negative media reaction, with descriptions of the relationship as 'hostile' and 'defensive':

They flood you with press releases but real stories you've got to go and flush them out yourself and they'll usually try and block them. The whole area's difficult. (Lindsay Murdoch, journalist, Fairfax)

Former public servant Peter Jones said the education department 'shied away from the media to avoid 'negative spin':

... that was my experience and that was certainly the view of the department in general ... The very strong view was, let's keep it out ... of the media in general as much [as] possible, because even if we start in with a positive story, there was that great concern that whatever we do the media will put a negative spin on this.

He described the department's narrow, low-risk-set of activities that it was prepared to advance to journalists:

So the department would say no, unless there's something that the minister wants his face on, or the local member — whatever, because [unless] it's something like a school building opening or giving out awards at a speech night or something like that, steer clear.

Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten attributed this tendency to 'steer clear' of the media to the perception that journalists have given up their 'sacredotal' orientation towards politicians and political institutions (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010, p. 3).

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) argued that journalists have adopted a more aggressive, adversarial style of reporting that has increased the pressure on policymakers to engage in active news management (see also Ward, 2007).

'Anticipatory news media effects' have also been identified by Davis (2007) in his study of British parliamentarians. Bolton said, in the political arena, media advisors and other ministerial staff controlled journalists' access to politicians:

The minders work very hard to sort of keep us away from any unsupervised contact with any government minister. There seems to be a mindset that you're the enemy.

Media logic can be seen at work in the strategies these 'minders' use to also control journalists' ability to report on political events and activities. They time announcements so deadline pressures make it difficult for journalists to conduct thorough inquiries or research. Bolton described this practice as a 'tight drip feed':

If stuff has really been planned for some time, they won't tell us about it, so they keep us very much ill-informed. They'll often send out a media alert which is just a two-liner saying Paul Henderson will be attending such, he's making an announcement at this location at this time. They often won't tell us what the announcement is about, or will give us an education announcement or ... an environment announcement. But they attempt to keep us on a very tight drip feed so we couldn't possibly do things like research questions prior to an interview.

Organisational constraints and geographical biases can be observed at work as well (Dominick, 1977; Epstein, 1973). In order to minimise the cost of news, journalists privilege themes and political elites in the seats of federal power, who are near at

hand and always available (Darras, 2005, p. 162). In *Journalism Studies*, ‘proximity’ is understood as an important news value (Galtung & Ruge, 1981). It reflects newsrooms’ concerns with what is important to audiences. In scholarship about journalist–source relationships, proximity between elite sources and journalists is understood to influence the way news is constructed (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Gans, 1979). Research has shown that, while journalists like to see themselves as watchdogs on political powerbrokers, much of the time the relationship is more collaborative than adversarial (Franklin, 1999). This has been attributed to the fact that agenda-setting political journalists and elite policymakers interact closely as part of the day-to-day routine of politics (Davis & Seymour, 2010). Participants were reflexive about the way both dimensions of this concept of proximity had had a significant impact on public and policy discussion of bilingual education.

Geographical bias is explained in particular by the fact that, in countries such as the United States, France and Australia, national news is mostly political news, and comes from the political centres of Washington, Paris or Canberra. News is created where its (co)creators are, and this means the correspondents of the national press (Neveu, 2005). Territory-based journalists who cover federal politics and national affairs were reflexive about the difficulties they encountered in covering national affairs from their ‘remote’ base. For example, Murdoch described the difficulties of getting comment from the former head of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, former Major-General Dave Chalmers:

So he’s come up here to be head of FaHcsia²³ Darwin, and so he’s the big honcho on all the communities, but we’re not allowed to talk to him. Forbidden to give any news to the media. Every press for official information has got to go via [Indigenous Affairs Minister] Macklin’s office and then of course there you only get stonewalled.

Under the spotlight

The news media’s interest in policymaking is highly uneven due to a number of factors. It is often limited to specific political actions and reactions, while the policy process is so complex and slow that it commands little attention generally (Koch-

²³ Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). Chips Macinolty was reflecting on this phenomenon when he said:

... there is, generally speaking, some pretty wild spikes — sympathy and support for Aboriginal issues which erupt every now and then. Like in the Apology three years ago, the street march and all that sort of stuff.

The territory's bilingual education policy has only been of real media interest when it has been made a political issue (Waller, 2012b). This has resulted in a lack of public knowledge about the rationale and operation of the programs. It has also meant that when bilingual education became a political issue there was little community knowledge or interest to influence debate and political decision-making. It was a national news story in 1972, when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam announced it as Australia's first policy of indigenous self-determination (Whitlam, 1972). It received national media attention again in 1998–99 when the conservative Country Liberal Government attempted to scrap it, and again in 2008 when the Labor Government introduced its first four hours in English policy (see chapter 1). These kinds of media spotlights are short-lived and may therefore not have much impact on public perception of an issue (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010, p. 2). Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten said that, in policy areas that are more the province of public servants than politicians, and the territory's bilingual education policy is arguably one of these:

It is unlikely that the media will take notice of the highly specialised, often esoteric debates going on ... unless a gross policy failure occurs that has the potential for a full-blown media scandal. (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010, p. 2)

In 2007–08 the media represented it as an educational crisis and at the same time asserted the 'common sense' solution of neo-liberal politicians and commentators who want all indigenous children to learn in English. This has resulted in public awareness and understanding of the educational issue and the policy being weak on one hand and, on the other, motivated politicians to be seen to act swiftly to address the 'crisis'. This appears to have contributed little to further public discussion and thereby hold politicians accountable to consult widely or develop well-formulated policies.

The news media's rules of the game

Politicians, government departments and their media sections can be understood to be at the top of the media chain for the most part (Altheide & Johnson, 1980), while those most affected by the policy often struggle to be heard (Terkildsen, Schnell & Ling, 1998; Marsh, 2003). This is an advantage policymakers use to shape issues and present them to journalists in a particular light they know will appeal. Using the media for strategic, or 'positive', purposes gives policymakers some control over the way policies are represented (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). However, they have to play by the news media's rules of the game, what Bourdieu described as part of the habitus of the field (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002). This can raise the stakes as leaked information or a poorly researched or timed public statement can damage not only a policy proposal but also a political career (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). For example, former education minister Marion Scrymgour spoke out strongly in the media against the Northern Territory Emergency Response (Scrymgour, 2007) and was admonished by fellow Labor politicians at both territory and federal levels. Simpson et al. (2009) suggested the reprimand may have made her more cautious in opposing policies supported by the Labor Party and the news media, and encouraged her to take policy directions that fitted Labor's national policy framework — such as its new national benchmarks for literacy and numeracy.

Policymakers devise media campaigns and events, and package carefully timed announcements in formats and language designed to fit media production needs and values. These practices, through which the media affects public policy, are a form of 'mediatization' (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 247). For Couldry (2008), mediatization theory is less concerned with direct and unidirectional effects of media contents on culture and society, but allows for a complex and critical reflection of the role of contemporary media communication, as well as the history of culture and society. His argument makes contradictory views on 'who leads the dance' (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000) — news media or the political field — less important than understanding the overarching effects of media on all parties. Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) said these effects are intensifying as political institutions are more dependent

on and shaped by mass media. For example, Franklin said governments increasingly use media to inform, shape and manage public discourse about policy (Franklin, 2004, p. 256). The effects of mediatization are understood as mutually influential on all parties:

Mutual dependency has led to each side developing strategies to respond to the attempts of influence of their counterparts — a constant ‘arms race’ to control the public agenda. As a consequence, the dynamics of media coverage of political activities and the response of external actors and public opinion does not follow a linear pattern that can be captured by common stochastic modelling. (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010, p. 6)

Some participants recognised that journalists rely heavily on information subsidies (Gandy, 1982) from government. Davies said reporters were:

... so very reliant on the information the department provides, very reliant on external analysis that comes out of things like the NAPLAN testing and so on.

Journalist Tony Koch said press releases were crucial for journalists as a ‘starting point’, alerting reporters to issues. However, he said they should never be ‘just cut and pasted’ and expressed some cynicism:

You know 90 per cent of press releases, particularly from government in this day and age, are at least partly true. They’re the truth but like in court when you say the truth and nothing but the truth. It’s the whole truth part that’s sometimes a little bit lacking.

In *On television and journalism* (1998), Bourdieu’s main focus was describing the inner workings of this field and what separates it from other fields, but he also examined the effects journalism has on other social spaces, especially politics. Scholars have extended Bourdieu’s ideas on journalism’s effects on other fields to develop theoretical understandings of the mediatization of education policy processes (see chapter 2). Banks acknowledged that media logic could be influential at all levels of the policy process, from development to implementation. She pointed to the Northern Territory’s Education Department’s media strategy on middle years school reform in 2008 as an example:

[it was] really comprehensive ... in every sense of the word from the letter drop to making sure that media events, television events, onsite interviews, the works. A really comprehensive media plan and I ... guess it’s some of the core of your work ... the media was seen as absolutely hand in glove with successful policy implementation. Not necessarily so much policy development, although there had been in the policy

development before it was decided, a fully comprehensive consultation — public consultation, site by site. So that had involved the full-blown media opportunities.

Through the interviews media monitoring emerged as an important practice for policymakers who rely on media logic to control the way policies are represented.

One former ministerial advisor said:

... folk in the ministerial environment in particular, and at senior levels in bureaucracies are scanning media endlessly and responding to it endlessly, and shaping themselves in relationship to what is increasingly intimate dialogue, because journalists' storytelling ... is through this close relationship with the political environment.

Davies said public interest in a policy area can be 'heavily driven' by media attention and policymakers could not afford to ignore that:

... and so it would be — if a high level education administrator wasn't paying attention to what was happening to the media domain about education and about the impacts of education policy or practice, then they'd be a bit foolish, I suspect.

Policymakers use the media to monitor the movements of their opponents and to measure their own performance (Davis, 2007b; Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010).

This knowledge is used to make adjustments to their strategies, including finding ways to distract attention from unpopular moves, reframing proposals or issues and using the media as a vehicle for attacking their opponents. Lea recalled her practice of media monitoring as crucial to her role as an advisor to a federal minister:

... so that level of being totally tuned in to what the media was saying and what might be trouble spots for the minister, that's your job. So, that's why I'd say there's a close — there's a symbiotic relationship between policy and media because there's impression management going on at every level. And it's kind of got its own life force, so that becomes the job.

Former Northern Territory education minister Syd Stirling said he relied heavily on his media adviser to help him out of 'trouble spots':

The inner strength and confidence — and at some stage you knew you were going to be in for a bad day or a rough day — and they were just so supportive ... particularly Mary, my media advisor.

Media crisis and impression management

Banks contrasted the careful and comprehensive media approach of the middle school reform with the handling of the bilingual policy change, which she described

as a 'ministerial decision' rather than a well-considered and developed policy roll-out that included media planning.

Robinson (2001) has identified policy uncertainty as one of the factors that gives the media power to shape policymaking. It can make political actors more sensitive to the pressures of the media spotlight. Once the media takes a strong interest the effect is one of amplification:

Increased media coverage usually intensifies conflict ... Policy alternatives must then be formulated in a manner that suits the media's thirst for sound bites and catchy headlines, and since the conflict is now enacted in front of the public eye, compromises and backstage deals become less likely. (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010, p. 5)

Banks said the national news media's major focus on the territory's poor NAPLAN results in 2008 put political pressure on the education minister and her department in the weeks before the decision to dismantle the bilingual education policy. That pressure was to be seen to be addressing the poor literacy and numeracy results of its indigenous students:

So that was absolutely a critical lever in the series of events that then impacted on the bilingual program ...

She said during those weeks she was aware of the need for community consultation and media management of the issue:

In an area such as the bilingual education policy normally there would have been heavy consultation with the media ... I can recall some discussions with the minister about some things that needed to happen, but also was conscious of the importance, having been through the middle years work, of the importance of planning a similar process.

This process did not occur. Instead, media influence can be seen to have occurred in the mind of education minister Marion Scrymgour. Johnson-Cartee (2005) says politicians who come under media attack can lose their confidence and sacrifice their principles. Scrymgour's commitment to consultation with indigenous people on policy matters affecting them was sacrificed in this instance (Gosford, 2009c).

A number of participants expressed the belief that the minister's media advisors could have used media logic to ensure a more positive policy outcome. It is recognition that a different discursive strategy could have made a difference to the policy process (Bacchi, 2009). Peter Jones said:

How does that story get told in terms of what that situation is, as opposed to being a story of failure, one would think that the spin doctors would be able to tell it as a story of opportunity in terms of yeah, these are the results and this is what we're doing in terms of working with community.

Media texts and educational policies can be understood as discourses — that is, as social practices that represent social realities in particular ways, and construct particular social positions (Bacchi, 2000, 2009; Thomas, 2003). Understanding media and policy as discourse draws on the Foucauldian theory of discourse as the conjunction of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1976). Discourses are manifestations of power in that they are sites of struggle over understandings of reality (Fairclough, 1989). Discursive struggles construct a preferred discourse that presents a hegemonic, common sense version of the world (Allan, 1988) — an 'authorial voice' that suppresses differences and masks the socially constructed nature of the discourse (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 192). In this case, the monolingual mindset that was prominent in commentary on indigenous education at the time (see, for example, Ferrari, 2008; Karvelas, 2007; Pearson, 2007), and the media's neo-liberal 'league table' mentality on education (Franklin, 2004), discussed in section 4.2, provided the discursive frame for the policy change. The 'first four hours in English' policy can be understood as 'policy by press release' (Davies, 2008). There was no public consultation or parliamentary discussion in the lead-up to the media announcement (Scrymgour, 2008b). It is important to note the discursive strategy at play in the minister's announcement. It begins by announcing a departmental restructure, with news of the policy change buried within it:

Education Minister Marion Scrymgour announced today that there would be a restructure of the Department of Education and Training, with a greater focus on teaching English. Ms Scrymgour said a particular focus of the restructure would be delivering better educational outcomes in remote Indigenous communities. 'As part of that I'm also announcing today that the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English', Ms Scrymgour said. (Scrymgour, 2008b)

The press release made no reference to bilingual education or the fact that only nine schools would be affected by the change, or that there are only five hours in the school day (Wilkins, 2008). This obscured the fact that the policy targeted a specific set of schools. It also downplayed the extent of the change for those affected.

Badging the decision to dismantle the bilingual programs as ‘the first four hours in English’ can also be interpreted as a discursive strategy to present a hegemonic rationality that journalist Lindsay Murdoch described as politically palatable in its appeal to the nation’s monolingual mindset. Katrina Bolton said it was a strategy that worked to disguise the impact of the decision on bilingual schools and to shape news coverage of the decision. This relates especially to the newsroom practice of ‘churnalism’ or press release journalism where reporters do little critical investigation, instead reproducing the lines fed to them in these news subsidies (Davies, 2008; Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008) because they do not have the time or resources to research stories in depth (Davis, 2007a). Lewis, Williams and Franklin (2008) said journalists cannot be blamed for this as they are expected to produce too many stories with too few resources. They say the result of this is news ‘that will favour those, most notably business and government, best able to produce strong and effective PR material’ (Lewis et al., 2008, p. 18). Bolton said:

... there’s that line that people keep using that the first four hours each day have to be taught in English but, as I understand it there are only five teaching hours in a day, and so every time journalists who don’t know that background really well, or who don’t care enough to research the background really well, do a story, they repeat these lines saying for the first four hours each day, which people ... on the other end, think it’s half the time, or have this vague impression that it’s somewhere near half because people are used to... eight-hour working days. So ... it requires the journalists to know more and it also takes up time ... it’s ... a fair bit of background or stuff you’ve got to say in every step of making that news story.

Media as a policy trigger

Media is understood to influence politicians by defining which issues need to be addressed, which compels them to respond (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010).

Bob Gosford described Scrymgour’s decision to announce the ‘first four hours in English’ policy through the media as a ‘brain explosion’, and Banks said it was ‘just sort of almost a kneejerk response’:

I mean the media was actually the trigger behind all of that policy change to go from bilingual to a four-hour full-on English experience, and it was the national publication of results, the Northern Territory’s need to respond to look like they were on top of this and handling it ... so it was part of that role out of responsiveness to the media.

Banks offers an important insight into how that media influence affected the policy process:

I don't think the media actually had a role in shaping sort of a well-constructed ... there was no well-constructed policy response as far as I could see.

In an interview with the news and online opinion site *Crikey* in 2012, Scrymgeour admitted that:

... the formal announcement of that particular policy initiative in October 2008 was bungled by myself and others ... It is an unfortunate feature of modern Australian politics that policy initiatives often tend to get "*dumbed down*" to slogans or "*key lines*" [author's emphasis] formulated by people who don't themselves have to actually speak them in public. The key line for this particular policy initiative was "*four hours English*" [author's emphasis]. It was a mistake for me to run with that. (Scrymgeour, 2012)

Media are seen to represent an area where 'accountability' and other forms of democratic checks and balances are performed (Fairclough, 1995). Davies acknowledged the importance of this for the wider society and the pressure it places on public servants:

You have to be able to read the wind and to understand what the critical issues are out there in the public domain. You have to be able to provide the facts and fairly dispassionate feedback about what's going on in that regard, otherwise it looks like you're hiding things.

On one level the media's critical spotlight on the territory's poor NAPLAN results can be understood to fill the accountability role Fairclough (1998) described. However, Stuart Hall (1980, 1982) and the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980) have been particularly influential in demonstrating that the forms of representation adopted in news media are not neutral in the way that news agencies project them to be. Rather, news reports embody a 'hidden agenda' of communication — that of giving the dominant ideology an apparently congenial form. As the Glasgow University Media Group put it: 'the news is not a neutral product ... it is a sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society' (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976, p. 1). The claim is not necessarily that journalists are personally biased, or deliberately deceitful, but dominant assumptions are embedded in and reproduced by news presentations. The culturally dominant assumptions of

mainstream Australian society — that for indigenous Australians to succeed they must speak English — had been circulating in both news and conservative media commentary in the lead-up to the policy decision (Simpson et al., 2009), which can be interpreted as an alignment with that dominant discourse.

Return to media management

Some journalists said in the aftermath of the announcement they attempted to investigate the claims Scrymgour made to justify the decision that bilingual schools had performed worse than schools in remote communities that used English as the language of instruction (Scrymgour, 2008e). They said these attempts were frustrated by the Northern Territory Government, which kept tight control over the data on school performance, while continuing to defend its decision through the news media. Davis (2007b) says a substantial proportion of corporate communication time is taken up with blocking journalists ‘and stifling negative coverage’ (Davis, 2007b, p. 60). Bob Gosford described the Northern Territory Government as ‘very defensive’, and said his access to information often came down to personal relationships with public servants:

... there are some parts of the NT Government that I go to, I’ll never get a response ... Same with [Federal Indigenous Affairs minister Jenny] Macklin, although Macklin usually deigns to give a response depending — and again it comes down to the relationship that I have ... There other parts of the NT Government that will talk to me like a laughing drain, and that’s fine. Comes and goes.

Katrina Bolton said she was frustrated in her dealings with government contacts over the bilingual decision:

And it’s such a shit fight always to get even the statistics from the Education Department. There’s so much lack of clarity in terms of being able to see the data. Like, the length of time between when they were saying that bilingual schools weren’t performing and the length of time between when we then got any kind of quantifiable data was ridiculous. Like months. And so it was repressive lines being fed by politicians, and then other opponents sort of, it was that sort of warfare kind of thing.

Another strategy the Northern Territory Government uses to manage information and opinion from inside government is its tight control over who within its ranks can talk to the news media. Some people from inside the education department who were approached to participate in this study refused on the grounds they feared

repercussions from the department. They pointed to people who had spoken out and not had their contracts renewed, or were moved to other parts of the department (Waller, 2012d). Bolton said:

The education department ... are real thugs. They have no hesitation in bullying, threatening staff. The department does not tell the truth, certainly not the truth as we hear it from other people who aren't being told what to say by the department. It's a really forceful, repressive, far from free speech environment.

She said reporters had to be careful in the way they approached and worked with these people:

They're not allowed to speak and if you ask for permission to speak you have to be really careful how you do it so that it doesn't seem like you've spoken with them before because they'll get hammered. And people who are at the coalface aren't allowed to speak and you get some trumped up director from whatever region, parroting the line. There's no resemblance to what the people on the ground are telling you.

In conclusion, I return to the quote that opens this essay and relate it to Yolngu, who were excluded from the mediated policymaking process in 2008. They were 'the people on the ground' — one of only nine indigenous communities affected by the decision. However, they had no opportunity to voice their position in the policy process because there was no consultation process, simply an announcement through the news media that did not make any direct reference to bilingual education programs. No journalist who covered the issue visited their school to gain their perspective on the decision. The manoeuvres between the department and the news media were therefore remote, but their impact on Yolngu was keenly felt. In an open letter to Scrymgour, senior Yolngu teacher Yalmay Yunupingu explained the impact of the decision and made a veiled reference to the silence²⁴ imposed on department employees such as herself:

We have been told we are not to use our students' first language, only English. Well, I already know that the children won't understand what I'm saying, they will laugh at me, and they may even misbehave because they'll be bored and won't know what the lessons are about. So perhaps I will cheat and use some Yolgnu matha — what will happen then? Will I have my mouth washed out with soap like in the mission times? Or will I have to stand on one leg outside the classroom? Or perhaps I will lose my job? (Yunupingu, 2008b)

²⁴ Personal communication with Yalmay Yunupingu at Nhulumbuy airport, 7 November 2010.

The literature suggests that the close relationship between the news media and government can make it difficult for marginalised groups, such as indigenous Australians, to assert their perspective in public discussion of policy (Terkildsen et al., 1998; Marsh 2000, 2003) and, as Lester has shown, while mainstream media can be interrupted by protest groups, it is only briefly (Lester, 2007; Lester & Hutchins, 2009). This argument demands further development in light of the insight of some public servants who were interviewed and the experience of Yolngu in 2008. Not only did the intimate dialogue between news media and government effectively exclude them from policy and public discussion. The evidence suggests it contributed directly to another policy in keeping with the Federal Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response that involved no consultation and denied Yolngu their human rights. In conclusion, it is worth underlining other arguments made in this chapter. The wider discursive frame of Reconciliation and activities in the Yolngu public sphere in 1998–99 enabled Yolngu to interrupt the 'intimate dialogue' between media and government and thereby be heard in public and policy discussions. Their influence in news media and policymaking resulted in the bilingual education policy surviving for another decade.

The following chapter provides a critical analysis of the remote indigenous reporting subfield and the journalism practices involved in covering bilingual education policy. It also puts forward a model for academic journalism on indigenous affairs that enables journalism academics, their students and indigenous people to work together to ensure indigenous perspectives are heard in public and policy discussions.

Chapter 5: Writing black, writing back

Introduction

This final chapter is presented in two parts. Both focus on journalism practices related to the bilingual education policymaking field, and taken together can be understood as the place where the two theoretical streams running through the thesis — saltwater and freshwater — become deeply intertwined. They are worked together in a new and distinctive ecology of knowledge to generate theory about a specific subfield of journalism — this is the result of the *Ganma* (Marika, 1999) approach detailed in chapter 3. The first section flows from Bourdieu's northern tradition of field-based research and other 'saltwater'²⁵ theories about journalism. It analyses the journalism subfield and theorises the practices that participants say shape the way it represents 'remote' indigenous issues. The second, 'freshwater' section flows from the land — from southern, indigenous methodologies and Yolngu social theory rooted in their land and their culture. It presents a new model of academic journalism for working respectfully with indigenous people to break through the barriers to media justice that participants have identified. It is designed for telling stories that serve indigenous peoples' self-determinist aims, such as their right to educate their children in their own languages, as well as English. Questions about the nature of the specific subfield and how journalism about 'remote' indigenous people and issues can be improved emerged inductively as the study design took shape, ethical processes were worked through, relevant theoretical traditions were explored and the interviews progressed (Grbich, 2004). It became clear through this adaptive theory approach (Layder, 1998) that, to understand the journalism practices involved in coverage of bilingual education policy, the subfield required analysis because it was the arena that generated the reportage. The first section explores its logic and operations. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of Yolngu objectives for the project and the second section of this chapter documents

²⁵ From the Yolngu perspective, northern people and ideas (*balanda*) come from overseas, across oceans of saltwater. Their own knowledge, as well as theory from other Australian indigenous peoples, comes from the land and is therefore 'freshwater' (Mundine, 1999).

how these were achieved and presents the theory and journalism practice that has grown out of the process of working together.

Section 1: It comes with the territory: Remote indigenous reporting as a weak subfield of Australian journalism

There are some real issues out there and to be honest there's not many people getting out and covering it. (Lindsay Murdoch, journalist, Fairfax)

The contact with the indigenous talent and contacts is I think for many people, incredibly difficult. (Bob Gosford, *Crikey*)

Working within the specific context

Journalistic production is always strongly dictated by the specific social, political and economic conditions in which it is organised (Champagne, 2005) and therefore needs to be understood within a specific context (Schudson, 2003). As a field it also has its own common sense that interacts with other fields, such as education and politics, to create a powerful set of norms that set the boundaries around what is and is not considered news and who should be included in the construction of stories (Stack, 2007a). This thesis argues that, because of the organisation and operation of the Australian news media and the Northern Territory's particular geography and social history, indigenous reporting is a distinct, but weak subfield of Australian journalism. Journalists speak of the geographical and ontological distances they have to negotiate in dealing with both indigenous and government sources, as well as their newsrooms. They attribute many of the difficulties with covering indigenous issues in the Northern Territory to factors linked with these physical and cultural distances.

Strong journalism subfields include rounds such as sport, entertainment, fashion and business. These specialisations sit comfortably within the wider logic of the journalism field, which Bourdieu argues is driven by economic imperatives (Bourdieu, 1998). These can be described as strong subfields because they involve specialist reporters and contribute revenue from the advertising and large audiences or targeted publics they attract. In contrast, indigenous issues in the Northern Territory are covered mainly as part of national political rounds or by general

reporters, with only a handful of journalists who can be considered dedicated specialists. The indigenous round is not regarded as a revenue or audience generator, but as participants emphasise, it is one of the most expensive forms of Australian news reporting. Furthermore, there are weak connections between mainstream news outlets and 'remote' indigenous audiences, as well as news audiences on the eastern seaboard of Australia and 'remote' Northern Territory communities.

To analyse and interpret the workings of indigenous reporting in the Northern Territory, I draw on the work of a number of scholars who work in Bourdieu's northern tradition of field-based research, including Dominique Marchetti (2005), who was a colleague of Bourdieu at the Centre for European Sociology. His work stemmed from Bourdieu's basic relational insight of field theory that how you see and understand the world varies systematically depending on your relative position in social space (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Marchetti's research addressed what is sometimes seen as a shortcoming of Bourdieu's theory of fields, which is a lack of attention to variation within the field (Benson, 2005). He focused on specific types of journalists, rather than journalists as a whole. This approach is theoretically consistent with the policy-specific approach taken in this thesis for understanding the interplay of media and policymaking (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). Marchetti (2005) said, because specialised journalists have different characteristics and therefore different ways of perceiving the same event, 'the handling of news will sometimes be noticeably different according to the speciality mobilised' (Marchetti, 2005, p. 64).

I argue here that specialist indigenous affairs reporters see and understand their reporting field differently from political specialists and generalists who produce most news about 'remote' Northern Territory communities. Drawing on Connell (2007), it can be argued this is because their boots are planted in the land of the people they research with and report on, which assists them to hear their perspective and see the world through their eyes to some degree. In her book, *The Tall Man* (2008), which told the story of the Palm Island death in custody of Mulrunji Doomadgee, Chloe Hooper discussed the news media coverage of the case. She

observed that, of the 'fifteen or so journalists at the inquest, only *The Australian's* Tony Koch did not stay with the police but rather with a local family and went out on the street reporting' (Hooper, 2008, p. 92). Mason said staying with an indigenous family made his source relationship with the police 'less routine and certain' (Mason, 2012, p. 173). In contrast to Mason's focus on how this affected relations with *non-indigenous* sources, my research puts the emphasis on Koch's closeness to his indigenous sources. The research presented in section 2 of this chapter explores Koch's expertise in negotiating indigenous public spheres and draws on his approach to suggest the directions in which indigenous affairs reporting needs to move. Specialists such as Koch are shown to have a distinct set of reporting practices that enable them to navigate the 'remote' indigenous field. This study suggests they are more likely to unearth their own stories and include a range of indigenous voices and perspectives in their reports. Participants said political specialists and generalists lack this knowledge and skill and it is reflected in their reporting.

Marchetti (2005) has used thick descriptions of dozens of individual case studies of journalistic subfields and abstracted from these four sets of variables that can be used to analyse specialisations. These variables are used here as the framework for investigating the subfield of indigenous reporting in northern Australia. Marchetti's four sets of variables are economic, political, the degree to which journalism imposes its own logic, and the journalists' social characteristics (Marchetti, 2005, p. 64). He said subfields have their own logics and specific properties that can help to establish these variables. The logics and specific properties identified here include fluidity and inconsistency in the round, the economics of remoteness, the centrality of 'whitefella gatekeepers' and cultural competence as a key attribute of specialists. Marchetti (2005) did not consider specialties as they relate to journalism's democratic function or the public good. However, a significant number of 'remote' indigenous reporting specialists have identified a social justice orientation as a strong underpinning of their journalism practice.

Because of the very public relationship between indigenous Australia and the state (Meadows, 2005), much indigenous news is politically driven. Journalists rely

heavily on government to take them to 'remote' indigenous settlements, and much of the news is generated from the offices of politicians and public servants. The fourth essay in chapter 4 explores this 'intimate dialogue' between newsmakers and policymakers that resulted in the mediatization of the bilingual education policy in 2008. This section focuses on relationships with indigenous sources because it is the defining aspect of the territory's 'remote' indigenous reporting subfield. If the specialised subfield is to develop, this study suggests more journalists need to develop skills and knowledge that afford them the cultural competence to work effectively with 'remote' indigenous people.

Variation within the subfield

News is never just a product of the specific logic of the journalistic field; however, much scholarship has this kind of media-centric bias (Cottle, 2003; Darras, 2005). Marchetti (2005) said we must examine news in its complex relations with the other social spaces with which it relates. We need to break away from general, homogenising expressions about relationships between journalists and their sources in particular because they are meetings between the habitus of different fields and different positions within fields (Marchetti, 2005, p. 65). One of the main findings of the previous chapter is the marked difference in journalists' relationships with government, academic and indigenous sources necessary to producing news about bilingual education policy. As Stack (2007b), who works in Bourdieu's tradition, reminds us, the field of journalism has its own common sense that interacts with other fields to establish perimeters around what is and is not considered news and whose perspectives should be included in stories.

There are also variations in the types of journalists within the subfield. Three types of journalists who undertake indigenous reporting in northern Australia have been identified as part of the subfield. The first group comprises national affairs writers and national political reporters who work from their offices on the eastern seaboard or are 'parachuted in' to report on a particular event or issue, such as the Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007. The second group consists of general reporters based in large centres in the territory, including Darwin and Alice Springs,

who cover some indigenous news. Then there are a few who can be described as indigenous affairs specialists.

Parachute journalism

Some participants discussed the problems associated with eastern seaboard journalists being 'parachuted in' to 'remote' Northern Australia. 'Parachute journalists' are described as experts in crisis reporting who appear and disappear with high news value events (Palmer & Fontan, 2007). Bob Gosford was embedded in the Walpiri community of Yuendumu in Central Australia as an indigenous affairs correspondent for the news and opinion site *Crikey* for three years. He said he had observed how difficult 'remote' indigenous reporting was for these journalists:

A lot of this is really hard for outsiders ... a journo coming in. You never worked in a community before, you come in and it's just this sort of wall of sort of like, 'shit there's all these people on the other side of this wall, or how do I get to them, I don't know'.

Former Fairfax foreign correspondent Russell Skelton said the experience of reporting on 'remote' Central Desert communities was 'a personal and professional awakening' (Skelton, 2010, p. viii). He described these settlements as 'unreported realities':

I found myself exploring a part of my home country that was just as alien as the countries I had reported from. (Skelton, 2010, p. viii)

Murray McLaughlin of the ABC provided the example of journalists from the eastern seaboard flying in to cover the Northern Territory Emergency Response, following government media agendas closely and making no adjustment to their routine news-gathering practices, such as focusing on elite sources (Gans, 1979), to accommodate the remote context:

I was at Mutitjulu the day that they rolled in and there was chaos. It was a bloody traffic jam at Mutitjulu, they came from everywhere ... the attention from mainstream media down south lasted for a few weeks and was usually tied to things like visits by [indigenous affairs minister Mal] Brough or [Prime Minister John] Howard ... and you'd roll up and join the throng. It was just like being in the big city really, cameras everywhere ... that coverage tended to be pretty superficial, but you knew instinctively that it would fall off.

Hess (1996) said 'parachute' journalists 'know a great deal about covering crises but not necessarily much about the crisis they are covering' (1996, p. 100). Senior writer

with *The Australian*, Tony Koch, commented on how these reporters' lack of knowledge, time and rapport resulted in distrust on the part of indigenous people from 'remote' areas. He said they often expressed cynicism about eastern seaboard journalists who make quick visits with a government minister:

... there's this term, they call us 'seagulls' — politicians and journalists — because they say that we fly in, shit on them and leave.

Indigenous media advisor Ursula Raymond said much of the news commentary on the Northern Territory's indigenous peoples and issues that appeared in the eastern seaboard mainstream news media was written remotely and with little or no direct reference to indigenous people or organisations:

There's a lot of people who write stuff from interstate, they don't actually come here and write the story, or if they do come here, the odd ones, they don't ... they don't ... they don't contact you for whatever reason.

Nicolas Rothwell of *The Australian* said poor news coverage of the indigenous education 'domain' in particular:

... relates to the propaganda of the NTG [Northern Territory Government] and reflects, of course, the general collapse and degradation of journalism in the NT, where the only significant local sources are the Territory ABC and *NT News*.²⁶

Study participants' observations and experience support Rothwell's case. Other journalists were reflexively aware of the structural setting and context of news production in the Northern Territory. For example, they were critical of the limited number of local news outlets and quality of commercial news, limited budgets for travel and the demands of covering 'everything'. In chapter 4 they describe their frustration with the government's media-related practices of withholding information from them on one hand, and the ways it uses the media for strategic purposes on the other. Some other participants also commented on the lack of diversity and capacity in the Northern Territory's local news outlets, with one senior public servant observing smaller news outlets such as the *Centralian Advocate* are syndicated, and that people in the Northern Territory do not tend to read papers such as *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* because they do not cater for the local audience with their coverage:

²⁶ Email from Nicholas Rothwell received 17 November 2011.

... they don't look for answers from local politicians. If they do have a story, it's a story that's packaged up and delivered to a different audience, elsewhere, you know, with federal ministers commenting. You know, would you ever see issues being debated with, um, you know, Northern Territory academic versus Northern Territory politician? You know. It's the expert from ANU²⁷, or somewhere else.

Senior territory bureaucrat Ken Davies said major news organisations reported indigenous education policy scantily and superficially, and territory-based news organisations had little capacity for in-depth analysis and commentary:

... and it's fair to say that in the Northern Territory context, there's not the capacity of journalists locally here to do that work either ... So it tends to be quick grabs about particular issues and then moving on to the next thing, and usually the journalists aren't moving on to the next education story, they're moving on to the next story which might be about roads or something else.

Much research in Journalism Studies focuses on how standardised news routines and professional ideologies shape the news (see, for example, Cottle, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 2012; Tuchman, 1978; Zelizer, 2004). Comments such as those above invite us to place more emphasis on considering the importance of the 'imagined audience' in informing news production cultures and news values (Dreher, 2010; Matthews, 2008). This culturally differentiated view of news production can sharpen our understanding of how the character and content of news is shaped by these professional concerns. Production studies of regional television programs, for instance, describe the constructed audience as playing a seminal role in the selection of news (Berkowitz, 1992) and in the construction of the appearance and tone of the populist regional news story (Cottle, 1992). This research emphasises the importance of journalists' constructions of the news audience within the manufacture of news. This is not to deny that the intensification of newsroom time and resource pressures (Davies, 2008; Lee-Wright et al., 2011) is a major factor in news manufacture in the Northern Territory. In conjunction with journalists' construction of the imagined audience they can be seen to produce arms' length reporting and limit who and what makes news (Schudson, 2005, p. 218). What comes through forcefully from the interviews is that from a territory audience perspective the news media has 'difficulties in constructing a local point of view or perspective'. One participant said there was the ABC

²⁷ Australian National University, Canberra.

... and then everyone else has another line, as we all know, everyone's on that line and it never changes, and so things, issues that are complex, critical, don't get much of a run. They are either too complicated for them to be bothered with, or too daunting and complex to be covered in a five-second grab, and the NT media, the print media, just doesn't run to covering that sort of thing.

Generalists

In northern Australia almost all indigenous reporting is done by generalists, or by people who can only be described as moderately specialised because they move on to other rounds (Marchetti, 2005, p. 68). Participants identified these journalists as a high turnover group, often young and inexperienced, who were expected to cover indigenous affairs as part of their general duties. According to Macinolty:

There's never been a consistency of Aboriginal affairs round. There is a round but it keeps on getting shoved around and between shifts and stuff like that. You'll get people picking up a story with no background knowledge ... and ... tough luck, which is kind of foolish in a way.

According to Marchetti (2005), circulation of journalists provides an indicator of the specialisation's level of professionalisation. The more professional the specialisation, the less turnover of journalists. A number of participants observed there was a high turnover of journalists in the territory generally, with comments such as:

... take the ABC newsroom here in Alice Springs – there's a huge turnover every year.

This high turnover of reporters reflects a wider pattern of non-indigenous people coming in and leaving relatively quickly from health facilities, schools and public service departments and government agencies throughout the Northern Territory. Anangu from the Central Desert say 'white people are like clouds – they come and go'²⁸ and indigenous people blame this instability in large part for the 'amnesia' that besets indigenous policymaking (Pearson, 2009).

However, even journalists who specialise in 'remote' indigenous affairs reporting, such as Murray McLaughlin, Tony Koch and Katrina Bolton, who said indigenous reporting accounted for 70 per cent of her work at the ABC in Darwin, have to cover other rounds. Most of this group reported on state and federal politics as well.

²⁸ Personal communication with Anangu elder at Ernabella, South Australia, May 2006.

Fairfax northern correspondent Lindsay Murdoch covers indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory, but as his colleague Bob Gosford observed, he

... also ... gets packed away to Indonesia and South-East Asia and so forth. He'll cover from ... all across into North Queensland, all of the Northern Territory and across into Kununurra [Western Australia], and he'll be on call to go to all of those places. It's impossible for that person to have a relationship with individuals in all of those communities.

The main criticism of journalists' practices and the quality of their reporting revolved around a perceived lack of knowledge about indigenous people:

[B]ecause there's very little in-depth knowledge of Aboriginal affairs in the media, there's very little capacity for in-depth looking at policy issues other than on a sort of media response to a press release or an event or something like that. (Chips Macinoly)

This lack of knowledge can be understood to reinforce routine practices of covering indigenous affairs. As reporters do not have indigenous contacts or the means to access them, the topic is only of interest when government makes an official announcement, or releases data on indigenous education, health, housing or other social indicator. This kind of coverage results in particular representations of indigenous peoples. For example, McCallum (2010) argued that the persistent representation of indigenous violence and substance abuse in the mainstream news media has contributed to a discourse of risk and crisis dominating public discussion of indigenous issues. The capacity of indigenous people to represent their *own* concerns and interests is seriously compromised by these dominant discourses, as well as the lack of media resources and media access (Hollinsworth, 2005; Jakubowicz et al., 1994). Yolngu participants in this study stressed that this was the case in the bilingual education policy arena in 2008:

Paradoxically, even while Aboriginal misery dominates the national media frenzy — the perpetual Aboriginal reality show — the first peoples exist as virtual beings without power or efficacy in the national zeitgeist. (Langton, 2008)

Another dimension to this issue is that reporters and news organisations often fear alienating the dominant culture by drawing attention to marginalised groups such as indigenous people (Dreher, 2010), except in predictable and routine ways that often result in them being portrayed as challengers or violators of the status quo (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 240). Outside of these framings the news media pay little attention to

such groups, which are consigned to a place outside of the public sphere they assume their mainstream audiences desire. Through this process it may be said that groups such as indigenous Australians are assigned a restricted public existence.

Senior public servant Ken Davies described an 'ideal' reporter as one with deep knowledge of the subject area and the skill to ask penetrating questions but said this was 'substantially lacking':

It's all about coming on the quick grab, this is happening in place X, these results have come out, so the capacity of the media to do detailed analysis and really explore a topic to get to the underlying issues, I think is not there.

Some participants expressed an understanding of the pressures territory-based journalists encountered in their work:

You need to put the territory journalists in context. They cover all of the issues in the Northern Territory so you don't just have ... an arts writer or an education writer, or a legal writer for example. They've got to do everything. (Senator Trish Crossin)

In other words, they are not specialists dedicated to a round. The demands on these busy general reporters are broad and, as participants said, it is impossible for them to have in-depth knowledge of all areas they cover. This makes them highly reliant on information subsidies from official sources. Gandy (1982) said journalists 'favour bureaucratic sources who can provide a regular, credible and ultimately useable flow of information, insight and imagery with which to construct the news' (1982, p. 13). Elite sources, such as those within government, work to provide information subsidies with the stamp of authenticity and the appropriate news values to ensure journalists will use their material in the construction of news stories, ultimately reaching their targeted publics.

Indigenous reporting specialists

Participants identified very few indigenous reporting specialists at work during the study period 1988–2008:

There's not enough doing it. There's not enough, I mean there are probably half a dozen serious indigenous reporters in Australia. (Tony Koch, journalist, *The Australian*)

Through participants' comments, this elite group's identifying qualities are the number of years spent covering indigenous affairs, their degree of cultural

competence and a relatively high level of autonomy in their reporting. Four of the journalists quoted here, who can be described as indigenous specialists, have between 10 and 35 years' experience in the round. However, there are not many with this depth of professional experience. Koch, McLaughlin and Macinolty were unable to name half a dozen other journalists they regarded as 'true specialists' reporting on 'remote' indigenous communities between 1988 and 2008. However, they all said *The Australian* has the largest specialised staff with the most experience in the field (see 5.1.4 for discussion of *The Australian*). Cultural competence and autonomy are discussed later in this section.

Indigenous reporting camps: Hunter-gatherers and packagers

Marchetti (2005) said that from the generalists' perspective, journalists do not need in-depth knowledge of topics — what matters is mastery of journalistic skills including resourcefulness, speed, brashness, ability to get there first, and independence vis à vis sources. These abilities are said to equip reporters to handle any topic at short notice, and write about it in a way that the general public can understand. Specialists working in the mainstream are under pressure to acquire credibility with their peers as a specialist, as well as demonstrating these journalistic qualities that satisfy both special and general audiences. Champagne (2005) said 'generic discourse on "the journalist" is in fact a major obstacle to understanding the field of relations in which this actor is situated and plays the game' (Champagne, 2005, p. 55). Depending on the outlet and news department, journalists are nearer to or farther from the intellectual or heteronomous pole, and they are more or less competent concerning the topics they cover. Journalists with expertise in covering indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory said mainstream journalistic skills alone were inadequate for covering 'remote' indigenous contexts, where cultural competence is needed to gather story ideas and perspectives from indigenous sources. This can be understood as journalists shaping their practices to respond to and incorporate indigenous worldviews and approaches to knowledge construction (Connell, 2007b; Smith, 2004).

Participants discussed their reporting styles and identified two distinct sets of practices. Those who can be described as indigenous reporting specialists described theirs as an independent, investigative style of reporting associated generally with the Fourth Estate premise in journalism (de Tocqueville, 2012). They contrasted this with 'hack' journalism where reporters follow newsroom assignments, rely on news subsidies from elite sources, and tend to report the same news and events as each other in routine and predictable ways (Zelizer, 2004). Katrina Bolton of the ABC coined the terms 'hunter-gatherers' and 'packagers' to describe these 'two basic camps'. She described hunter-gatherers as:

journalists who actually go out and dig out stories and that involves working personal contacts, the phone, turning your ears out a lot, and when you hear a gem or a germ of something that might be interesting, you're negotiating through the obstacles to the point that people are going to be willing to talk to you and then through the obstacles at your work to get the story so that you can go and do it.

She contrasted this approach with that of the generalists or packagers, who:

are very, very good if you point them to a particular issue on a particular day and they will hit some of the good people for comment and they'll package it up nicely and they'll write it quite well ... but they didn't sort of do anything for that story. It was usually assigned to them, or there was something actually happening, an announcement was made.

Participants who are not journalists identified the same distinction in reporting styles and the pressures journalists are under to conform to the agendas and values of their newsrooms. Champagne (2005) observed they were torn between the contradictory demands of economic profitability, taking political positions and the imperatives proper to intellectual work (Champagne, 2005, p. 49):

I know some of them and I know the ones that try and do things well, like you know, the old traditions of enquiry, and ... they have this sense of what they're there to do intellectually, ethically, and then they have a whole lot of other imperatives. They have the imperatives of the station, the editor, not crossing this line, not crossing that line and it's a rope that they walk and then of course, no time is given to actually do original enquiry to the depth that's ever needed. So if you're going to do that you're more or less doing it as a labour of love in your own time. And then they find too, most of the sources here, this being such a government town, are closed to them or they can't get anything ever on the record or whatever. So ... the very few who are here — who've actually got a working brain; who realise that their job is more than just ... Some of the ABC journos I would describe in that way ... but, yeah. Otherwise they're just getting the verbatim press releases off the fax machine from the minister's office and printing that. They're not doing really any exposé. (Tess Lea, academic, Charles Darwin University)

Macinolty said that most of the reporting of indigenous affairs was done by 'packagers', who relied on news subsidies from government and indigenous organisations:

A hell of a lot of reporting generally up here is reporting of press releases and then getting the other side to say what they think about that press release. [There is] very little independent generation of stories.

The literature on source relationships emphasises that journalists focus on official actions and reactions by government actors. This creates 'a popular myth that the pronouncements of government officials and institutional elites somehow represent the reality in which the majority of people live' (Bennett, Gressett & Halton, 1985, p. 51). The practice of using the same group of informants and interviewees again and again is referred to as 'source standardisation' (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). Not only do individual journalists work this way, groups of journalists also often have a common dependency on the same sources (Entman, 2010). Because journalists seek out 'experts' or 'qualified informants', they depend on 'centralisation of information in bureaucracies and the generation of fact by bureaucrats' (Tuchman, 1981a, p. 92). So journalists rely on elites who meet journalistic norms of source selection. They tend to be geographically close and socially similar to working journalists and have the power and resources necessary to attract journalists' attention. They are official spokespeople for large organisations who occupy powerful positions and are likely to meet the 'standard definitions of reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness and articulateness' (Gans, 1979, p. 24). The literature also shows that those with economic or political power are more likely to influence news reports than those who lack power (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p. 5).

Journalists who specialise in indigenous reporting expressed frustration with the generalist or packagers' professional practice because they said it resulted in news that reflects the agendas of their regular and powerful sources, such as politicians and senior bureaucrats:

If you only get ... the products from Minister Macklin's spin-doctors saying 'this is a great thing' then people from Sydney and Melbourne are not going to get an opportunity to see much of the case against it as it were. (Graham Ring, journalist)

Herman and Chomsky's (2012) propaganda model of news described the relationship between journalists and their elite sources as symbiotic. They argued that the relationship is driven by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest: 'they cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important stories might break' (Herman & Chomsky, 2012, p. 386). Fishman (1980) called this 'the principle of bureaucratic affinity: only other bureaucracies can satisfy the input needs of a news bureaucracy' (Fishman, 1980, p. 143). Berkowitz (1992) offered a more dynamic perspective when he says the journalist–source relationship should be understood as a by-product of their perceived roles within their individual, organisational, professional and societal spheres. In this view each actor has competing roles within and among these spheres. He regarded the way journalists or sources viewed 'their jobs' as 'the result of several levels of forces in constant interaction: this interaction is dynamic, so that each level — individual, organisational, professional, societal — might be more or less influential at any time' (Berkowitz, 1992, p. 95). Looking across the study period through my examination of the media-related practices of different actors in the bilingual policy constellation supports Berkowitz's interactive perspective on these relationships.

Media outlet, specialty and its position in the news media hierarchy

The degree of specialisation varies strongly within subfields and can change across time. Factors include the media outlet, the specialty in question, and the position of the specialty in the news media hierarchy (Marchetti, 2005, p. 65). At Fairfax²⁹ there has only been a full-time northern correspondent for the past seven years. Before this there was a freelance reporter for many years, which suggests a stronger commitment by the news group to reporting on the Northern Territory for its eastern seaboard audiences in recent times. It is also important to note that the same speciality does not occupy the same place in the news hierarchy at different media outlets. One experienced tabloid journalist said:

²⁹ Fairfax Media Ltd is one of Australia's largest diversified media companies. The group's operations include newspapers, magazines, radio and digital media operating in Australia and New Zealand. It publishes metropolitan daily newspapers including *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

You would never hear indigenous policymaking raised ... [Tabloid newspapers] just don't think it relates to their readership at all, therefore, you simply accept that unless it's scandalous you don't see it.

This sense of 'remoteness' can be understood as failing the 'newsworthiness test' based on the criteria of proximity. A lack of interest in indigenous affairs unless there is a crisis or controversy accords with studies of media and policy, which suggest that there are many areas of policymaking that are of little or no interest to journalists unless they meet their news values of conflict and drama and involve prominent personalities (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010). It also resonates with the literature on racism and the media, which documents the exclusion of indigenous peoples' voices and issues (Jakubowicz et al., 1994; McCallum, 2007b; Meadows, 2001). These scholars concluded that silencing is a form of racist discourse. In this view, indigenous peoples' exclusion from the media is understood as the result of a combination of their dominated and disadvantaged position in society (Bourdieu, 1992) and journalistic norms and practices that reflect the perceived interests of mainstream, dominant audiences (Cottle, 2000; Fiske, 2000; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson & Roberts, 1978).

To understand marginalisation of indigenous Australians by the media, it is worth considering what appearing in the news means to most people. The work of Lazarfeld (1948) and Merton (1960) identified what they called the 'status conferral function' of mass media. For the average person, simply the appearance in the news of a person, object or public act is enough to mean that they are important. The media bestows status and legitimacy on people, groups and objects. But what is missing in the news is just as important as what is contained in the news (Couldry, 2010a). When people, groups, issues or objects are ignored or left out of news media coverage, they do not exist in the public sphere; and therefore they have no status or legitimacy (Dreher, 2010). Tuchman (1981b) has called this symbolic annihilation. Even when marginalised citizens' viewpoints are admitted into the pool of recognised sources for a story, those views 'are further contextualised with symbolic cues that colour their credibility and salience for news audiences' (Bennett, 1996,

p. 374). Tuchman (1981b) said condemnations or trivialisations are further examples of symbolic annihilation.

In any discussion of remoteness, such as the distances between territory journalists and their sources, mobility emerges as an important consideration. Geographer Doreen Massey's 'power geometry' (Massey, 1994) is a concept for unpacking the time-space compressions of globalisation and the 'complicated and varied' ways different people are placed along the space-time continuum. She said 'different social groups, and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections' (Massey, 1994, p. 149). She argued that this needs to be understood socially, not just as a political or moral point about inequality. She said it is not only capital, but factors including race and gender, that influence the degree of social mobility people possess, as well as their sense of place and space. In her call for a 'progressive sense of place' (Massey, 1994, p. 156), Massey pointed out that there are real relations with real content — economic, political and cultural — linking any local place and the wider world in which it is set. She emphasised that some groups, such as journalists, are 'more in charge of' these relations than others because they have greater mobility (Massey, 1994, p. 149). Couldry (2003), working in Bourdieu's field-based tradition, offered another perspective on this power to shape the wider social space. He argued that the media, like the state, has the power to decide what counts as capital in other fields and to influence social space through the circulation of media representations. In *An introduction to reflexive sociology* (1992), Bourdieu used the term 'meta-capital' to describe the concentration of different types of capital in the state, giving it power to decide what counts as capital in specific fields. Couldry (2003) argued the media's power can be theorised the same way:

Just as the state's influence on cultural capital and prestige ... is not confined to specific fields but radiates outward into social space generally, so the media's meta-capital may affect social space through the general circulation of media representations. (Couldry, 2003, p. 688)

The mobility and control of the state and the news media can actively weaken the leverage of other people (Massey, 1994, p. 150) through actions such as silencing. It can also strengthen their leverage through amplification of a perspective, as Yolngu

said was the case with the ‘Don’t cut off our tongues’ campaign in 1998–99. These concepts about differentials in power and mobility in the wider social space can assist in understanding how social actors such as journalists and politicians shape public discussion and why indigenous voices are often not heard distinctly in the policymaking process and news media discourses. Instead they get ‘talked about’, as was the case in news media commentary on ‘remote’ indigenous education in the lead-up to the ‘first four hours’ policy announcement. These issues are explored in chapter 4.

The Australian

Participants overwhelmingly identified Australia’s only national daily newspaper and Rupert Murdoch’s flagship *The Australian* as the news outlet that took most interest in indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory. It occupies the strongest position in the subfield, which participants understood as its agenda-setting influence on public and policy discussion of indigenous affairs³⁰. Bourdieu said cultural capital remains on the side of the ‘purest’ journalists of the print press, and they are the ones who launch the critical debates that others pick up:

As Einsteinian physics tells us, the more energy a body has, the more it distorts the space around it and a very powerful agent within a field can distort the whole space, cause the whole space to be organised in relation to itself. (Bourdieu, 2005a, p. 43)

In his essay on *The Australian*, Manne (2011) observed that it is the nation’s only genuinely national general newspaper and that, although its weekday sales are relatively small (between 100,000 and 130,000), it is extremely well resourced by its proprietor and able to employ many of Australia’s best journalists. Manne said it dominates the Canberra press gallery, not only in the number of journalists employed but ‘also in the aggression its reporters display and their capacity for teamwork in pursuit of their prey’ (Manne, 2011, p. 4). This dominance of national political reporting means it effectively sets the political agenda for other media outlets. Manne said it is the only newspaper:

³⁰ For a detailed analysis of *The Australian*’s campaigning style of journalism on indigenous affairs, see McCallum & Reid, 2012.

that is read by virtually all members of the group of insiders I call the political class, a group that includes politicians, leading public servants, business people and the most politically engaged citizens. Even those members of the political class who loathe the paper understand that they cannot afford to ignore it. (Manne, 2011, p. 5)

Champagne (2005) discussed how newspapers like the Paris broadsheets make it a point of journalistic honour to maintain a relative autonomy in relation to the most immediate demands of the public and support certain forms of journalism that are not economically profitable. *The Australian's* commitment to indigenous affairs reporting in the territory can be understood in this way. It is praised for:

playing a crucial role in alerting the public to the breakdown of conditions of life in remote communities and providing 'one of the most intellectually courageous Aboriginal leaders of contemporary times, Noel Pearson, with a permanent forum for the expression of his views'. (Manne, 2011, p. 13)

Fairfax correspondent Lindsay Murdoch was reflexive about the variation between the national newspaper *The Australian*, with a solid readership in the Northern Territory and a focus on its politics and indigenous affairs in particular, and the media company he writes for. Indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory rates lower in the news hierarchy at Fairfax because its audiences are not perceived to be so interested (Matthews, 2008):

... see my audience is in Melbourne and Sydney where the Oz³¹ sort of laps it up more, but for my audience we don't get really ... we're not interested in chasing all that sort of in and outs of the black politics or even politics, any politics in the Northern Territory. (Lindsay Murdoch, journalist, Fairfax)

Variation in the subfield can be measured in the biographical trajectories of journalists, as well as general economic and professional indicators, including the age and experience of journalists; the space and position of stories; and the salaries and status of journalists (Marchetti, 2005). Specialities cannot be considered from an economic perspective only because they are also linked to social and political logics. For example, as Bourdieu argued in *On television* (1998), journalism subfields such as sports and entertainment are money-spinners for media outlets, which he described as being at the homologous pole of the field. There is symbolic capital attached to political rounds and foreign correspondents, or the heteronomous (intellectual and autonomous) pole of the field. These subfields can be costly and bring in less revenue

³¹ 'The Oz' is *The Australian* newspaper's nickname.

but they occupy high status in the field and confer symbolic capital on the media outlet. Commenting on *The Australian's* coverage, Macinolty said:

... the only place that's provided any real resources consistently has been Murdoch.

Discussing its coverage of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, McLaughlin said:

... as much as I can't stand *The Australian* newspaper, I think actually it's prosecuted a pretty good case for resources and improvements and what not. And I think that they more than the ABC, and I say this with some reluctance, but I think that they have helped keep Canberra focused as much as it is.

However, the newspaper was criticised for its neo-conservative ideological bent, with comments such as:

... and of course you've got the other main newspaper locally is *The Australian* which is just increasingly fascist.

... they think they own the debate ... They think they should run bloody indigenous policy. Well, not just indigenous policy.

The Australian has maintained a close focus on government policies regarding racism and multiculturalism for many years and its standpoint has remained almost unchanged, going back to 1991 when it indicated a clear commitment to a position that denied institutional or structural racism existed in Australia (Jakubowicz et al., 1994, p. 112).

Journalistic capital can be measured by indicators linked to production, including the number of exclusives, the rate of articles picked up by other outlets, the size of the specialist staff, editorial space, and the size of audience and that audience's profile (Marchetti, 2005, p. 72). Again *The Australian* stands out here for the size of its specialist staff, the number of exclusives it gets, the editorial space it devotes to indigenous issues and its highbrow, national audience. Murdoch described the close geographic and professional relationship between senior press gallery journalists writing on indigenous affairs at *The Australian* and Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin. He said these close relationships could effectively lock leading territory-based journalists out of a story:

Leaking [to a journalist from *The Australian*] about some announcement the day before she actually makes it ... and then [the journalist] beats the shit out, gets a big run, oh,

this is new, brand new, this is all big, huge and the Oz put it on the leader page ... and everyone says oh, that's a good story ... [Macklin's] ... got this habit, I'm furious with Macklin because she just — well it's in her interest because the Oz gives these stories a big run, so she feeds — bloody gives it to [*The Australian*] and then the next day we get it suddenly released on the fax and on our email. And ... I'd struggle to get it in the paper. Probably wouldn't get it in the paper, probably wouldn't even write most of it ... it wouldn't get in the paper, but because [*The Australian* journalist] has got an exclusive and ... gets the mix-master out on it and ... gets a big run, the Oz think it's all very important and they're very happy and then by the time it gets to us we just ignore it, but Macklin's got a run, you know.

Murdoch's comments here show he is reflexively aware that the framing of a news story 'is a reciprocal process between political elites and journalists' (Kuypers, 2002, p. 11). As Reich (2006) has argued, this reciprocity in the relationship is a different reality to what is asserted in much of the literature on journalists and their sources, which focuses on the tensions between elites such as politicians and journalists and argues the news media has the final say over which events and events are deemed newsworthy, seemingly demonstrating their independence in the news process. Media organisations are inherently a part of the community where they exist, and for this reason are subject to community influences, particularly powerful actors and institutions and their needs (Kuypers, 2002). In the case of *The Australian*, it is a powerful presence in the federal parliamentary community (Manne, 2011).

The Australian gives prominence to an indigenous story from northern Australia by placing it on page 1 of its weekend edition regularly. Some of its most senior (and highly-paid) journalists have covered indigenous affairs in northern Australia, including prize-winning reporters Tony Koch, Paul Toohey and Nicolas Rothwell, who is the godson of Rupert Murdoch (Skelton, 2010). Natasha Robinson joined the paper's investigative unit after completing a stint based in Darwin. All these journalists have experience as foreign correspondents, political writers or investigative journalists. Their seniority and public profiles bring substantial symbolic capital to their roles and are indicators of the high value placed on indigenous stories with national significance (McCallum & Reid, 2012). *The Australian* also retains the nation's most influential indigenous commentator, Noel Pearson, and regularly features contributions from other prominent indigenous public figures, including Warren Mundine and Marcia Langton. Scholars working with Bourdieu

argue that the power of the journalistic field lies in its capacity to weigh on other social fields through the fame it creates. This power of consecration (Champagne, 2005; Darras, 2005; Waller, 2010c) — to say who and what is important, and what the public should think about important things and people — is based on its own legitimacy (Champagne, 2005, p. 58). Manne described the newspaper's consecration of Pearson and those who agree with him as 'univocalism' and said its neglect of other indigenous voices 'represents a kind of distortion' (Manne, 2011, p. 12):

The Australian's univocalism has seriously misled its readers about the balance of indigenous sentiment in the Northern Territory and elsewhere. (Manne, 2011, p. 13)

Data on journalists' backgrounds can be compared to the social agents they write about as another means of assessing the subfield's relative position in the larger field of power (Marchetti, 2005). Journalists are on the whole much closer in social space to the bureaucrats and politicians involved in indigenous stories than they are to remote indigenous sources (see section 4 of chapter 4). Their perspective tends to be on the political relationship between the state and indigenous people, with most stories having their genesis in an action or event staged by the state. Their main sources are politicians and senior public servants. Political reporting is the specialty that is often mobilised, which means stories are most likely to be written by political reporters based in parliamentary press galleries, or who attend media events in 'remote' settlements that are carefully managed and sponsored by the state. Acknowledging the variability of power within these relationships aids understanding of their complexities but does not negate their symbiotic nature, which other scholars interested in source relationships have identified. Although neither party may be completely happy with the constraints and obligations this imposes, the interviews show participants understand that meeting expectations of these externally prescribed roles is crucial to effectiveness and success within their organisations (Berkowitz, 1992, p. 95).

Characteristics of the subfield

Through participants' specialist reporting practices, a number of characteristics that are particular to indigenous reporting in northern Australia can be identified. They

fall into Marchetti's four sets of variables and assist in understanding the nature of the reporting specialisation and the particular challenges and struggles within the subfield. These include sensitivity to changes in the discursive context, a high level of journalist autonomy, white gatekeepers as key sources, the economics of remoteness, cultural competence and a social justice orientation. These are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Discursive contexts

The links between the wider discursive context and public and policy debates about bilingual education are discussed in section 4.1.0. Marchetti (2005) said it is important to note that the positioning of specialists in the journalistic space may be very sensitive to characteristics of the era. Certain events, especially controversies, can contribute to transforming the position of topical specialties or their content (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2010). McLaughlin commented on how the Federal Government's Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007 generated intense media interest in remote territory communities for just a short period:

The Intervention ... for a while there it was a window — it was open slather, you could get on anything you wanted but the window's to an extent closed again and it is a constant battle.

Autonomy

Schudson (2005) said one of the strengths of Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research is its focus on the question of autonomy of fields, with some having more autonomy than others. Different fields of human activity have their own internal logic and some degree of insulation from the influence of other fields. Due to its economic imperatives and close relationship with the state, Bourdieu viewed journalism as a weakly autonomous field (Bourdieu, 1998). However, Marchetti (2005) said that levels of autonomy vary within the field and a high level of autonomy is an indicator of a journalistic subfield's importance. Professional socialisation is a factor that is difficult to study but can allow a more refined description of the processes of producing news (Cottle, 2003). The newsroom culture may overwhelm the specialty — factors like whether someone is based in a newsroom or rarely in the office can be a factor. Marchetti (2005) said those not

office-based may be more 'independent', 'alternative' or 'autonomous' than their colleagues. Indigenous reporting specialists described striving for a high degree of autonomy in their reporting practice. For example, Bolton said she was determined to spend her time in the field 'out bush', while several other indigenous affairs specialists indicated that they had relatively high levels of professional autonomy from their media outlet. Murdoch said, 'I haven't set foot in the office for 18 years', and Bob Gosford was writing for Crikey from his home in Yuendumu. Macinolty worked as a stringer and said he had the freedom to refuse to cover some issues. He also said his strong personal contacts meant he was not so reliant on Fairfax's sponsorship for travel or news subsidies for story ideas:

I have the advantage that I knew a lot of people out bush that I could actually — I had no money for travelling ... I was doing stuff for [Fairfax] and they paid for one trip to Alice Springs. The rest of it I did either hitching with other people or just on the phone and getting people to ring to get comments on stuff and so on. (Chips Macinolty, former journalist)

Autonomy is closely related to the heteronomous, or intellectual pole of the field (Schudson, 2005), and independence is prized by indigenous reporting specialists. Autonomy is associated with investigative journalism, where the Fourth Estate role of the media is most evident in its two dimensions of informing the public and acting as a watchdog on government (Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Zelizer, 2004). Describing the need for independent newsgathering practices to find out 'what's really going on', Koch said:

... unless ... reporters ... get off their butts and go out, and not just go out with the minister flying the government jet ... and be given the candy coated version anyway. You've got to go to the community and spend some time there ... and find out what's really going on.

Indigenous sources and cultural competence

Participants identified cultural competence as one of the key attributes of 'hunter-gatherers' in 'remote' indigenous reporting. They said it enabled them to find their own indigenous stories, cultivate and maintain strong contacts in the indigenous public sphere and negotiate the obstacles in the field to get the story.

If you don't know how to be culturally aware with traditional people especially, then it doesn't matter how much you try to make eye contact you're not going any further.
(Katrina Bolton, journalist, ABC)

Cultural competence is a concept developed in social medicine (Betancourt et al., 2003). It refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. This involves being able to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures and/or belief systems other than one's own. Cultural competence has four dimensions: awareness of one's own cultural worldview; positive attitude towards cultural differences; knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and cross-cultural skills (Betancourt et al., 2003). Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence is discussed further in section 2 of this chapter, which suggests a new model of academic journalism informed by southern theory (Connell, 2007b) and built on an understanding of indigenous ontologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Major news organisations and institutions, including the ABC and the Australian Press Council, have developed sets of protocols for reporting on indigenous people and affairs. These require journalists to be aware of and respect indigenous peoples' beliefs and practices, especially in relation to ceremony and land (Eggerking & Plater, 1992). Some participants said these guidelines had improved news organisations' approach and their reporting:

Back in the '80s there was pretty much outright refusal by Murdoch papers to even countenance the sort of restrictions on the naming of dead people and so on, and now it's part of the practice of the local Murdoch papers that they will enquire as to whether or not a person's name can be used. The ABC's been pretty good at it for a lot longer, so that's been a big shift. (Chips Macinolty, former journalist)

Taking a southern theory (Connell, 2007) perspective enables me to make an observation and acknowledgement that has not been made elsewhere in the literature on Australian media representation of indigenous people (Meadows, 2001; McCallum & Holland, 2010; Ewart, 1997; Hollinsworth, 2005). That is, that indigenous people have exerted a strong hand in actively shaping mainstream codes of reporting practices that concern them. This has been achieved through their

official complaints and submissions on addressing the way their cultural practices have been disrespected and misrepresented at times, such as reporting the names and presenting images of deceased persons and reporters venturing into areas that are off-limits due to sorry business³². Indigenous people have actively campaigned through inquiries such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnson, 1991) to improve reporting practices.

The literature on media representation of indigenous peoples and issues identifies a number of obstacles to quality reporting, from lack of familiarity with indigenous public spheres (Meadows, 2005; Waller 2010) to racist attitudes (Jakubowicz et al., 1994). Journalists who participated in this study were reflexive about barriers that made it difficult to get indigenous voices into their reports, from lack of cultural competence on their part, to newsroom values and norms:

The most difficult thing with indigenous reporting is actually getting their voices. You want their voices but it's so hard to get indigenous voices — getting people to talk with you and share with you stories, particularly if it's not a hip, hip-hooray story because you run into all sort of barriers, the shyness barrier, the is my English good enough barrier, the cultural barriers. (Katrina Bolton, journalist, ABC)

Macinoly, Murdoch and McLaughlin were reflexive about their lack of indigenous language ability as a significant barrier to reporting well on remote communities.

McLaughlin said not being able to speak with people in indigenous languages was:

... a huge impediment to cutting through and being able to talk to people ... you rely on someone who has got a rough understanding of English ... or on the rare occasion you actually hire a professional interpreter, or you rely on white people who have worked there long enough that they can speak the language. So all of that means stuff is necessarily filtered so ... you can never really be confident that you're getting it right all the time.

These accounts suggest that it is too simplistic to attribute lack of indigenous voice in the news media to the ideological position of the news media alone (Ewart, 1997; Mason, 2012). Lack of cultural competence on the part of journalists and investment

³² Bereavement is known as 'sorry business' and is a very important part of Aboriginal culture. Funerals can involve entire communities. The grieving relatives may live in a specially designated area, the sorry camp, for a period of time. Grieving can include the relatives self-harming, cutting off their hair or wearing white pigment on their faces. The community refrains from using the name of the deceased, and photographs and videos of the person may be destroyed. (Source: Australian Academy of Medicine and Surgery http://www.aams.org.au/mark_sheldon/ch7/ch7_sensitive_areas.htm)

in it by media organisations was understood by participants to be the main barrier to amplifying indigenous perspectives. For example, Macinolty commented on the lack of education of journalists on indigenous culture, society and politics:

I don't know any journalist since I've been here ... who has made an attempt to learn an Aboriginal language, or who has made any serious attempt to go through some kind of orientation course or learnt anything much about kinship systems and political systems and so on in Aboriginal communities and it really comes out. I remember when Gorbachev came into power in the Soviet Union, within days every journalist knew how to pronounce his name, but you still get journalists who can't even get their heads around how to pronounce Aboriginal names, personal names or community names.

Another barrier was the clash between newsgathering rituals and indigenous practices:

... the two are really quite directly opposed often, like your time frames and your budget and the time frames that pushes on you, are really like direct opposite to what is considered polite in indigenous culture. But sometimes it's also knowing how to ask. (Katrina Bolton, journalist, ABC)

'Knowing how to ask' involves spending time with indigenous people, which can be difficult for journalists for a range of reasons. Tony Koch emphasised this as a most important aspect of quality indigenous reporting (see section 2 of this chapter) and it is also identified as a crucial dimension of conducting any research with indigenous people (Smith, 2004):

You can't just rush in bang, bang and get your interview. You've got to sit down, how you're going, what's going on, and then finally they might tell you what you want to know. (Lindsay Murdoch, journalist, Fairfax)

Koch and McLaughlin identified patience as an important quality for reporters covering remote communities:

When you go there under your own steam you've just got to have patience because people run their own timetable. It's no use saying I'll see you at 2 o'clock next Wednesday. It's a matter of rolling up on Wednesday and just sitting around and waiting and sometimes it never happens, and I've long learnt not to feel any frustration about that. (Murray McLaughlin, journalist, ABC)

Newsroom racism was an issue some reporters identified as an obstacle in coverage of indigenous affairs. It took several forms. The first was a lack of interest in indigenous stories from news editors. Couldry (2006) contended that what is omitted from news agendas can tell us as much about the beliefs and values of media

organisations as what is published. Meadows (2001) has shown that indigenous people are routinely silenced by being talked about, rather than heard, in broadcast news on indigenous affairs. Dreher (2010) argued that entrenched news values and existing story agendas shape media discussion of marginalised groups — focusing on addressing the stereotypes and concerns of perceived ‘mainstream’ audiences, rather than providing an open forum where marginalised peoples’ perspectives can be aired:

... there is ... a limited appetite for blackfella stories. I can remember I’d been up here not that long really, maybe a year, and I can remember my EP [executive producer] said to me, she said, now Murray we like your stories, but do you reckon you could get a few more white faces in there? That’s the prevailing attitude. (Murray McLaughlin, journalist, ABC)

Gosford said journalists from the Murdoch press who were in Central Australia to cover the Northern Territory Emergency Response sought out routine and predictable images and stories about indigenous dysfunction:

The Australian had a bunch of journalists going around here who were basically out writing black ... they wanted pictures of kids, snotty nosed kids with dirty nappies or naked, playing in the dirt with beer cans around, or old crones standing around drunk. And they got it because there’s lots of that here.

According to Edward Said (2003), the media plays a key role in the process of entrenching racism at an institutional level through routine, day-to-day ‘reinforcement of stereotypes’ (Said, 2006, p. 26). Meadows’ (2001) study of national television coverage of indigenous people found it reinforced the dominant ideology of non-indigenous racial superiority, thereby contributing to a stream of research that has found media representations of indigenous Australians and issues are racist discourses (Cottle, 2004; Jakubowicz et al., 1994). Media representations and narratives have been found to sensationalise indigenous issues by highlighting violence and dysfunction. Hollinsworth (2005) said: ‘Stereotypic representations include stories of criminality, drunkenness, poor health, welfare dependency, family violence, alongside sporting prowess and artistic ability’ (Hollinsworth, 2005, p. 17).

Bolton recalled being deeply uncomfortable when she was sent to an Alice Springs shopping centre to get indigenous peoples’ reactions on welfare quarantining for a

news story on the Northern Territory Emergency Response being produced out of the ABC's Canberra studios:

It was awful. And in the end someone did talk because I kind of sweet talked/charmed/batted my eyelids into it and [they] also knew our camera man who actually happened to be indigenous ... But, it was just so contrived because of the speed and the urgency and the expectation that we could just snap our fingers and get indigenous reaction ... I think it was worse because there were all these implicit assumptions: 'Hi, you're an Aboriginal person in the supermarket you must be on welfare.' It was just awful.

McCallum (2007a) has investigated the news media framing of indigenous people at the height of the Intervention era and concluded that they were portrayed as a societal risk, concluding:

Such narrow and stigmatising portrayals of indigenous Australians allows for the perpetuation of socio-cultural values that further alienate indigenous populations. (McCallum, 2007a)

Indigenous cultural practices

Participants identified a range of indigenous cultural practices journalists need to negotiate to get their story. McLaughlin said sorry business, which is discussed in reporting guidelines for journalists (see, for example, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009a; Eggerking & Plater, 1992), was 'the biggest disrupter of story ventures':

The number of times I've turned up to a place and just can't do anything ... can't move around even because of this sorry business going on, or fortunate enough to learn about it before I go and have to cancel the trip. Sorry business prevails, that's the reality.

Other cultural practices are not so familiar to many journalists, such as who has the right to speak about certain land, certain business:

So that whole thing, that whole cultural thing of not speaking out of turn, not speaking when it's not your land, not speaking when you're not senior enough, is really, really, really limiting. (Katrina Bolton, journalist, ABC)

She said many elders did not trust journalists and she would approach younger community members for information:

There's no affection towards the media among some of the older people. When you blast in there and shove a camera in their face and want them to talk quickly or in brief answers, it's just so culturally clashing. So you get that problem where the sort of young articulate person ... gives you a great background briefing and says all the things you need to hear and then says 'Oh, but I can't say it'.

Understanding the social dynamics of an indigenous society can assist journalists in their quest for comment but this is not always apparent to reporters. Bolton described her approach on a court story at Borrooloola:

I just went and said, 'do you mind if I sit down with your mob', and everyone kind of just stayed fairly silent and I sat down. I didn't start talking straight away and slowly I did a little and not just to one person, but a few people, and suggested the idea that maybe they might talk with me and why. But also said things like if you want to sit together and pick one person to talk, but you want to sit together that's OK, and those kind of things that are sort of barriers to people, but no one ever really explains to you as a journalist that perhaps it might make — the camera men don't like it — think that perhaps it might make all the difference if people could feel that they're sitting together as a group and they pick who they want to talk out of that group, but they're physically there together. So that's important, might mean the difference between getting a piece from them or not.

Communication technology could also be a barrier. Bolton commented on the fact that often people in remote communities do not have a telephone journalists can call. Gosford said often people had no credit on their mobile phones and relied on text messages more heavily than other mobile phone users. He also said it was a widespread practice in remote settlements to give phones away and to swap phones with family members:

You have to talk to people through their institutions. A lot of people don't have home phones and if they do people are highly mobile so often it's the institutions that people work through or are represented by, so you pass messages through. That's changed a fair bit with mobiles — but again, because what might have been someone's good contact a month ago is now their daughter's contact. 'Ah, yeah, mummy' and people are still highly mobile. 'Mummy's in Alice blah, blah, blah'.

The range of indigenous voices

A number of participants commented on the lack of diversity of indigenous voices heard through the news media. In section 3 of chapter 4 the reliance on a handful of conservative indigenous commentators is discussed. McLaughlin commented:

If you're not Marcia Langton, if you're not Warren Mundine or Noel Pearson then you know, you're not a legitimate black voice.

This study shows it is too simplistic to attribute this to news organisations' ideological agendas alone. Macinolty said it was also due to journalists failing to cultivate a wide circle of indigenous contacts, and the inconsistency and high turnover of journalists covering the round:

When I was working for ministers and so on you'd have journalists who'd ring up and say 'Oh, X has happened, who should I talk to?' Every media organisation has its own black book sort of thing, but it's usually pretty poor when it comes to Aboriginal affairs.

Bolton identified two other aspects to the problems with getting a wide range of indigenous voices in media reports. The first was a form of media burnout because journalists called them for comment constantly. She said there was also a 'lot of thuggery' on communities and that people who spoke to the news media often got 'a hard time' because of it:

Sometimes you've got people who do kind of speak up, but then the media demand is so great on so many issues that they're getting approached all the time on different topics and they feel why me, it's too hard, and they get shit from people. You know, awful pressure and nasty comments and that kind of stuff and that makes them reluctant to speak again.

Some journalists also commented that, unlike other sources who would approach them with story ideas, their 'remote' indigenous contacts did not seek them out:

If they ever come to town it's very rare that they look you up, which is a pity. It's just not their way, they just don't do it ... it's not their style to sort of come knocking on the door because I think they just naturally feel a bit intimidated. (Murray McLaughlin, ABC)

Gaining cultural competence

A few journalists said they had gained cultural competence through their work for indigenous-owned and controlled organisations. Some learned in the field and from other professionals with deep experience working with indigenous peoples.

Macinolty attributed his excellent indigenous contacts and well-developed sense for indigenous stories to his experience working with indigenous organisations for many years before writing for publications including *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He said he did not find it difficult to find agenda-setting issues:

I remember when I was working for the *Herald* I was getting pages 1, 3 and 5 really regularly because the stories I was getting were really fantastic.

A few specialists described how they developed their cultural competence from other non-indigenous people with good knowledge of indigenous cultures and people:

I've talked a lot with people who work [with indigenous people] — friends of mine and my sister, who works as a lawyer down in Central Australia, who has to talk to Aboriginals about usually really sensitive issues, like assaults. I talk to her about how she

does it. I've talked to a lot of white people in communities over the years about what faux pas I might be making without realising it. (Katrina Bolton, journalist, ABC)

'Whitefella gatekeepers' and 'two-way capital'

As discussed in chapter 3, gaining access to the community of Yirrkala and Yolgnu research participants depended on gaining the interest and trust of key *balanda* (non-indigenous) people in the first instance. Journalists commented that they also had to negotiate entry and access through these people. They described them as 'gatekeepers'. Since White conducted his study of an editor's daily news selection at a wire service (White, 1950), there has been a rich vein of communication research on news selection. Gatekeeping is the process by which the vast array of potential news messages are sifted and shaped into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). It is often defined as a series of decision points at which news items are either continued or halted as they pass along news channels from source to reporter to a series of editors. However, the gatekeeping process is also thought of as more than just selection, to include how messages are shaped, timed for dissemination, and handled:

Gatekeeping in mass communication can be seen as the overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed. (Shoemaker et al., 2001, p. 233)

Murdoch said 'whitefella gatekeepers' played a pivotal role in his relationship with indigenous leaders and organisations, including the Northern Land Council. He described communities as having 'whitefella protection' and defined the role of these gatekeepers as telling indigenous people 'what to do and what to say'. He emphasised that 'whitefella gatekeepers' had their own agendas, which shaped the dialogue with journalists:

There's always a whitefella behind it, you know the advisors, and they've always got agendas so you can find yourself dealing as much with a white guy as you do with a blackfella ... the blackfellas up here, the leaders, usually they've got white advisors, out on the communities there's usually white advisors.

Gosford offered a different view on the role of 'whitefella gatekeepers'. He attributed their importance for reporters to the fact they were easily contactable, which was

crucial for journalists who needed comments, interviews and background to meet the news cycle and their deadlines:

I think that's a general rule across the board because they're the points of stability. The points of constant change are the Aboriginal people, they'll be in Yuendumu one day, they'll be in Lagumanu for a ceremony the next week. They'll be in Alice Springs for a meeting of a board that they're sitting on the week after that. They'll be away at a funeral, blah, blah, blah. They'll be back in Yuendumu at work etcetera.

Bolton described whitefellas in communities as 'non-indigenous brokers' and said she relied on them for story ideas and setting up contact with indigenous sources because it was difficult to make and maintain strong indigenous contacts:

They're very rarely indigenous people who are your direct contacts. They're usually the white people working for indigenous organisations. Preferably the long termers, and then they can sometimes be a bridge to indigenous people. But I've found that it's very rarely a direct connection. There's almost always a non-indigenous kind of broker or at least introducer, because we never seem to have time in communities to actually stop and meet people properly. I think the clash between white culture and indigenous culture is so great there that you don't have time to build rapport with someone who you haven't done a story with, so you're more pointed at them. You may form a kind of bond through doing a story and then be able to draw on that person later and I really try to do that, but on that first contact it's almost always a non-indigenous staffer at an indigenous organisation.

Gosford said reporters who were 'parachuted' in by the eastern seaboard news media and local 'packager' journalists were more reliant on 'whitefella gatekeepers' than indigenous reporting specialists such as Murdoch and Bolton. He said they 'tend to grab at what [they] can get easiest and earliest':

Whether that's someone walking down the street or someone that's nominated as the spokesperson, usually by a white person that you deal with. So your gatekeeper will be a whitefella.

Many of the people who participated in this study have knowledge and experience in one or more of the fields that interact in the wider social space where bilingual education policy is made and discussed. Through the interviews this has emerged as an important factor in the way these agents circulate in different fields associated with bilingual education and bring their habitus from one area to bear on another, often to exercise particular forms of influence in the policy process or public discussion. Ball and Exley (2010) described this kind of movement as an important

phenomenon in policy networks, which they refer to as 'straddling'. This describes how some policy actors move between sectors and fields. They argued further that:

One of the defining characteristics of many of the key participants in policy networks is their ability to move between worlds — they practice what they preach by breaching traditional boundaries and being flexible and adaptable. They are what Stone (2000) calls 'knowledge actors'. (Ball & Exley, 2010, p. 158)

I extend Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and cross-field effects to suggest 'two-way capital' is a localised form of capital and that 'whitefella gatekeepers' are an identifiable set of actors in the field who can be understood to possess 'two-way capital'.

The importance of capital can be understood through knowing that specific forms of economic and cultural capital vary within each field and within them, and that individuals and organisations compete, consciously or unconsciously, to valorise those forms of capital they possess (Benson, 2004). Symbolic capital, which is obtained through reputation and prestige and depends completely on people believing the individual possesses valuable qualities, can therefore be understood as the 'energy that drives the development of a field through time' (Moore, 2008, p. 105). The relative social power of agents depends on their positions within fields and the relative position of the fields in which they engage (Bourdieu, 1977). Both symbolic capital and habitus can be approached in terms of two dimensions: accomplishment and transposability. Moore (2008) explained that some agents may be highly accomplished, but only in a limited number of fields. A person with great accomplishments that transfer across a broad spectrum of social spaces has more symbolic capital. Bourdieu's ideas about capital offer ways of understanding how an individual can have an impact in one field or across many (Waller, 2010c).

In *On television* (1998), Bourdieu discussed how the field of journalism has infiltrated the field of politics and, as discussed in chapter 3, scholars working in his field-based tradition have extended this idea to examine the news media's effects on other areas of social life, including the field of education (Lingard, Taylor & Rawolle, 2005; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Stack, 2007a). But cross-field effects are not a phenomenon restricted to journalism. A number of non-journalist participants, including

academics Brian Devlin and Tess Lea, provided examples of how they have taken their practices and habitus from one field and influenced another field. For example, Federal Labor Senator for the Northern Territory Trish Crossin worked as an early childhood educator at Yirrkala before moving into federal politics. She has taken her knowledge and skills in early education and her deep familiarity with the bilingual program at Yirrkala into Federal Parliament to advocate for indigenous people's right to educate their children in their own languages (Crossin, 2009). She relies on empirical evidence to support her argument that young children learn best in their first language, as well as her experience as a teacher and social standing in the community at Yirrkala. In her opening remarks in a speech to Federal Parliament on 28 October 2009, she said:

I had the privilege of teaching in a bilingual school at Yirrkala for five years in the early eighties, so I come to this debate with some *knowledge and experience* (my italics). (Crossin, 2009)

Crossin can be understood to have what I term 'two-way capital'. 'Two-way capital' is an expression of the correlation between informational capital in terms of people's knowledge, social capital based on connections and group membership, as well as symbolic capital because this informational and social capital is perceived and recognised as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1987, pp. 3–4). 'Two-way capital' embodies the Yolgnu Ganma concept of two-way as a particular ecology of knowledge, connection and recognition (Marika, 1999, 2008; Marika et al., 2009). This informs people's positions on the issue of bilingual education as well as their practices in relation to the policy/public discussion of the issue. A handful of journalists, and others, including policy actors, academics and indigenous people such as Mandawuy Yunupingu, have 'two-way capital' that stems from their media and/or political habitus and their cultural capital within those fields, as well as their extensive knowledge, experience and cultural capital within indigenous public spheres because they have lived and/or worked in indigenous communities.

'Whitefella gatekeepers' can be understood to possess 'two-way capital'. Participants' observations suggest fluidity is a defining characteristic of the indigenous reporting field, with a high turnover of journalists and a high degree of mobility among

indigenous sources. Described as points of stability, this position in the field affords 'whitefella gatekeepers' the power to mediate relationships between news media and indigenous people, with both fields recognising their expertise and standing, and relying on their skills and connections in and across the fields. One participant's description of them as 'brokers' suggests they also have the power to negotiate and make deals on behalf of all parties.

Economics of remoteness

The costs of time, resources, travel and interpreter services were identified by almost all journalist participants as major factors that affected their reporting on 'remote' indigenous communities. They also attributed many of the problems with indigenous affairs reporting to these factors. Most said their main opportunities to travel to these places were when government ministers took them along in their planes:

You can always bet that it's an event that suits the government's agenda. (Murray McLaughlin, journalist, ABC)

They described the efforts they made to travel to communities independently and stressed the importance of this for 'hunter-gatherer' reporting. *The Australian's* Tony Koch provided the insight that both major media outlets and national policy development were remote from the Northern Territory's indigenous populations and therefore journalists needed to get out to 'remote' settlements independently to find out what was happening there:

You know all your policy is Canberra based ... You see the major newspapers, Brisbane Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, the policy is made in Canberra mostly but it's implemented so far away ... you've got to go to the communities and spend some time there, spend some days there ... and find out what's really going on.

McLaughlin said that access to 'remote' settlements was crucial because it was the only way to make contact with relevant indigenous sources:

I want to be out there. That's the only way. That's where these people are. They're not going to come to you.

Bolton said she was constantly aware of the need to contain costs, which was a newsroom practice that was often unspoken. She said this meant she had to be personally resourceful in her newsgathering in 'remote' locations:

It's stressful. There's a lot of pressure to keep costs down so that can involve ... It's odd you know, I feel that pressure very strongly yet little is actually voiced about it, but in practice it means in the past I have, even at points, I've even rung up people I haven't met and say can I stay at your house and can my camera man stay at your house ... There are times when we've paid for our accommodation, but there is a pressure there and there's a real consciousness of making our dollars stretch.

Traditional news organisations including newspapers and television are under economic pressure from falling circulations and major changes in the media landscape due to the rise of new media (Deuze, 2005). As a result there is less time to produce reports, fewer reporters, and budgets for travel have been reduced (Davies, 2008; Lee-Wright et al., 2011). Newsrooms must decide how their limited resources will be allocated, which can be determined by what they perceive their audiences' news preferences to be:

For me to go to the Torres Strait and do a week up there with a photographer, my editor pointed out to me a couple of years ago that he can actually send a journalist on an entire Ashes tour of England for cheaper for two months, you know. It costs \$6000 or \$7000 to fly there and hire boats and charter planes and get around. So there's that little inhibitor ... (Tony Koch, journalist, *The Australian*)

McLaughlin gave the example of the \$5000–\$6000 cost to travel to a community in the Arafura Swamp to cover an education issue for the ABC's *7.30 Report*:

It was a great yarn, but in the scheme of things that's an expensive story. There wouldn't be many stories done out of Sydney for example, which cost that sort of money in hard cash. We're not talking below the line, just labour and the cost of taking a camera crew ... because that's just a constant challenge ... we're talking above the line stuff here. So I'd be, per story, I'd be the most expensive reporter in the land, but that's only because of the huge distances you know, you chew up a hell of a lot of fuel.

The wider logic of journalism, expressed through news values (Gans, 2003) and imagined audiences (Matthews, 2008), also play a role in determining what resources the eastern seaboard news media will allocate to covering indigenous affairs in the Northern Territory. Participants said major political or policy announcements, staged events or stories with a high threshold of conflict are more likely to be sponsored than a piece of investigative journalism:

There's nowhere to stay, it costs a fortune, so unless it's something that's going to get up on the front page there's not a commitment from the bosses. They're difficult. To go anywhere it's a huge effort. (Lindsay Murdoch, journalist, Fairfax)

Bolton said the ABC had supported her to do some investigative work:

... while there's a real battle to keep costs at a minimum, it's been under ABC steam that got us there.

However, there were occasions when she had pursued a story on her own time and at her own cost because the ABC could not provide the resources:

In the end, I flew myself down there, borrowed my sister's bicycle and did it on my own time. They didn't ... I really quite despaired at how little, at how it's been like that. The stories I'm most proud of, I've done almost all on my own time, sometimes footing the bill.³³

Bolton and other ABC journalists said the organisation's policy was that it paid for its reporters' travel costs. However, Bolton said

... the practice is often we attempt to bum lifts ... and especially when there's sort of event based or announcement based stuff that's particularly when we're trying to hitch rides or keep down costs.

Murdoch said Fairfax was 'cutting corners mainly because of the cost of it'. This included strategies such as sending the territory-based staff photographer Glenn Campbell out bush while Murdoch used the telephone and other resources to write the accompanying story from his base in Darwin, where he could be working on other stories at the same time:

Unless someone's flying you out there, you've got to hire a plane usually, or drive vast distances on bad roads and ... And you've got stuff to do in town too. I mean, if you're Fairfax's only guy on the ground here, if you go out to a community for a week or... (Lindsay Murdoch, journalist, Fairfax)

Others described creative ways of negotiating obstacles presented by their news organisations, such as limited resources for travel. Senior writer with *The Australian*, Tony Koch, revealed one of his most successful techniques for maintaining direct contact with people living in 'remote' settlements:

With News Ltd, we've got a 1300 number so you can ring free from any phone anywhere in Australia. And I just put that number all around, all the communities, anywhere, on cards, anyone that wants to talk to me can just pick up the yellow phone.

³³ Here Bolton is discussing research she conducted for her ABC radio documentary, 'Drink, death and dollars'. This piece of journalism won the 2011 Walkley Award for best radio documentary.

Journalists who accompany government ministers on trips to ‘remote’ settlements are constrained in what they can cover during the short time they are there.

McLaughlin said it was difficult to break away from the minister’s program to find out what else was going on. Murdoch commented that unless the government provided transport these trips would not receive media coverage:

We don’t have to pay for those flights so that’s why we readily jump at them, but if we had to pay for ourselves, when you’re looking at \$5000–\$6000 a day to get out to these places, it’s too much. Editors won’t pay it.

Journalists’ personal orientations: Social justice and the public good

Marchetti (2005) said it is not only professional trajectories but educational and social influences that must be understood if one wants to compare the differences to understand the relationship between social fields and the production of news.

The journalists interviewed come with their own individual histories and experiences, which can be seen to influence their approaches (Stack, 2007a).

Marchetti (2005) said sometimes specialists from the field in question who have journalistic skills are hired for professional and commercial reasons — ‘knowledge of the issue’ can be crucial for credibility, especially with politically sensitive topics such as indigenous affairs. Some participants fit this category of being hired because of their knowledge of indigenous public spheres, including Chips Macinolty and Bob Gosford. Graham Ring was engaged by *The National Indigenous Times* to write opinion and commentary after many years of work in and for indigenous organisations. Marchetti (2005) said sometimes social actors circulate from one space to another or are in an in-between state. As stated previously, many study participants have circulated in two or more fields that make up the bilingual education policy field. This includes the indigenous field, journalism, education, academia, politics and indigenous organisations. Some of these participants also possess ‘two-way capital’.

The indigenous reporting specialists who were interviewed have a social justice orientation and a genuine desire to engage with indigenous public spheres. They did not see their role as influencing policy, but they did express a desire to make a

difference to the lived experience of indigenous people. They feel strongly about the responsibility to raise issues of injustice, disadvantage and dysfunction in the communities they report on, and at times their reporting generates crisis stories and intractable policy debates. As noted by McCallum, Waller and Meadows (2012b), these agenda-setting journalists often break the big stories that initiate major policy change:

I was really the first one I suppose, to raise the issue of violence against women and children in communities 20 years ago and the shit I got into. A white male having the audacity to do this and it went on for three or four years before, more than that actually, before Noel Pearson rang me up one day out of the blue and said you're saying the things I should be saying, I want to talk to you and then it went from there. And I nearly kissed the guy because I was just so sick of it. I was sick of going to communities and doing it, and just getting shit put on me and everything else, but somebody had to do it. (Tony Koch, journalist, *The Australian*)

Some said they were committed to presenting positive accounts about indigenous people and highlighting injustice. Marchetti (2005) said often specialists are stigmatised as captured by their sources, or serving as de facto spokespeople for the field they report on. They can be accused of having a narrow vision. McLaughlin justified his reporting style:

Negative stories about Aboriginal communities are dead easy. I think that I prefer a more positive path deliberately ... there might be criticism that I've ignored perhaps the hard and more negative stuff — deliberately ignored it but it's been my preference to look for stories and actively pursue stories that have positive contexts. There's plenty of positive stuff out there. It's not all fucking doom and gloom. There are healthy, functioning communities out there. It's not all mayhem, doom and gloom and disaster out there. That's been my preference and I don't know how that developed but it's just the way it's worked out.

Taking on an advocacy role depends on the media organisation's politics as well. For example, Chris Graham, who edited *National Indigenous Times*, had no qualms about being partisan:

So, I'm a journalist but I'm very open about the fact that I campaign for Aboriginal rights and if people don't like that, well, they don't have to read it.

Some attributed their social justice orientation to their education, while others said early reporting experiences had shaped their attitudes. Veteran journalist Peter Reese recalled his earliest experiences of reporting indigenous affairs from the Canberra Press Gallery in the 1970s:

So to ... have these events unfolding before my eyes and to have demonstrations as well and witness police brutality — dragging people like Bobby Sykes and friends off on their backs along the ground and throwing them in the paddy wagon — it really opened my eyes and made me very aware of the disparity in society that Aboriginals have.

Ring said the social justice orientation in his journalism came from his Catholic school education and studying politics at university:

I was always pondering how you get the message across to people, how you give people a feeling for the kind of discrimination, mistreatment, dispossession all that kind of stuff, it clearly wasn't cutting through [in the journalism] that was around.

Bolton said:

I guess one of the things that I enjoy personally is social justice kind of stuff... and a lot of that by definition is black stuff.

The journalists interviewed had personal experiences with indigenous people and issues that influenced how they understood indigenous policy and bilingual education policy in particular, but it was the larger logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1990) that determined what they saw as a 'good' story about 'remote' communities and what was needed to convey the story to their imagined audience.

The subfield and bilingual education

The impact of news on the decision to dismantle bilingual education in 2008 is detailed in chapter section 4 of chapter 4. However, there are two points to make here about the subfield and the coverage. The first relates to the economics of remoteness. Gosford was living at Yuendumu, which is home to one of the nine schools affected by the decision, when he was writing about it. None of the other journalists who were interviewed travelled to Yirrkala or other affected communities to cover the issue in 2008, but they did report on it from Darwin or other centres. Section 2 of chapter 4 discusses the news commentary on indigenous languages and education in the lead-up to the policy change. These articles were mainly published in *The Australian* and were written from the eastern seaboard of Australia.

Yolngu participants commented that their perspective was almost completely absent from media discussion of the decision to dismantle the bilingual education policy in 2008. They emphasised the need for journalists and commentators to visit their

communities to gain their perspective, which as Connell (2007a, 2012) emphasised is based in their land. The Yolngu elder who spoke on behalf of her people said:

The media's got to go more out to the community and talk to people outside the school a bit more and find out why our school has to put up with things that are unacceptable in Yolngu terms, in Yolngu perspective ... that's the perspective that needs to be emphasised more.

And a senior Yolngu teacher from a homeland community who participated in the study said:

It is very important for both indigenous and non-indigenous that everyone should share the ideas and the philosophy together. The land is very important and our culture is very important as well, but there is more significance in both worlds — the two worlds — how our culture and *napaki* (non-indigenous) live together.

She said no journalist or politician had visited her community to look at its bilingual program in recent years. She wanted the opportunity to show them her country, which was essential because she could only explain how the curriculum works and why it is crucial by discussing it through relationship to land. Therefore, if journalists are to understand and be able to reflect the Yolngu perspective they need to consider the issue of language through its relationship to land, an idea that is reflected in the title of the most recent government report on indigenous languages in education, *Our land, our languages* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012). Connell (2007b) argued:

It is impossible to understand Yolngu social structure without locating it in its particular landscape. The land is *part* [author italics] of the social order ... the land is therefore capable of entering into organised social knowledge and playing a central role in representations of society. (Connell, 2007b, p. 200)

As already discussed, getting to indigenous communities is difficult for mainstream journalists because of time and cost constraints, as well as the values of their newsrooms. Production requirements can present a further layer of difficulty as well. Marchetti (2005) argued that the culture and practices of news organisations can act to constrain specialist reporters in their coverage of issues. The production needs, routines and priorities of broadcast news affected editorial decisions on the story:

I can remember wrestling with it, but it was an incredibly difficult story for television because at one level it's quite ethereal really because you're talking about high policy, and very academic ... it can be reduced to studies of serious research and that just ain't

the stuff of news and current affairs really. It's the stuff of good academic argy bargy. But, it ain't really made for television. It's tough, you know, good for print, which is why Gosford did quite a good job of it for *Crikey*, but what do you do for pictures, well you go into a classroom and it's just another classroom really because you can't actually impart the education part of it. (Murray McLaughlin, journalist, ABC)

The complexity of the issue was also a barrier for radio news journalists, who have very little time to explain the background or the empirical research:

So, there's some stuff with bilingual like when you're trying to get across the basic sort of stuff ... If you do a radio story for Radio News you've got three to four sentences and a 10 to 20 second grab to get the whole story across. So it's kind of like once you've done the basics there isn't room apart from probably one sentence left to say what someone's saying about it. So, you're quite constrained. (Katrina Bolton, journalist, ABC)

In his research on the mediatization of an Australian education policy, Rawolle, who also works in Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research, concluded:

Journalists are differently positioned to make informed comment on educational policy as a result of editorial priorities and specialisation. Therefore public and policy debate on educational issues is equally dependent on strong and diverse journalistic fields. (Rawolle, 2010, p. 36)

This analysis suggests the subfield needs to be strengthened so well informed journalistic work on bilingual education can inform public and policy debate. Study participants made a number of suggestions for positive change, which are discussed in the following section.

Building capital in the subfield

Participants offered suggestions for improving the level of professionalisation and participation in the remote indigenous affairs reporting subfield. Several commented on the need for cultural competence education for journalists who report on 'remote' indigenous communities. Macinolty identified a strong need for reporters to undertake training in indigenous languages, kinship and governance systems. Such courses are available, including Flinders University's Pitjantjatjara summer school, which runs for two weeks every January (Waller, 2012a). Charles Darwin University offers courses in Yolngu matha.

Another suggestion from indigenous reporting specialists was for large news organisations to invest in reporters' relationships with indigenous contacts. One said major news outlets should:

Say OK, take three weeks, go on a road trip, make connections, don't go out, like don't just fly in, film and fuck off. Just go out, talk to people, meet the people, find out what's going on, get phone numbers. And then it would be such a great investment in future stories and future relationships, because you need to be able to ring up ... and go 'What's going on, I've been told this', and if you just constantly do the blast in blast out, you lose all that.

One idea was that the ABC's Darwin newsroom could provide specialist training for indigenous affairs reporting and it was suggested those who were interested in developing these skills would need to be based there for a minimum of two years.

Several journalists said developing practices of reciprocity (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007; Smith, 2004) could improve relations between reporters and their indigenous sources. Koch discussed this notion in section 2 of this chapter. Bolton said:

Something happens at say, Borrooloola. I've got a few people I can call because they've met me, I've dealt with them respectfully, I've done the follow-up which also wasn't supported at an institutional level, by like sending them a DVD copy of the stories that we've done and that kind for stuff. Like those sorts of things, even getting a CD I have to go and knock on someone's door and ask for one CD and one case and then I get grumbled at. When you do that then the next time you need to find out, or even get a barometer on almost anything that's going on, you've at least got one person, an indigenous person you can call and say, 'hi, someone you know. Hey, do you know anything about this'. But without, yeah, there's just no time put in to developing these relationships or facilitating them so that they're there when you need them.

If the news industry acted on these suggestions it would go some way to addressing the issues Yolngu have identified as problematic in public discussion of bilingual education policy, especially reporters spending time on their country to gain an understanding of the issue from their perspective.

Conclusions

Using Marchetti's set of variables in conjunction with participants' accounts of their journalism practices has revealed that reporting on 'remote' indigenous communities is a weak, but nevertheless distinct, subfield of Australian journalism. Its

distinguishing features include inconsistency and lack of specialist knowledge due to 'parachute journalism' and the high turnover and inexperience of territory-based general reporters tasked with covering indigenous stories; the economics of distance; cultural competence; the centrality of 'whitefella gatekeepers' due to the fluidity in the field; and a social justice orientation on the part of journalists who are dedicated to presenting indigenous perspectives. These factors have been shown to shape the coverage of the bilingual education policy debate. In particular, participants have identified a failure to listen to and relay indigenous perspectives.

In the following section I propose a model of academic journalism based in indigenous research methodologies and journalism practice. It is designed to foster cultural competence and work towards achieving media and social justice for indigenous people in the Northern Territory.

Section 2: Learning in both worlds: academic research, academic journalism

I return now to the *Ganma* metaphor to explore the connections I have made between indigenous research ethics and journalism practice, and between academic research, academic journalism and mainstream news media. I use the metaphor here to describe my southern theory (Connell, 2007) approach of mixing of indigenous and *balanda* streams of knowledge for the creation of a new ethical framework for indigenous reporting. I use my own practice as an academic journalist and the feature article written as an outcome of this project (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003; Waller, 2011a) to argue that works of journalism by journalism academics can be valuable outcomes of research without making the claim that they are scholarly works *per se* (Bacon, 2012). I will also discuss the 'experimental' possibilities such works of journalism offer for 'testing' research findings, concepts and theories.

Chapter 3 discusses the research design, consent and interviewing processes with Yolngu who participated in the study. It also explains how writing mainstream journalism on the issue of bilingual education policy from their viewpoint was

agreed upon as an important outcome for the project. Their ongoing consent to participate rested upon me agreeing to wear my journalist hat as well as my academic hat. The clear and strong desire they expressed for me to write for the mainstream media on the topic has generated the important finding that Yolngu think news media coverage can have a positive influence on policy discussion and outcomes for their community. They revealed their media-related practices through their experience of the 'Don't cut off our tongues campaign' (see chapter 4) in 1998–99 and their insights about the importance of their perspective being heard through the eastern seaboard media as a strategy for being heard in the policy process in 2008.

Writing *Learning in both worlds* (Waller, 2011a) (see appendix 1) in collaboration with Yolngu participants is a key outcome of my PhD project. First, this piece of journalism places my research within a critical studies paradigm, which is overtly political (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) because it advocates for the rights of Yolngu under section 14.1 of the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Smith, 2004). It is a concrete outcome of research that has the explicit aim of contributing to their self-determination and liberation struggle, as defined and controlled by their community (Rigney, 1999, p. 109). A second outcome of this part of the project is the development of a new ethical model for journalists reporting on indigenous people and affairs (Waller, 2010b). The model evolved through the process of gaining ethics approval for this project and my own practice of writing journalism within this indigenous ethical framework (Waller 2011a, 2012a, 2012d). The third outcome is the emergence of a new form of academic journalism (Waller, 2012c).

Veteran indigenous affairs reporter Tony Koch³⁴, who participated in this study, emphasised the importance of respect, trust and listening in his journalism practice (Waller, 2010b). This section of the findings draws on Koch's practices, as well as the

³⁴ This thesis is concerned with reporter Tony Koch's newsgathering practices. It makes no attempt to analyse the journalism that results. Nor should it be read as an endorsement of *The Australian's* coverage of indigenous affairs in general.

recent scholarship on the politics and value of listening (Dreher, 2010; Thill, 2010; O'Neill, 2010), to support the proposal that indigenous research ethics provide a concrete framework for improving media representations of indigenous people and their access to news media. The university ethics process cannot replicate the understanding Koch has gained from 25 years of interacting with indigenous people and their communities. However, I argue it provides a pathway along which journalism academics and their students can learn to engage with indigenous people, navigate indigenous public spheres and produce high quality reporting that reflects indigenous peoples' aspirations. Journalists within the academy, who are not subject to the commercial or organisational pressures of the news industry discussed in the previous section, are especially well placed to collaborate with indigenous people to develop new ways of conducting research and telling stories that privilege their perspectives. Koch's newsgathering practice demonstrates that many principles of this progressive approach are also desirable and achievable in mainstream journalism.

Learning in both worlds (Waller, 2011a) can be described as a piece of 'experimental' journalism as it contributes to operationalising the ethical framework developed through this study (Waller, 2010b). It could also be used to 'test' some of the research findings, especially the local understanding of participants that Australia's eastern seaboard mainstream news media has little interest in the topic of bilingual education. It could also be used to 'test' whether a substantial piece of journalism that advocates an indigenous perspective could influence the bilingual education policy debate (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). The article and my discussion of the processes that drove its creation make a contribution to the ongoing debate within Journalism Studies about the relationship between journalism practice and research within the academy (Waller, 2012c). The 'Media Wars' of the 1990s broke out after Keith Windshuttle launched an attack on teaching theory, and cultural studies in particular, saying it had no place in Journalism Studies at universities³⁵.

³⁵ See 'Literacy wars' in section 1 of chapter 4 for a discussion of the 'History Wars' declared by conservative politicians and historians in 1996, in which Windshuttle was a key protagonist for the Right.

Turner (2000) said the substance of Windshuttle's accusations elicited a wave of approval among Australasian journalism educators:

Some of those who teach journalism are disinterested in the theoretical benefits produced by cultural studies because their orientation is primarily towards the journalism profession rather than towards an academic discipline ... since this group identifies with training journalism practitioners it is impatient with what looks like an excessively academic discourse getting in the way of professional knowledge. (Turner, 2000, p. 357)

These attitudes persist among some journalism academics (see, for example, Lamble, 2004; Knight, 2010), which others such as Lumby (1999), Meadows (1999), and Flew and Sternberg (1999) argue is highly damaging. Commenting on the situation recently, Harrington said that 'erecting high walls around the discipline will, in the long run, only stifle journalism as a discipline, not fortify it' (Harrington, 2012, p. 157).

Some Australasian journalism academics are developing the use of journalism as an academic methodology to create new understanding of issues of public concern and two academic outlets have been established for disseminating this work³⁶. Some of these academics work within a Positivist paradigm (see, for example, Lamble, 2004). They argue that journalism is a methodology because it has an established body of information-gathering techniques, objectivism as a framework for enquiry and its own code of ethics (Lamble, 2004). Bacon (2012) argued that the practice of journalism through its own methodologies is a form of practice-based research which is undertaken to gain knowledge and understanding that can lead to new or substantially improved insights (Bacon, 1998, 2012). I present a different form of academic journalism based in the argument that the journalism itself is not research, but can be a valuable *outcome* of research that can then be used and discussed in scholarly work (Waller, 2012c).

³⁶ *Research Journalism* is a peer reviewed online journal edited by Dr Kayt Davies, published through Edith Cowan University that publishes journalism as research. *Pacific Journalism Review* has a section called Frontline edited by Wendy Bacon, that publishes academic journalism.

A new ethical model for indigenous reporting

The new ethical model proposed here draws on the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003, 2007) and indigenous research methodologies discussed in chapter 3. It also relies upon recent scholarship on listening and study participant Tony Koch's newsgathering practices. I argue that journalism academics, their students and working journalists can be more effective agents of change if they look beyond professional ethics codes or reporting protocols, to indigenous research methodologies. The ethical framework advocated here requires reflexivity and meaningful engagement with communities and individuals. It involves structuring projects so they privilege indigenous voices and perspectives, thereby expanding, diversifying and challenging stereotypical media representations.

In-house protocols on indigenous reporting and professional reporting codes are regarded as important by the profession, with research finding that 'on some fronts, journalists take these guidelines very seriously, and ... they can be seen to shape the way at least some stories are told' (McCallum & Holland, 2010). However, while they may offer more detailed guidance than the Australian Journalists' Code of Ethics (Media Entertainment Arts Alliance, 1999), they do not go so far as disrupting the underlying news values and assumptions that have been identified as problematic (Dreher, 2010), nor do they require journalists to focus on the positive self-representation of indigenous communities (Burns & McKee, 1999). For example, both the ABC's protocol (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2009a) and the Australian Press Council's (2001) guidelines are mostly concerned with avoiding offence to indigenous people by using certain terms or interrupting cultural practices such as 'sorry business'. I question whether this is in fact a form of cultural politeness designed to minimise obstacles to the journalist getting the story, rather than encouraging genuine attempts to understand, respect and reflect cultural differences, which are the hallmarks of cultural competence (Betancourt et al., 2003).

Journalism academics have demonstrated a commitment to classroom discourses that require students to critically engage with the sensitivities of reporting on issues of race for many years (Eggerking & Plater, 1992; Hess & Waller, 2010). However, I suggest they could be more effective agents of change if they looked to indigenous research methodologies to inform their own journalism and encouraged their students to do the same. This would require pedagogical approaches that encouraged students to question the objectivist–positivist epistemology of much mainstream journalism, as well as distilling the principles of indigenous research methodologies for use in the classroom and the field. This kind of approach has been advanced by Meadows (2005), who suggested journalists need to learn how to navigate indigenous public spheres in the same way they learn to move within and between other information networks as part of their daily practices. He said enabling indigenous speaking positions requires journalists not only understand the impact of negative or stereotypical representation, but also the effects of silencing indigenous people and making them invisible:

Sensitivity to such issues might invoke reporting strategies such as using an indirect approach in news interviews, consultation and negotiation over meaning, acknowledgment of the existence of indigenous English and local languages, and making use of translators or subtitles where appropriate — in other words, negotiating indigenous identity through dialogue with indigenous public spheres. (Meadows, 2005, p. 36)

Re-imagining journalism

Conventional journalism presents itself as reflecting social reality and representing the most important events and issues; however, its representations construct public understanding of the everyday world and exclude many issues and events (Silverstone, 2007). This is understood to flow from the fact that journalism's professional standards police and reproduce the conventions of news rather than challenging or exploring new possibilities (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). Threadgold offered another perspective when she said the silences on marginalised groups within news discourse can be attributed to the great inequality in access to resources and credibility between marginalised people and elite sources, as well as the lack of 'dialogue of the co-operative kind which might recognise the story of the other as

worth telling or hearing/seeing' (Threadgold, 2006, p. 233). Dreher (2010) suggested that entrenched news values and existing story agendas often work to shape listening and speaking by focusing on addressing the stereotypes and concerns of 'mainstream' audiences, rather than providing ways through which marginalised voices can be heard. She said our thinking needs to change to include hearing and listening as well as speaking.

Dreher is one of a group of media scholars who are concerned with the politics and importance of listening. Husband (1996) advocated for a universal right to be understood, and Downing (2007) has built on Husband's work with his concept of 'active listening'. He argued that positive cultural change depends on developing a sense of obligation to listen to people who have been historically excluded from public conversation. Bickford (1996) said change can occur when we understand that how we listen determines the ways in which others can speak and be heard. In her work on listening, Dreher suggested that the nature of media power can be usefully rethought:

Media power might entail the privilege of choosing to listen or not, the power to enter into dialogue or not, to seek to comprehend the other or not, the privilege of demanding answers and explanations and justifications. The challenge for media change then might be how to undo the privilege of not listening at multiple levels — including the news conventions which structure journalists' hearing stories, and the presumed interest of the assumed audience in listening to others. (Dreher, 2010, p. 101)

Despite interventions by indigenous people, scholars, educators, and the news media itself, indigenous people and issues continue to be routinely represented in negative ways and there are documented cases of indigenous people's calls for action being ignored for decades by governments and news media (Thill, 2009). Fair representation and access to news media for indigenous people are more likely to be achieved by working outside or re-imagining news conventions, challenging routine source strategies and using different modes of information gathering and storytelling (Dreher, 2010). Journalism academics are well placed to take up the challenges of media change suggested here by working through the university ethics process, which facilitates dialogue with indigenous public spheres. New subjects as well as ways of storytelling can be developed from indigenous peoples' definitions of issues

and priorities for research. Different modes of information gathering would include working together to negotiate what will be investigated and how that inquiry will be carried out. Establishing meaningful relationships that extend beyond information collection can displace routine source strategies. Respecting indigenous cultures and knowledge, including people's right to be understood in their own languages, facilitates speaking and listening. The ethics process incorporates mechanisms designed to ensure research outcomes satisfy the needs and aspirations of indigenous people, which I argue can be works of journalism that tell the stories indigenous people want the world to hear.

Working within an indigenous ethical framework presents serious challenges to the conventional methodologies of mainstream non-indigenous journalism, which remain firmly rooted in the positivist-objectivist tradition (Lamble, 2004). A central logic of practice within the journalism field is that of objectivity (Gans, 1979; Schudson, 1995). Hearing 'legitimate' sources from different sides of an issue and neutrally reporting what is said remains the paramount aspiration of most journalists. However, indigenous research methodologies reject the idea that research is neutral and value free. Journalism's focus on objectivity has been critiqued heavily (Gans, 1979). For example, Mancini argued that Italian journalists, by focusing on themselves as neutral intermediaries, fail to see themselves as political actors (cited in Curran, 2005). Many journalists may no longer use the word 'objectivity', but it continues to be entrenched as an attainable and desirable goal. Hackett and Zhao (1998) maintained that fairness 'still implies the same old claim – that news is basically impartial, and independent of particular interests' (Hackett & Zhao, 1998, p. 59). In this paradigm the journalist is an independent figure who decides what is newsworthy, and balance and fairness mean treating everyone the same. This contrasts with indigenous research ethics where the relationship is one of collaboration rather than independence and the principles of fairness and justice mean that treating marginalised people equally will often involve treating them differently (Husband, 2000, p. 212)³⁷.

³⁷ See section 2.2.3 of the *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*, which concerns equality. It notes that: 'One of the values expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and

Indigenous research methodologies reject the notion of objectivity outright and privilege indigenous perspectives. I argue that working within this paradigm is a worthwhile challenge for journalism academics as well as their students, as it has the power to transform the ways indigenous peoples and issues are represented and discussed in public conversation. This approach gives no priority to news media production schedules, newsgathering routines, news values or journalistic independence. This means journalists within the academy, who are not subject to the commercial or organisational pressures of the news industry, are in a unique position to pursue this work with the support of their universities.

Journalism research of the kind advocated here can also translate into innovations in industry. Tony Koch of *The Australian* provided an example of how some of the approaches discussed in this paper can inform mainstream newsgathering. Koch's philosophy on reporting indigenous issues reflects a deep understanding of the spirit and values indigenous people demand in research, and his professional practice incorporates some of the indigenous research principles discussed here. These go well beyond the Australian Journalists' Code of Ethics or in-house reporting guidelines. I include Koch's insights here to show how moving journalism in the direction Meadows first suggested in 2005, and this paper supports, is achievable.

Tony Koch on seagulls: the importance of listening and returning

Tony Koch has been visiting indigenous communities in the Gulf Country, Cape York and the Torres Strait for 25 years. These communities are not just a part of his reporting round, they are the homes of longstanding friends and he chooses one as his holiday destination every year. Koch says his passion for Barramundi fishing helps his reporting:

I take my holidays up there ... every year I go to one of them. I've got a brother who's a mango farmer up in Bowen and he's a good boatie, so we just hook up and we go to one of the communities, stay there and we're always with the locals. Go camping with them

cultures is the equal value of people. One of the ways this is reflected is a commitment to distributive fairness and justice. Equality affirms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' right to be different. Equality as a value may sometimes be taken to mean sameness. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples hold strong beliefs that sameness is not equality. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have sought the elimination of "difference blindness" so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures can be appreciated and respected.' (NHMRC, 2007, p. 14)

and getting turtle eggs and everything else. Just living with them on the beach, having a great time. Meeting all their kids.

The time Koch spends on holidays relaxing and fishing with his brother and the locals helps him to maintain trust with the communities he writes about, which he says takes time and a lot of work because 'people are sick of journalists coming in and writing horrible things about them'. He said many of the reports he has written over the years on topics including violence and alcohol could be classed as quite negative; however, unlike many other journalists he is responsible to the people he writes about because he has connections with them that go well beyond the conventional reporter–source relationship. He is always returning to the communities he writes about and sits down with people face-to-face to discuss his work. He said he has had to justify himself to individuals and communities on many occasions, explaining his reasons for what he has written and why he believes an issue or event needs to be part of the national conversation. In academic research terms this discussion and negotiation can be understood as a process of gaining and maintaining peoples' consent for their continuing involvement in his journalistic research. Smith discussed the importance in indigenous research of the Maori concept of *kanohi kitea* or 'the seen face', which means 'being seen by the people — showing your face, turning up at important cultural events ... it is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained' (Smith, 2004, p. 15). In Australia, indigenous researchers point to the different layers of entry that must be negotiated when they seek information, while others describe their research as involving long-term relationships, which are established and extend beyond a research relationship to one involving families, communities, organisations and networks (Rigney, 1999; Marika et al., 2009). Koch described his journalism research in these terms.

According to Koch, geographical distance is a major challenge to the Australian media's ability to report well on 'remote' indigenous communities in northern Australia, as the major news outlets are in the south of the country and policy is made in Canberra, but implemented far away. Meadows (2005) emphasised the importance of journalists learning how to navigate indigenous public spheres and

Koch provides some examples of how he does this. He said an important part of his round is ensuring that he knows when people from remote communities are attending conferences and other major meetings in Brisbane or regional centres. Koch said these events are crucial for him to find out about current issues and maintain contact with communities. Despite the significant distances and expense, Koch also underlined the importance of reporters spending time and building relationships with 'remote' communities to do their jobs well:

With visiting Aboriginal communities, the first couple of years you don't hear much or see because they don't trust you. They don't know you. In Queensland there's this term, they call us 'seagulls' — politicians and journalists. Because they say that we fly in, shit on them and leave. So you have to get over being a seagull, and the only way to do that is they have to see you coming back all the time ... unless those reporters get off their butts and go out, and not just go out with the minister flying in the government jet and you know, be a seagull, drop in for a couple of hours and be given the candy coated version ... You've got to go to the communities and spend some time there, spend some days there ... to listen to the people talk ... to the old ladies ... and find out what's really going on.

The NMHRC guidelines say:

Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures respect is reinforced by and in turn strengthens dignity. A respectful relationship induces trust and co-operation. Strong culture is understood as a personal and collective framework built on respect and trust that promotes dignity and recognition. (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007, p. 11)

Koch stressed the importance of this principle for all journalists. He said there is an onus on reporters not only to respect, but to make a real effort to understand, indigenous peoples' worlds and values and that this is achieved through listening:

The best advice I can ever give anyone about reporting on communities is that you go there to listen. You don't go there to speak to them, you go there to listen and that's just a wonderful experience if you've got the patience for it.

Meadows and McCallum described Koch as 'an agenda setting journalist' in indigenous news³⁸, and he said that agenda is shaped to a significant extent by listening to indigenous people. The respect and understanding Koch brings to his work has been developed through 25 years spent interacting with indigenous people in their communities as a journalist, a friend and a fisherman, which is rare in

³⁸ Personal communication. Associate Professor Kerry McCallum and Professor Michael Meadows are the chief investigators on the Media and Indigenous Policy 1988–2009 Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP 0987457, 2009–2011).

Australian journalism. However, he is a senior writer with News Ltd's flagship publication, *The Australian*, and his reporting occurs within the confines of the news production cycle and values of the newspaper, just like that of all its journalists. The processes involved in fulfilling indigenous research ethics requirements at a university cannot replicate the understanding that comes from a quarter of a century of personal/professional experience. However, it can provide a valuable process for journalism academics, their students and working journalists who want to engage in dialogue with indigenous public spheres. It is important to note that journalism academics enjoy an editorial freedom that industry journalists can only dream about and it can be argued that journalism academics have an ethical responsibility to use that freedom to demonstrate what is possible.

The university ethics framework is far more rigorous than the Australian Journalists' Code of Ethics or professional protocols. It is a concrete path along which to explore the more nuanced approach to journalism practice Meadows was calling for in 2005. It involves learning to navigate indigenous public spheres, just as journalists learn to move easily within and between more familiar information networks as part of the everyday practice of newsgathering. It facilitates active listening and thereby enables indigenous speaking positions. Those journalism academics prepared to set aside positivist-objectivist methodologies and work within the ethical paradigm suggested here are in a particularly strong position to improve public and media discourses through meaningful partnerships with indigenous peoples. The article I wrote as an outcome of my research is an earnest attempt to do just that.

Writing 'Learning in both worlds'

As discussed in chapter 3, decolonising research is enmeshed in activism. From our first contact, Yolngu were more interested in what I could offer their community as a journalist in return for their participation, than what I could offer as a PhD student writing a thesis and conference papers. We agreed that I would produce a work of journalism for the mainstream media that presented their perspective and advocated for their policy position. Denzin & Lincoln (2008) describe this approach as 'decentring and redefining the field of research so the Western academy is not the

locus of authorising power that defines the research agenda' (2008, p. 38). My project had ethics clearance from the University of Canberra, which included writing works of journalism. The article was constructed upon the indigenous ethical framework I have described above.

Denzin & Lincoln stressed that decolonising research emphasises performativity:

It is not only concerned with building a theoretical foundation but researchers are engaged performatively in decolonising acts framed as activism, advocacy or critical reclamation. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 38)

The article was published by the online news and opinion outlet, *Inside Story*, almost one year after I had completed my fieldwork in North-east Arnhem Land. There were two reasons I did not write it sooner. The first was that I had further interviews to complete with members of the policy field who I believed might not be prepared to participate if they did not like what I wrote. The second goes to my journalistic habitus, especially my news sense (Benson & Neveu, 2005). The aims of the feature article were to present the Yolngu policy perspective, reach as wide an audience as possible and ideally to have an impact on public discussion that could influence the policy process. The wind did not blow the right way, according to my journalism 'nose', until I could spot a suitable opening in the national news agenda. The House of Representatives inquiry into indigenous languages (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee, 2011) announced in July 2011 provided an opportunity to link the bilingual education debate to a broader discussion about indigenous languages at a national level (see Waller, 2011a; 2011b; 2012a; 2012d).

There are strong similarities between ethnographic and journalistic methods (Gans, 1979; Waller, 2010c). My immersion in Yolngu society while conducting fieldwork provided much of the observation used in the work of journalism. I quote some material from my research interviews, from interviews that were conducted specifically for the news article, and draw upon the scholarly literature and news coverage of bilingual education. The article briefly discusses the Media and Indigenous Policy ARC Discovery Project my research contributes to and highlights a key finding about the role of the media in the 2008 policy change. I had to

undertake a considerable amount of routine journalistic research such as finding and checking facts and figures and gathering background information from websites, books and other secondary sources. In this sense, the journalism I produced is a hybrid of my academic research and journalism research, undertaken to meet a stated goal of the research.

Lack of interest from mainstream southern news media

Yolngu wanted the piece to be published in a metropolitan daily newspaper on the eastern seaboard of Australia, so they were the media outlets I approached first. Neither the *Sydney Morning Herald* nor *The Canberra Times* was interested in publishing the article. As ANU linguist Jane Simpson said of her own experience of trying to publish an opinion piece in *The Age*, there are many possible reasons, including that the article might be badly written, deadline and resource pressures or, as she was told by an editor, they have 'had their fill' of indigenous stories that week. A rejection email from the section editor I approached at *The Sydney Morning Herald* provides some evidence to support the local understanding of participants that the metropolitan news media is not interested in the bilingual education issue and does not believe its audience is either. The editor wrote:

It's not for me, now. I think you should try to find another home for it. Sorry.³⁹

The use of the term 'home' with its connotations of place and belonging, suggests this editor did not think the article belonged in her section. Editors' responses raised the question that, as well as the subject matter, perhaps the *Sydney Morning Herald* did not feel 'at home' with academic journalism. On the other hand, online journalism outlets in Australia including *Crikey*, *The Conversation*, *New Matilda* and *Inside Story*, which responded quickly to accept the article, welcome academic journalism into their 'home' pages. For example, *Crikey* has an arrangement with two universities to publish work by academics and journalism students (Posetti, 2011). *Inside Story* is produced by Swinburne University in partnership with *The Canberra Times* and the Copyright Agency Limited. Articles are published on the *Inside Story* website and an article from the site is often included in Forum, the news review

³⁹ Personal communication, 27 October 2011.

section of *The Canberra Times*. Content from *Inside Story* is also published in a monthly magazine and included as an insert in the print version of *The Canberra Times*. *Learning in both worlds* appeared in the 27 November 2011 issue of the magazine (Waller, 2011b). The magazine is also distributed nationally as a free publication available in independent bookshops. Benefits of online publication for academic journalists include reaching a highbrow audience, including decision-makers and the wider academic community. It also allows for the inclusion of hyperlinks to relevant scholarly articles, reports and other research material. Reaching a wider academic audience can be valuable for journalism academics doing cross-disciplinary work. It can expand their networks and unearth potential research collaborations with academics working in related fields. For example, after my article appeared I met with Professor John Altman of The Australian National University, who knew about my research as a result of reading the article. He is a leading academic opponent of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (Altman & Hinkson, 2007, 2010) and the author of many books and papers on indigenous policy. I was also contacted by Nicolas Rothwell, a senior writer on *The Australian*, who had previously declined to participate in my study. We had an informal conversation via email and he offered to meet me in Darwin to discuss the issues raised in the article further. I did not take him up on the invitation.

Inside Story editor Peter Brown submitted the article to *The Canberra Times* for publication in Forum but it was rejected. He said the site usually offered an international news feature for the slot, although the newspaper had published national news stories as well. It chose to run an article about the post-Gadaffi Arab Spring instead of the story about bilingual education. Brown said in an email he thought their decision not to publish had more to do with 'geography' — the space usually reserved for an international feature — than disinterest in the subject of bilingual education. As Cottle (2003) observed, the processes and formats of news have a great deal to do with media representation, rather than any ideological agenda. Patterns of representation come about through journalists acting as they are trained to — given the pressures, limitations and incentives they face in a highly

competitive market. He said to change this, journalists would have to undergo training where they confront the possible consequences of their news agendas and reporting practices and explore ways to prevent undesirable effects, but he doubts this idea would receive institutional support and that, given the pressures journalists are under, they would not be eager to pursue the issues. As Dreher (2010) argued, these routine news processes and formats can effectively shut out and silence marginalised voices.

For the average person, simply the appearance in the news of a person, object, or public act is enough to mean that they are important. The media bestows status and legitimacy on people, groups, issues and objects. But what is missing in the news is just as important as what is contained in the news (Couldry, 2010a). When people, groups, issues or objects are ignored or left out of news media coverage, they do not exist in the public sphere; and therefore they have no status or legitimacy (Dreher, 2010). Tuchman (1981) described this as 'symbolic annihilation'. Even when marginalised citizens' viewpoints are admitted, those views 'are further contextualized with symbolic cues that colour their credibility and salience for news audiences' (Bennett, 1996, p. 374). Tuchman said condemnations or trivialisations are further examples of symbolic annihilation (1981).

Journalism as a research instrument

Writing and placing the article provided a research instrument I could utilise in my scholarly work in several ways. First, the process of researching and writing the article contributed to operationalising the ethical framework developed through the university ethics process (Waller, 2010b). Reader feedback to *Inside Story* and discussion of the article in the Friends of Bilingual Learning Google group provide a measure for evaluating whether the ethical framework supported the desired outcome. The comments suggest these readers are not disinterested members of the public, but rather active members of the bilingual education lobby with an understanding of the Yolngu perspective:

It is a tremendously well-written and correct version of things at Yirrkala. Lisa has got so many things right, and has sympathetically reported the events and people's feelings and reactions. A real change, easy to read and the truth.

Lisa Waller has got it right, crafting a respectful and accurate account of the continual battles (war) Yolngu have fought for many years to have their land, ceremonies, culture and languages acknowledged, and their rights to continue utilising their land, ceremonies, culture and languages in contemporary Australia. Lisa has also shown us the long and significant history of Yolngu public contributions to wider Australian society ... Importantly, Multhara's voice can be heard, sharing with Lisa on her country at Garrthalala, the depth of Yolngu feelings, about land, culture, family and two-way education.

Lucky Lisa — reciprocity — well done.

This article should be read by everyone and serves an excellent model for us language activists. It's a clear and grounded summary of the issues that never devolves into righteousness and slogans. Of course, I think we have every right to be mad as hell but emotive language gives readers a license to switch off. Worse, it offers 'proof' to the Abbott's/Brough's/Scrymgour's of this world that we are somehow motivated by ideology over evidence (just as they are).

The main aims of the ethical framework are to ensure reciprocity with indigenous participants and privilege their perspectives (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003), which the comments suggest the article has succeeded in achieving.

Second, the process allowed me to index my experience against research participants' accounts of having difficulty getting stories about bilingual education through gatekeepers in metropolitan newsrooms. Academics recounted having opinion pieces rejected (see 4.2.1) and journalists reported having difficulty interesting editors in indigenous stories that did not fit the routine frames of violence, dysfunction and failure (McCallum, 2010). My experience of having the article rejected by several major metropolitan dailies aligns with participants' experiences, providing further evidence to support the argument that most editors find little interest in the subject and do not think it will appeal to their assumed audiences.

Third, publication of the article has allowed me to 'test'⁴⁰ whether news media coverage can amplify marginalised people's perspectives in the policy process, as the literature says (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). The 'experiment' suggests it

⁴⁰ I use the terms 'experiment' and 'test' in a qualitative sense to describe procedures for checking the quality, performance, and reliability of the ideas generated through this part of my study.

does. The article was a 'top read' in the influential Australian Policy Online⁴¹, ensuring it was brought to the attention of opinion and policymakers. In the week of publication I received an email from a highly placed public servant who participated in the study. He wrote: 'I talked with [NT Opposition Leader] Terry Mills, and he'd like to see it if you have the link.' It is possible to pinpoint the impact of the article through reader comments, any reference to it in Hansard, press releases, follow-up media interest and participants' comments.

Can the 'experiment' be replicated?

This form of 'experimental' journalism can be replicated by academics and their participants if they work together within a critical studies paradigm guided by liberation epistemologies (Rigney, 1999). As Dreher (2010) argued, fair representation and access to news media are more likely to be achieved by using different modes of information gathering and storytelling, as this 'experiment' does. This approach requires journalism academics to be committed to their research and its design supporting the self-determination struggle of their participants, as defined and controlled by their communities (Rigney, 1999, p. 109) The 'experiment' suggests that news media can amplify the perspectives of marginalised groups and that journalism academics are well placed to work with them towards these ends. This approach demands reflexivity on the part of researchers, acknowledging they are active participants in their field of research. It also rests on the assumption that research participants are in the best position to speak on their own behalf. This underpins my approach to research and is materialised through the Yolngu voices and perspectives in the work of journalism. The approach offers a number of benefits, including reciprocity with research participants; providing a research instrument for testing theories and findings; making research topics accessible for mainstream audiences; and developing journalism academics as public intellectuals. As Davies (2010) argued, it is also highly appropriate for academics to incorporate their own journalism practices in the nexus between their research and their teaching. Taking

⁴¹ Both pieces of journalism written for *Inside Story* as outcomes of my research appeared as 'Top Reads' on the Australian Policy Online website. See <http://apo.org.au/commentary/learning-both-worlds> as well as <http://apo.org.au/commentary/shift-monolingual-mood>

this southern theory approach (Connell, 2007) in my research has resulted in a distinctive Australian form of journalism that incorporates indigenous practices and knowledge in its construction.

Developing a definition

I have proposed a new concept in journalism research, but hesitate to name it or to define it too prescriptively at this early stage. However, I suggest it can be underpinned by a liberation epistemology; is produced by journalism academics; has approval by a university ethics committee; is published in mainstream news outlets; is not subject to academic peer review, but editorial review; is highly reflexive; designed in concert with participants as an *outcome* of research and has an 'experimental' dimension because it can be used as a research instrument to evaluate methodologies and 'test' findings. The results of such journalism 'experiments' may be reported and discussed in research outputs, contributing to the scholarship of journalism and culminating in full academic recognition of the work.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

When I think of Ganma I see the 'tri symbol'. I guess you could call it a triangle but it's not the angles that are important. It's the points and how they express for Yolngu the idea of knowledge. It's the linkages, and how they are made, that are important. (Yunipingu, 1994)

I have theorised the dynamic interplay between media practices and policy practices in the bilingual education policy field during a 20-year period and conclude that, while media power was a key factor, it was not even, external, or unidirectional. The media exerted considerable force at the key policy moments in 1998–99 and 2007–08 in and through the media-related practices of actors in the policy constellation. These media-related practices were shaped in response to media representation, and were also found to have influenced the way the policy was represented. The news media defined which knowledge (and audience) was of most worth, and in doing so, set up the conditions for certain truth claims about bilingual education to circulate and shape public and policy thinking. I have argued that in 2007–08 this was not only a case of neo-liberal ideology in action, it was also due to the logics and structures of the remote indigenous reporting subfield. In 1998–99 and 2008 the media-related practices of particular players in the policy field amplified certain voices in the news and resulted in different truth claims about bilingual education trumping others in the policy outcome.

My approach to generating new knowledge about this interplay has forged a number of new linkages between 'northern' and indigenous bodies of knowledge, as well as journalism and scholarly research. So in keeping with the Ganma concept, the aim of this conclusion is to highlight the major knowledge links that have been made, beginning with the two main methodological research aims as a way of discussing the value of my approach. I will then make some further concluding remarks about the findings. The first of the two methodological aims was:

1. To create a new and distinct ecology of knowledge for exploring the news media's role in a specific indigenous policy field. My objective was to make a contribution to the development of southern theory and connect it with the

project of democracy, which Connell (2007) says involves rethinking the land in social structure and dynamics from indigenous perspectives. It also involves rethinking the nature of social–scientific knowledge (epistemology, methods and forms of communication) ‘in a context of respect for intellectual traditions from the global periphery’ (Connell, 2007, p.viii).

This aim has been achieved through the way I have respectfully brought the *balanda* streams of knowledge together with indigenous and southern theories, perhaps most notably in the study design and development of my theorisation of the Yolngu public sphere (see chapter 4), which makes a direct link between traditional governance processes and public and policy discussion; between Yolgnu social theory and Habermas’s public sphere tradition (1986). This research makes an innovative contribution to Media and Communication Studies by demonstrating how indigenous epistemologies and knowledges can offer different perspectives and insights about media and indigeneity that can be brought into balance with northern theories to build southern theory. It dovetails with the second of my methodological aims, which links southern theory with the practice of journalism and activism in research. The second aim was:

2. The development of an academic form of journalism about indigenous people and issues that serves their self-determinist aims for scholarly research, based in indigenous perspectives and research methodologies (Waller, 2010b).

The research and thinking that has produced the model of academic journalism discussed in chapter 5 is in large part a response to Yolngu participants’ self-determinist aims for the research from the outset, which included writing works of journalism on the subject of bilingual education for mainstream news media audiences that present their perspective. This critical studies approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) has resulted in the model (Waller, 2010b) being based in the university ethics process, indigenous research methodologies and in response to the practices of participants in this study, including Yolngu and journalists. At the time of writing, five pieces of journalism produced using the model developed through this research

have been published and received positive feedback from Yolngu and other participants, as well as editors and audiences through comments on social media sites (Waller, 2011a, 2012a, 2012d; McCallum & Waller, 2012a, 2012b). In alignment with my arguments on the role of academic journalism and how it should be considered in relation to research and scholarship, I do not claim it as research output but as an important *outcome* of my research for this thesis and the contribution it makes to the *Media and Indigenous Policy* project and to public discussion of indigenous policy in Australia. This aspect of my research has also been an exercise in reflexivity. I have used my journalism and academic skills as an active participant in the field of my research, and have arguably made some impact on the media and policy discussion I have sought to analyse.

The mediatization of policy

This study has taken the policy-specific approach to understanding the relationship between news and policy advocated by Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten (2010). This accords with Bourdieu's position that understanding interactions between people or explaining social phenomenon must involve analysis of the social space, locating the object of investigation in its specific historical, geographic and relational context (Bourdieu, 1993a, 1994). Taking a policy-specific approach rejects generalisations about the relationship and allows for a more complex appreciation of the factors at play. It also sits comfortably with Connell's concept of 'dirty theory' – of theorising that is grounded in the land on which the research is based (Connell, 2007).

I have considered an indigenous policy that was of little or no interest to the news media for 20 years unless it became the subject of a political controversy (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). Indigenous language activists, including Yolngu, were able to penetrate the intimate dialogue between news media and the state in 1998–99, but this study supports Lester's (2007) finding that interruptions to mainstream media power by protest groups are only brief. Chapter 4 investigated the reasons for the general lack of media interest, including issues of physical and cultural remoteness, monolingualism and disconnection from mainstream news and

production values and temporal cycles. Participants expressed the view that the nation's monolingual mindset reinforces the news media's lack of interest because it perceives its audiences to have little interest in, or understanding of, the importance of indigenous languages.

This thesis reveals how intense media focus shaped the policy process at the two key moments of journalists' interest in 1998–99 and 2008, with different outcomes. The literature on news media and policymaking suggests that when journalists' interest is piqued, the policy will most likely be subjected to intense media scrutiny (Altheide & Johnson, 1980). This mediatization effect has been documented and analysed here to show the consequences for a specific policy when political actors become highly sensitive to the pressures of the media spotlight (Robinson, 2001) and policy decisions are shaped in relation to their media concerns and the wider discursive environment — in this case Reconciliation and the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

A key conclusion that can be drawn is the value of Couldry's (2004) practice approach for revealing changing configurations of media power because, as this study has shown, the field of practices is not flat. Chapters 4 and 5 document marked differences in journalists' practices and their relationships with governments, academics and indigenous sources in the field. It argues that these differences play out in the way media coverage is constructed, policies are discussed and made, and participants understand the production and reception of media texts. The 'intimate dialogue' between journalists and government discussed in chapter 4 did not only exclude Yolngu from public and policy discussion — a universalising point made about marginalised groups, news and policy in the literature (Terkildsen, 1998; Marsh, 2000, 2003; Johnson-Cartee, 2005). This idea has been extended through the southern theory approach taken here to conclude that this *specific* exclusion not only prevented Yolngu perspectives been aired, it had a direct impact on their lived experience. Government responding to media resulted in the loss of their education program, which is based in their land, culture and knowledge. However, in 1998–99 the discursive backdrop of Reconciliation afforded Yolngu the opportunity to swing

public opinion in favour of indigenous languages in education through a sophisticated media campaign based in their land and culture. There is evidence in media texts, the scholarly literature (Simpson et al., 2009) and the words of participants that, against the discursive backdrop of the Intervention in 2007–08, neo-conservative politicians and media commentators with a neo-liberal ideology who oppose bilingual education had the ear of the national news media. Participants said this resulted in bilingual education policy being defined as the main ‘problem of remote education’ for Northern Territory policymakers. This finding supports Guterriez et al.’s (2002) argument that, in the neo-liberal political climate, language and ability become surrogates for the larger category of race. Finally, participants’ accounts of the policy’s effective demise in 2008 provide strong evidence that education minister Marion Scrymgour’s decision to dismantle the policy without community consultation was a kneejerk reaction to the media spotlight.

Taking Couldry’s (2004) media-as-practice approach has enabled me to pinpoint how media-related practices are interwoven with many of the participants’ policy practices. My analysis of participants’ media-related practices at the key policy moments in 1999 and 2008 provides evidence to support the argument that the policy process was mediatized. In other words, the media-related practices of a range of policy actors resulted in the policy process being shaped to a significant degree by their media logic. These mediatized practices also shaped the media coverage, which in turn shaped the policy process (Strömbäck, 2011) in different ways at specific times. In 1999, Yolngu were able to use their media-related practices, such as hiring a media consultant with two-way capital to influence ‘the optics’ (McCallum & Waller, 2012a), and advance their arguments for retaining the program. In 2008 Strömbäck’s fourth stage of mediatization (2008) can be observed in the way government shaped its policy in relation to the news media with its ‘first four hours in English’ announcement. This study has revealed unevenness in the media-related power of policy actors in the field across time. Taking Couldry’s (2004) practice approach has helped to explore the reasons for the unevenness, such as differences in habitus

between journalists and academics, and the barriers that prevent journalists from visiting remote communities to gain indigenous policy perspectives.

Northern theories of mediatization beg to be critiqued from a southern perspective, just as theories of globalisation have been (Connell, 2007a). However, it was beyond the scope of this thesis to undertake such a project. Southern views of the processes that northern theories of mediatization claim to explain are needed to understand how media processes may be transforming, or being used to transform, the specific, located experiences of people in the Global South. Specifically, northern theories of mediatization do not take account of Yolngu perspectives about where we stand in the world specifically affecting not only our view or our practices, but what we can achieve, how we are represented, and how we are treated (Marika et al., 2009). The importance of land, and relationship to land in Australian indigenous theories, has been underlined by Connell (2007a, 2012) in her call for the development and recognition of southern theory:

The land is not irrelevant ... even in the citadels of globalisation. We have to understand its social significance in a complex dialectic of place and power, of which the history of colonisation and the consequent land rights struggles of indigenous people are key parts. (Connell, 2007a, p.209)

Directing the spotlight back on to the news media

The *Ganma* chapter flagged that, as this is an inductive study, research questions beyond those identified initially could emerge (Grbich, 2004). During the interviews it became clear the subfield of indigenous reporting in the Northern Territory required analysis because it is the arena in which the bilingual education coverage was generated. The first section of chapter 5 was therefore devoted to exploring its logic and operations. Working in Bourdieu's tradition of field-based research to interpret participants' accounts of their journalism practices has revealed that reporting on 'remote' indigenous communities in northern Australia is a weak, but nevertheless distinct subfield of Australian journalism. Journalists who participated in the study were reflexive about their reporting practices. They identified and defined the distinguishing features of their reporting subfield. These included inconsistency and lack of specialist knowledge due to 'parachute journalism' and the

high turnover and inexperience of territory-based general reporters tasked with covering indigenous stories; the culture and economics of negotiating distance and developing cultural competence; and the centrality of 'whitefella' gatekeepers with 'two-way capital', as well as their own social justice orientations. Their accounts of how the reporting subfield operates explain why the bilingual issue received the kinds of media coverage it did, including the lack of critical investigation of the government's case and the fact that no reporter who covered the bilingual issue and was interviewed for this study visited a remote community where the programs were operating in 2008.

The model of academic journalism based in indigenous research methodologies and journalism practice discussed in the second part of chapter 5 addresses many of the barriers to good reporting identified in this study of the subfield. The model is designed to enable listening, foster cultural competence and work towards achieving media and social justice for indigenous people in the Northern Territory.

Vital signs

At the conclusion of my interview with Margaret Banks, the former chief executive officer of the Northern Territory Department of Education, in January 2011, she said she believed the 2008 decision to dismantle bilingual education would not be the end of the policy debate. She said that at the time of the decision:

[I] felt quite sad, and I particularly knew how people from Yirrkala would have felt, but they have such spirit it remains to be seen whether it is dead.

In early 2013 that spirit remains and the policy is not dead. Banks' comment underlines an important insight from this study concerning what from a dominant culture perspective may be regarded as the intractable nature of this remote indigenous education policy 'problem'. This study has presented arguments based in the history of the policy and the media-related policy practices of Yolngu and other supporters that suggest that the 'intractability' has in large part been due to the self-determinist mindset of Yolngu and other First Peoples of the Northern Territory, who have kept the debate alive through political means and the news media

(McCallum, Waller & Meadows, 2012). They will not give up their fight for the right to educate their children in their languages. They have clearly articulated through this study, and the journalism that is an outcome from it, that their philosophy and practice of education is based in their land and their culture. As former bilingual teacher Yalmay Yunipingu explained in an open letter to the education minister in 2008:

Yolngu language is our Power, our Foundation, our Root and everything that holds us together. Yolngu language gives us strength. Language is our identity, who we are. Yolngu language gives us pride. Language is our Law and Justice. (Yunupingu, 2008a)

Bilingual education has become part of the Northern Territory's education policy again. There was a change of government in October 2012 and the conservative Country Liberal Party administration, led by Terry Mills, announced as part of its election platform that it would support bilingual education 'in the early years' and independent indigenous schools (Mills, 2012). While I do not claim 'Learning in both worlds' (Waller, 2011a) influenced the policy process, Mills's reported interest in the article⁴² supports the argument in the literature that marginalised groups can use media to make themselves heard by policymakers when other channels of influence are not available. The *Inside Story* article was just one strategy in the Yolngu policy campaign that ran from 2008 to 2012 and kept bilingual education on the agenda until government made it part of its policy agenda again.

Banks said media coverage in 2007–08 had a strong impact on politicians, but did not contribute to the formulation of good policy. So the question remains, how can public discussion of bilingual education be improved and make a positive contribution to democratic processes? Jeffs (cited in Franklin, 1999, p. 157) argued that education is such a fundamental aspect of human society that discussion will have to move on, even if it means finding other channels apart from the mainstream media for this to take place.

Public discussion about indigenous languages and education has taken place since the 2008 decision, despite the lack of interest by most mainstream media and

⁴² Personal email from a study participant, 31 October 2011.

Northern Territory policymakers in fostering such debate. Significantly, at the national level, the role of indigenous languages in Closing the Gap and improving outcomes for indigenous communities was the subject of an inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (Parliament of Australia, 2011). The inquiry examined the benefits of giving recognition to indigenous languages, and how they can be used in education to improve competency in English. It strongly endorsed the value of bilingual education in the Northern Territory's remote indigenous schools and the chair of the committee was highly critical of the decision to dismantle the programs in 2008. The news media coverage reflected the positive findings in the committee's final report (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2012).

Supporters of bilingual education, including affected communities, the Australian Education Union and leading academic linguists and educators were among the 154 parties who made detailed submissions to the inquiry (Waller, 2012a). This wide range of voices ensured a well-informed and wide-ranging democratic discussion took place through the inquiry's listening processes and has the chance of informing future education policy.

Future directions

I am not an indigenous researcher, which means that while I respect and have done my best to comprehend the perspectives of indigenous peoples I do not share their worldview, am not privy to much of their knowledge and do not claim to speak on their behalf. There is little precise direction in the literature for *balanda* people wanting to work with indigenous peoples on research projects. Smith (2004) said it is up to non-indigenous people to work it out for themselves. I have taken this on in earnest and given a lot of thought to these issues in developing the ideas for working with southern theory presented in this thesis. Yolngu are generous in sharing their knowledge and their theories are good for thinking with. They offer a perspective based in their land that has given me cause to rethink not only the subject of

language in education and how media representation affects the lived experience of indigenous peoples. It has also inspired me to think about 'where my boots are planted' as an academic researcher and a journalist, and the kinds of research outcomes that are possible and are valuable. It is my hope that others will take up the challenge of thinking and working with southern theory to develop a distinctive body of knowledge about journalism, media and communication, based in northern and indigenous knowledges.

One of the best-known Yolgnu metaphors, *garma*, offers a way for *balanda* thinkers to consider how they can listen and learn from indigenous peoples and participate in knowledge creation with them. *Garma* is the name Yolgnu have given to Australia's biggest and most significant annual indigenous festival, which thousands attend each year on their lands at Gulkula. The festival is a spectacular cultural showcase, as well as an education conference and a major forum on indigenous issues. Dr Marika explained that the concept of *garma* is an open ceremonial area that anyone can participate in and enjoy:

If a ceremony is negotiated and produced in full view of everybody it will be performed in the *garma* ceremonial area. Yolgnu can sit and watch a *garma* ceremony and read from it the network of connections between people, places, songs and totems that make up these particular ceremonies at a certain time. *Garma* also means an open forum where people can share ideas and everyone can work hard to reach agreement. The old people told us the school should be like a *garma* setting. (Marika, 1999, pp. 7–8)

The Yolgnu concepts that underpin this thesis are not secret knowledge. They are found in the academic literature because Yolgnu scholars have put them into that forum to share with those who want to come to new understandings through their ideas. They are theories and research approaches that are open and available to all seekers of knowledge who care to work with them. My reading of indigenous research methodologies suggests that research involving indigenous people should be conducted in a *garma* setting where ideas are shared and reaching and maintaining agreement or consent for the research is at the forefront of the process. As Yolgnu study participant Multhara Mununggurr emphasised, Yolgnu social theories are in and of the land. The best way to understand is to go to their country, visit the places in which their concepts are based and sit down with the elders to

listen and learn from them. The results from taking this approach can be a new reading of the network of connections between people, places, texts and totems that make up particular events at specific times. In the case of this study, the approach has resulted not only in the theorisation of the dynamic interplay between news media and bilingual education policy. It has produced a model of academic journalism and works of journalism that Yolngu wanted to come out of the research process. This has been a satisfying and worthwhile outcome for all involved.

I end with a thought about the changing nature of journalism, and public discussion of indigenous issues more generally, in the digital era. This research shows that the mainstream news media was only interested in the issue of bilingual education when it became a political issue. The literature on media and indigeneity underscores that the politicisation of indigenous policy results in indigenous people and issues being presented as 'problems' and negative portrayals of crisis, dysfunction and failure flow from this and have effects on peoples' lived experience (McCallum, 2010). One of the challenges in the digital media era will be whether new practices of public discussion through social media can change the 'anchoring or ordering' (Couldry, 2004) of indigenous issues as 'problems'. Indigenous public spheres seem to offer the most power and promise for initiating different forms of speaking, listening and hearing on indigenous affairs, which can then articulate with the mainstream discussion — the kind of change this research identifies is necessary in order to bring about positive changes in the way indigenous issues are understood, discussed and acted upon by indigenous people themselves, as well as governments and the news media.

Appendix 1

Learning in both worlds

27 October 2011 @ 11:00 am

Despite the international evidence, the Northern Territory has discouraged bilingual programs in its schools, writes **Lisa Waller**. But there are early signs of another shift in attitude, in both Darwin and Canberra



Above: Banner at the Yirrkala State School in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.
Photo: Jonathan Nalder ^[1]/ Flickr

WE'RE belting along a bauxite-red dirt highway in northeast Arnhem Land, crossing country covered with the short, spindly eucalypts that are endemic to the region. Tall termite mounds rise from the forest floor, guaranteeing that many of the tree trunks are hollowed out – ready for Yolŋu craftsmen to harvest to make the *yidaki* (didgeridoo), the signature sound in their repertoire. Not too many cars pass on this road between Yirrkala and the Laynha homeland of Garrathalala, so when a white Falcon flashes past our driver waves to the occupants. “That’s Djakapurra and his family,” he says. “You know, Djakapurra Munyarryan, the songman who danced with Nikki Webster and led the traditional welcome ceremony at the opening of the Sydney Olympics.”

It was not surprising that the ceremony was led by a Yolŋu songman. The music of *yidaki* player Djalu Gurruwiwi, the band Yothu Yindi and Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu evokes the spirit of this spectacular country for audiences throughout the world. These are just a few of the high achievers in this society, who also include the brothers Galurruy and Mandawuy Yunupingu (both former Australians of the Year), the renowned actor David Gulpilil, Gatjil Djerrkura OAM, chairman of ATSIC from 1996 to 2000, and his son Nathan, who plays for the Western Bulldogs in the AFL. George Burarr was the charismatic frontman for the Warumpi Band; among the many internationally acclaimed Yolŋu artists is David Malangi,

one of whose designs was used on the reverse side of Australia's \$1 note in 1966 without his knowledge (he was subsequently compensated). Yolŋu have since helped to set up national mechanisms to prevent such exploitation of their artists and have vigorously defended their copyright, notably through a famous legal case in 1993 in which they successfully took action against the importers of carpets featuring stolen Yolŋu designs.

The Yolŋu were among Australia's earliest international traders, maintaining trade and cultural exchanges with the Macassans for six centuries. Yolŋu warriors, under the leadership of anthropologist Donald Thompson, formed a formidable squadron to defend the Arnhem coast from Japanese attack during the second world war. Perhaps most significantly, Yolŋu launched the first land rights case in 1963, when they presented a bark petition to the federal parliament protesting against the annexation and destruction of their lands by bauxite mining giant Nabalco. The petition, written in both English and Yolŋu Matha, hangs in Parliament House, Canberra.

Yolŋu insist it is their “both-ways” or “two-way” philosophy, represented by the *yambirrpa* (fish trap) metaphor (pictured), that gives them the strength to defend their culture and their rights both in their own world and in the mainstream, and to make their unique contribution to the life of the nation. Mandawuy Yunupingu has written that “active participation of Aboriginal peoples will renew Australian life during the twenty-first century.” But, he adds, “it will need Aboriginal people who are strong and balanced, rooted in their families and their land. This will depend on Aboriginal people being educated as balanced contemporary Aboriginal Australians, something which will only happen when this education is inspired by their land.”



Right: This etching by Banduk Marika depicts the *yambirrpa* (fish trap) metaphor which is used to describe how, within the Yolŋu philosophy of education, the whole community works together to guide young people into Yolŋu foundations for learning. Everyone helps to build the *yambirrpa* from rocks, which represent the elders, and the fish are the children. The children learn inside the *yambirrpa*. Yolŋu say that sometimes big storms come from the outside which break or fragment the *yambirrpa*. They work together as a community to mend it by putting more rocks in place.

Three years ago, the Northern Territory's education minister, Marion Scrymgour, announced ^[2] that Territory schools “would have a greater focus on teaching English.” Her media release did not directly mention the Northern Territory's bilingual education programs and none of the communities where the education department ran two-way programs were consulted or warned about the decision. The only detail provided in the announcement was that “the first

four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English.” There are five hours of instruction in the Territory’s school day.

The government’s decision undermined the achievements of the innovative two-way school curriculum that Mandawuy Yunupingu helped to pioneer. Community elders are deeply concerned that future generations will not be able to negotiate both worlds with the integrity, sophistication and success of current and past generations. The bilingual curriculum involves the coordinated use of Yolŋu Matha and English for instructional purposes and brings together Yolŋu and Western knowledge in teaching all subjects, including mathematics.

No review or study of the effectiveness of the two-way programs was undertaken before the announcement. Joe Lo Bianco, professor of language and literacy education at the University of Melbourne, says that some 1200 international studies provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of bilingual education for students who do not speak the dominant language when they start school. In his booklet *Indigenous Languages in Education: What the Research Actually Shows*^[3], Australian National University adjunct professor, Charles Grimes, cites 691 of them. “It’s easy to think that if you teach more English, students will learn more English. But that’s not how it really works,” Professor Grimes says. “Study after study shows that children learn best in the language they understand best. That should be obvious. Study after study also shows that where the primary language spoken in the home is not English, teaching them in both their own language plus English will improve their English far better than just teaching them in English alone. The evidence is overwhelming.”

News of the demise of the bilingual programs inspired a rush of protest letters to both politicians and the media. Yolŋu, already worn down by the impacts of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER or the Intervention), were angered by the complete lack of consultation on the decision and expressed distress at the devaluing of their languages. “We have been told we are not to use our students’ first language, only English,” wrote educator Yalmay Yunupingu in an open letter to then education minister Marion Scrymgour. “Well, I already know that the children won’t understand what I’m saying, they will laugh at me, and they may even misbehave because they’ll be bored and won’t know what the lessons are about. So perhaps I will cheat and use some Yolŋu *matha* – what will happen then? Will I have my mouth washed out with soap like in the mission times? Or will I have to stand on one leg outside the classroom? Or perhaps I will lose my job?”

Until recently, these protests were largely ignored. This is despite the fact that bilingual education expert Associate Professor Brian Devlin, of Charles Darwin University, argued^[4] strongly in 2009 that the figures the government used to justify the decision were flawed, and that more recent statistics show how the demise of bilingual programs has already had an adverse effect. Devlin has shown that the statistics tabled in parliament excluded the award-winning Tiwi bilingual school at Murrupurtiyanuwu, and that the NAPLAN testing data was presented incorrectly. A 2010 study^[5] by Greg Dickson of the Australian National University showed attendance at Walpiri schools in Central Australia has declined dramatically since their bilingual programs were stopped. At Murrupurtiyanuwu, in the 2008 NAPLAN exams, Year 3 students performed “substantially above average” compared with similar schools in reading, grammar and numeracy; last year, students of the same age performed below average or equal to similar schools in those categories. At Lajamanu, about 870km south-west of Darwin, results in the reading and writing categories in last year’s NAPLAN tests were half of what they were in 2008 and this year attendance rates fell to just 37.2 per cent.

THE Northern Territory's bilingual education policy dates back to two weeks after the Whitlam government came to power in 1972, when the new prime minister launched the first federal policy for Indigenous self-determination. The following year, Yirrkala was among the first communities to take up the opportunity to introduce a bilingual program. During its long life, the curriculum was developed through a unique Yolŋu approach based on a philosophy of creating new knowledge through the mixing of Yolŋu and *balanda* (Western) thought. A team of Yolŋu educators, most notably Mandawuy Yunupingu and Raymattja Marika, worked with *balanda* educators on learning programs, including the creation of the *ganma* maths curriculum, developed in partnership with mathematicians from Melbourne University, which teaches maths in the early school years through the patterns of the Yolŋu kinship system.

A review was conducted in 1974 and among its twenty-five recommendations was a proposal that the Federal Government should take steps to educate the public about the program. A short film on the approach, *Not to Lose You, My Language* ^[6], was produced in 1975, but no further efforts were made to encourage public discussion and understanding of bilingual education. The issue has inspired little media interest except on the few occasions when it has attracted controversy.

In this deeply monolingual country, the idea that everyone must assimilate to the dominant culture endures. The failure to explain and discuss the value of Indigenous languages means that they have not been recognised by the public or in law as national assets. This is not the case in some other post-colonial nations – including New Zealand, where Māori is an official language and taught in schools. There is also little popular or government support for the right of Australian Indigenous peoples, under article 14.1 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, to control their educational systems and provide education in their own languages in culturally appropriate ways.

According to a former head of the NT Department of Education, it was the national news media's intense spotlight on the Territory's poor NAPLAN results in 2008 that motivated the policy change. "If you look, the media was actually the trigger behind all that policy change to go from bilingual to a four-hour, full-on English experience," the former head said. "It was the national publication of results – the Northern Territory's need to respond, to look like they were on top of this and handling it... There was no well constructed policy response as far as I could see. And nor has there been. It's... almost a kneejerk response."

A team of researchers led by Associate Professor Kerry McCallum of the University of Canberra is examining how Indigenous policies are developed in an increasingly media-saturated political environment. In this case, the NT government's tight media management of the bilingual education issue on the one hand, and lack of journalistic resources on the other, hampered journalists in their coverage. One senior Northern Territory journalist who participated in the study said covering the 2008 decision to axe the bilingual policy was an exercise in frustration: "It's such a shit fight to get even the statistics from the education department," she said. "The length of time between when they were saying that bilingual schools weren't performing and... when we got any kind of quantifiable data was ridiculous. Like months. And so it was repressive lines being fed by politicians, and then other opponents." She was one of a number of reporters who described it as a complex issue that posed big challenges for inexperienced or disengaged journalists who did not understand the context of the debate.

People employed by the NT education department told researchers that they were reluctant to speak on the public record because it contravened department rules and they feared the repercussions. They gave examples of employees who were unsuccessful in applications for positions in bilingual schools or were moved out of schools because of their views and behaviour in regard to the “first four hours” policy.

Now, however, Yolŋu are hopeful that a federal inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities will ask better questions and arrive at different conclusions from the Territory government. On 5 July this year the federal Indigenous affairs minister, Jenny Macklin, and her colleague, arts minister Simon Crean, asked the Parliamentary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee to investigate the links between Indigenous languages and improving education, community well-being, interpreting services and strategies to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The committee will examine how the use of Indigenous languages, particularly in early education, can help to improve education and vocational outcomes where English is a second language. It will also investigate the Indigenous languages policies of Australian governments and the effectiveness of Indigenous language maintenance and revival programs.

This inquiry follows the committee’s recent inquiry into Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system, which found that language is an important component of cultural connection, and strengthens intergenerational relationships and community building. Many people who made submissions to that inquiry referred to language as playing a significant role in the wellbeing of young Indigenous people.

The federal inquiry was announced in July and on 31 August the Territory government launched a new policy framework which enables “the relevant director of school performance” to consider “proposals for additional within-school opportunities to provide cultural and home language learning.” Schools must go through an exhaustive application process before the end of this year to be considered. While this softening of the “first four hours” policy offers Yolŋu some hope, they are indignant at having to apply for permission when they already have a sophisticated bilingual program that has met accreditation standards for decades. The relaunched policy contains no detail about how these language programs will be resourced, an issue that has been unresolved for decades.

WHEN we reach Garrathalala I meet senior teacher Multhara Mununggurr. She tells me about her father, Maw Mununggurr, an important ceremonial leader, veteran of the second world war squadron and an outstanding politician, painter, singer and dancer. She also tells me about her daughter, Yananymul Mununggurr, who was educated in a two-way Yolŋu school and is now the chief executive of the Laynhapuy Homelands Association.

“My strength, my strength is here,” she says, looking out at the land and sea. “I speak about my father. How I was taught. Because he’s not around the continuation of my study is challenging. But I got a fortune from my father – the greatest gifts. Now I’m passing that to my children. My daughter is CEO of the homelands – huge homelands across the Arnhem region. I have to build up that strength – passing the value from my dad and me. My daughter got that. Two granddaughters are teachers as well. My students, now my teachers.”

Multhara says Yolŋu children need their two-way education so they can link Western and Yolŋu cultures and knowledge together successfully. “It is very important for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous that everyone should share the ideas and the philosophy together,” she

says. “The land is very important and our culture is very important as well, but there is more significance in both worlds – the two worlds – how our culture and *napaki* [non-Indigenous] live together.”

Multhara says she wants the opportunity to show journalists and politicians her country, explain how the two-way curriculum works and why it is crucial. They have not made the journey yet, but Yolŋu remain optimistic that the parliamentary inquiry will change that. •

Lisa Waller is a PhD candidate at the University of Canberra researching the relationship between news media and bilingual education policy in the Northern Territory as part of the Australian Research Council Discovery Project, Australian News Media and Indigenous Policymaking 1988–2008. She lectures in journalism at Deakin University and has worked as a journalist for the Canberra Times, the Australian and the Australian Financial Review.

Appendix 2

Draft interview protocol – policymakers and advocacy group members

[**Instructions.** Meet the participant at the agreed location. Introduce interviewer and ensure that informed consent statements are signed. Record details of participant. Ensure participant is sitting where they are comfortable and can be heard. Set up equipment.]

Introduce the project:

With your agreement the interview is being recorded.

Some of the topics I am going to be covering in this discussion are: [Interviewer to outline]

Topics for discussion:

What is or was your involvement in the bilingual education policy process?

Do you consider journalists to be part of the policy community. How would you describe their role?

I want you to think about a time when you attempted to interest the media in bilingual education policy or were approached by the media to comment on the issue.

Can you explain what the issue was?

[Prompts] Can you explain how you went about approaching the media or dealt with their inquiries?

What did you think about the way your position was represented in the news media?

What was the public response to the story?

Was this typical of your experience of dealing with the news media?

More generally, can you explain your experience of the news media?

Can you describe your experiences of dealing with journalists from different news organisations?

Who were they?

Can you describe your experience of public, or other media, responses to bilingual education policy generally?

Conclusion:

Thank you very much for your time and help in talking to me today. Have you got any questions? [General discussion regarding the project. Tell the participant they can get a copy of the interview transcript]

Draft interview protocol – Journalists

[**Instructions.** Meet the participant at the agreed location. Introduce interviewer and ensure that informed consent statements are signed. Record participant's details. Ensure participant is sitting where they are comfortable and can be heard. Set up equipment.]

Introduce the project:

With your agreement the interview is being taped.

Some of the topics I am going to be covering in this discussion are: [Interviewer to outline]

Topics for discussion:

I want you to think about a time when you reported on the Northern Territory's bilingual education policy.

Can you explain what the issue was?

[Prompts]: Can you explain how you went about reporting the issue?

What sources of information did you draw on?

Who did you interview?

Did your editor accept the story as it was?

What was the public response to the story?

Was this story typical of your experience of reporting on indigenous issues? Can you explain your experience of reporting Indigenous policy issues generally?

Can you describe your experiences of dealing with policymakers when reporting on indigenous issues? Who were they? Political staffers, Department staff? Others?

Can you describe your experience of dealing with indigenous policy advocates when reporting on bilingual education? Who were they?

Can you describe your experience of public, or other media, responses to your stories about indigenous policy generally, and particularly indigenous education policy?

Conclusion:

Thank you very much for your time and help in talking to me today. Have you got any questions? [General discussion regarding the project. Tell the participant they can get a copy of the interview transcript]

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