The Life Journey of Gifted Adults: a narrative exploration of developmental differences

by

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text.

I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

............................................................

Maree Gruppetta
ABSTRACT

The experiences of culturally diverse gifted learners have become a focus for research within the last decade, as have the experiences of gifted adults, yet few of these studies have been completed within Australia. The majority of research currently available in this field within Australia focuses on gifted children or adolescents. This doctoral research investigates the narrative lives of gifted adults across multicultural Australia. Interviews with Indigenous, Asian and European participants provided an array of cultural perspectives, and also represented a range of religious beliefs including Atheist, Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic viewpoints. Their culturally diverse life experiences, education, moral and spiritual development are shared through the presentation of their perspectives, insights and understandings of the phenomenon of giftedness.

The study involved a bricolage of qualitative research methodology and data collection strategies, including phenomenology, ethnography, narrative and art inquiry, to inform the research. Therefore the narratives are collected from interview data, value activities and collage work. The research journey is complemented by metaphoric imagery and key themes are also represented visually. The author uses a bicompetent approach to research incorporating both traditional academic and indigenous styles of presentation. The combination of these methodologies and variety of data collection and analysis strategies used resulted in a many faceted, multi-voiced dissertation contributing to the literature on giftedness by exploring an under utilised source, the gifted adults of multicultural Australia, whilst honouring their narrative life stories.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally to my husband, Arthur; children, Jordan, Marissa and Mason; and friends, who have encouraged and supported me, and endured both my physical and mental absence during the course of the project, I extend my greatest appreciation, and acknowledge the assistance of my children and foster children with the finer points of computer graphic programs.
Main Image - Illustration 1 - A research journey through metaphoric imagery.
Illustration 1 – ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’ (Gruppetta, 2006b). This painting, shown on the previous page, is the final artwork that accompanied the research journey. Elements of this artwork are peppered throughout the dissertation along with collage work and other metaphoric visual images. Each phase of this artwork is explained in detail relating to the relevant section of the thesis, as visual imagery tracking each phase of the research. Each of the collages and metaphoric visual images are also accompanied by text explaining their connotative meaning. However, the full import of this artwork - ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’ (Gruppetta, 2006b) will be gradually revealed as it accompanies the unfolding research journey, with a final summative explanation in the conclusion.

NOTE TO READERS

It should be noted that as this is an Australian dissertation Australian English was used. Therefore words are spelt correctly for Australian usage, for example ‘colour’ rather than ‘color’, and words such as ‘specialisation’ are spelt with an ‘s’ rather than a ‘z’, also words such as ‘learnt’ are acceptable whereas the term ‘learned’ is correct in overseas countries. Where Australian colloquialisms are used, mainly by the research participants, these are explained within text to ensure understanding. The use of terms that may be unclear, or specific terminology pertinent to the discussion, are also clarified within the text.

Comments from the author’s research journal and/or commentary from participants will be added within the right margin (as shown) in the form of a ‘soliloquy’ to ensure consistency to research design. A soliloquy is a “form of discourse where the character reveals his or her thoughts without addressing a listener” (Freedictionary.com, 2007) or “the act of speaking to oneself” (Freedictionary.com, 2007). As explained in detail in the methodology section this technique is used to reflect on the researcher’s and/or participants’ perspectives and biases (Burns, 1997; Vockell & Asher, 1995), and therefore ‘bracket’ or suspend prior assumptions, before beginning analysis (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).
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CHAPTER ONE

GENESIS

Illustration 2 – ‘Id’
(excerpt from main image - ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Gruppetta, 2006b)

This sketch represents my ‘id’, or at least the ‘self’ that dwells inside. This sketch was completed many years ago, in my teen years, when I saw this image on an x-ray of my stomach, and was both disturbed and heartened to find the ‘girl’ inside. It also displays my curious mind that apparently sees what others do not, as this image is only visible on the x-ray when pointed out, and few can see it at first glance. Reaction to this sketch is also interesting, the thought that such an image is dwelt ‘within’ disturbs many, and some read elements of the image that were not intentional. For instance one of my supervisors, Mary Mooney, perceived the image of a black bird’s wing, or possibly a ‘flock of black birds flying’ in the area near the ear, an element I did not see until she suggested it, once again signifying the multiplicity of perspectives possible within all aspects of interpretation.
1. GENESIS

I come from a long line of storytellers, as Bruner (1986, cited in Clark & Medina, 2000) confirms we all do. People have long learnt through oral stories, as a means of passing knowledge down the generations, usually in oral form, to relate the adventures and lifestyles of our ancestors, and to teach values through stories and fables. Seidman (1998) contends he interviews because he “wants to hear the story” (p. 1). So do I. My keen interest in this mode of storying has guided my in-depth qualitative investigation into the life experiences of gifted adults.

My interest in giftedness begins with my own identification as a gifted child, whereas my interests in culture, economic status and religious perspectives are shaped by both my childhood and adult experiences. As our backgrounds and past experiences shape the lens with which we view the world (van Manen, 2000), an autobiographical component of the research has been included in order to address the issue of researcher’s bias (p.346). The research journey presented within this dissertation was actually begun long ago, and is a culmination of my own life journey so far.

My own experiences of marginality, as a student, a parent and teacher, and particularly my experience as an Aboriginal child of lower socio-economic origins, colour my viewpoint and shape the lens with which I view many facets of gifted research, including the interpretations of this study. This highlights my own positioning as an ‘other’, fated to dwell in the fringes of society, and within the margins of my own family, whilst faced with my own phenomenon of giftedness and all its inherent connotations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said “Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis”. But sometimes a thesis is the only way a scream can be heard....
1.1 GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH

Initially this research was focused on the perception that religious belief is anti-intellectual (Possamai, 2004) and that this notion underpinned a paradigm shift away from religious belief. Research into the science versus religion debate failed to define a specific area of inquiry that would illuminate this concept despite the clear conflict in perspectives from scientists and religious scholars. A foray into the portrayal of religion within media sources resulted in a conference paper (Gruppetta, 2004a) but failed to present a solid founding for thesis research.

The next phase of my research investigated theories concerning religious and moral development (Berk, 1999; Erikson, 1968 & 1950; Kohlberg, 1981 & 1984; McInerney & McInerney, 1998; Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001; Oser & Scarlett, 1991; Piaget, 1971 & 1965; Shafranske, 1996) and the perceived differences between these theories and those presented of advanced moral and spiritual development in gifted individuals (Lovecky, 1997; Piirto, 2003). Again this resulted in a research paper (Gruppetta, 2005f) and some useful literature which is presented in Chapter Four but did not establish a firm focus for the study.

The notion that the gifted student is as ‘other’ as the culturally different student was also explored in the initial phase of this study (Gruppetta, 2004c), and appeared to be an original notion. The comparison of gifted characteristics (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) to those of cultural shock (Oberg, 1960; Lovat et al. 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward et al. 2001) was well received by conference referees, and as a result further exploration into the duality of ‘otherness’, those individuals both gifted and from another cultural background, became the major focus of the dissertation. Emerging from this initial point a multifaceted exploration of a variety of aspects of religious, cultural and value research were compared to aspects of giftedness research and the journey consolidated into the final subject of exploration, an investigation of the developmental differences and similarities within the lives of gifted adults across multicultural Australia.
1.2 PRESENTATION OF THE THESIS

Presentation of this thesis includes the formal required elements inherent to the academic expectations of a doctoral dissertation as set out in the University of Western Sydney requirements. In addition, borrowing an element of Henare-Solomona’s (2004) bi-competency approach, which incorporates Indigenous knowledge and presentation, it will also include the stories and artwork achieved throughout the research journey to honour Indigenous ways of knowing (Tuhiwa-Smith, 1999). The dual presentation style answers the challenges of contrasting perspectives between these Indigenous ways of knowing and the requirements of academia as explained subsequent chapters. Therefore the thesis is presented with contrasting and complimentary perspectives, as both academic and creative options have been explored to provide comprehensive presentation of the topic.

The research journey is presented in a linear style beginning with the initial phases of research in this first ‘Genesis’ chapter, which also introduces the researcher. The second ‘Orientation’ chapter provides the background, purpose, context and significance of the study as it is positioned in current Australian research. The third ‘Gauntlet’ chapter discusses the ethical and legal challenges encountered, and the literature informing ethical decision making, which needed to be addressed in order to begin the research. This is followed by the fourth chapter ‘Vista’ which presents the range of literature pertinent to the multifaceted exploration required of this study.

The methodology for this study is actually presented within two chapters. The fifth ‘Odyssey’ Chapter investigates the recommendations of the qualitative research literature and again is presented in a linear style. The emergent methodology addressed both the needs of the participants and the researcher, and each facet was added to the study in sequence as it was required. The seventh ‘Interpretation’ chapter deals with the minute details of data collection, processing and analysis.

In deciding on the final presentation I find myself drowning in multiplicities, for each choice there is a myriad of other options, which best relies on extensive metacognition – constantly wondering whether the omissions say more than the inclusions. Is something vital missing or too much incorporated? (J2)
This interpretation chapter is presented after the Sixth ‘Quest’ chapter, dealing with participant recruitment, as the details of data collection and interpretation could not be finalised until after participants had been recruited.

The participants’ life stories will be presented in their entirety within the appendices with a summary of each narrative in the eighth ‘Vision’ chapter. Within the chapter these narratives are represented as a ‘many-voiced’ work, with the researcher as interpreter, similar to the presentation of Rodis, Carrod and Boscardin (2001) where each participant told their own story and Rodis et al. (2001) then provided a response. Each participant narrative is presented in their own voice and my own response to each narrative is presented at the conclusion of the presentation of each participant. This commentary includes the personal viewpoints that were ‘set aside’ in phenomenological interviewing, and commentary on any ethical dilemmas that may have arisen during the research. The emerging themes presented by the research participants are then discussed as a ‘colloquy’ in the ninth chapter, a multi-voiced work expressing commonalities of lived experiences with comparison to literature and common themes. The techniques for constructing the narratives and the colloquy are described in detail within the ‘interpretation’ chapter.

The final chapter concludes and summarises the interpretation of the life experiences of the gifted participants within this study. A ‘post script’ is also provided to update the current circumstances of the participants and record any major life changes that have occurred as a result of their involvement with this research. The personal impact of this research on the participants and any remaining issues pertaining to ethical dilemmas and/or researcher bias is addressed within the post ethical review (Tolich, 2003), which finalises the presentation of this thesis.
1.3 RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVES

In order to address the issue of researcher’s bias an explanation of the researcher’s qualifications and possible grounds for bias is provided (Leedy, 1993).

1.3.1 RESEARCHER’S BIAS

As previously stated, because my interest in both giftedness and diversity arose from issues pertinent to my own life history, an excerpt from my own narrative is provided in Chapter Eight to clearly display any researcher bias (p.346). Also an autobiographical component has been included within the thesis. As part of the research design the researcher has been treated as the first participant in the research, and completed the same interviews, value activity and collage, as the recruited research participants.

I have also maintained a comprehensive researcher’s journal to ensure deep reflection (Richardson, 1998) of all phases of the research are recorded and analysed for possible bias throughout the term of the study. Elements of these journal excerpts are included in the thesis, where it is pertinent to the research, to provide evidence of possible bias and the techniques used to address these issues.

My previous investigation into the deficit viewpoint of some gifted educators, ‘There are no gifted here: Blinded by the deficit view’ (Gruppetta, 2003b) impacts on this study due to previously conceived notions of gifted education within Australia. As a teacher and researcher, I constantly discover those that are gifted and yet unidentified, usually due either to their lower socio-economic background (Gruppetta, 2003) or their cultural differences to the mainstream. In essence this is the purpose of this study - to acknowledge those not usually recognised as gifted by mainstream society. Nevertheless the use of snowball recruitment strategies (Jeffri, 2004) were carefully considered in order to prevent my own identification of gifted individuals colouring this research project, as explained in detail in Chapter Six.
1.3.2 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

I graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching, with major studies in Primary Education with Distinction, in December 2001. The following year I completed a Bachelor of Education Honours (1), whilst teaching part time in Primary schools and part time in the Bachelor of Education at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). The main focus of my Honours thesis was concentrated on examining gifted education in lower socio-economic areas of Western Sydney, and the resulting paper “There are no Gifted here: Blinded by the Deficit View” (Gruppetta, 2003) was well received at the Biennial World Conference in Gifted Education, and republished by editorial request in an international publication (2005e).

In 2003 I completed a Master of Teaching (Special Education) whilst teaching in a Secondary Science classroom, and continuing to teach education subjects at UWS. The ‘Forensic Science’ curriculum unit created during the Masters research proved to be successful in providing accessible curriculum to students with disabilities in secondary settings, and is still being used in local secondary schools. In 2004 I was awarded a full scholarship toward completing this dissertation, and continued to teach part-time at UWS while pursuing my Doctorate research.

My educational journey has included a specialisation in the teaching of World religions within a University forum, with an emphasis on promoting the similarities of religious beliefs rather than reinforcing the differences. Such teaching promotes accepting diversity as part of the values education required in Australian schools. During my teaching at UWS I have also taught the following subjects: Science and Technology; and Mathematics, at Primary education levels; Aboriginal Studies; Ethics in Education; Teaching Controversial Issues; Culture and Diversity, and various subjects involving Professional Education Experience for pre-service teachers. I have also been continually employed as a research assistant, extensively involved in the research areas of gifted education, cultural and socio-economic issues in education, at UWS since July, 2001. These experiences have further influenced
my perceptions of ethics and morals, and culture and religion, and therefore contribute to my own viewpoint as researcher.

Although my own experiences explain my interest in the study, and are useful to establish my bias as a researcher, they must be set aside. The ‘self’ must be minimised, shown and then set aside, reduced to lesser importance to take its place as a smaller part of the study, visible only in reflection as the study is interpreted through my eyes. Therefore the metaphoric image of my ‘id’ (Illustration 2) has been reduced to a tiny representation within the raven’s eye on the main artwork:

Illustration 3 – Researcher’ Eye
(excerpt from main image - ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Gruppetta, 2006b)

Whilst my own life experiences and perspectives may have been the true genesis of the study, nevertheless, my genuine curiosity and the burning desire to further my knowledge of the phenomenon of giftedness, particularly how the phenomenon manifests across cultures, was the final impetus for this study. The journey has been profound for both researcher and participants, as we have shared the journey, becoming research partners that have learnt from each other and incorporated a range of perspectives to illuminate the diversity of giftedness across multicultural Australia. This chapter introduced me as the researcher; the following chapter orientates the reader to the background, purpose, context and significance of this study.
CHAPTER 2

ORIENTATION

Illustration 4 – Mirrabooka
(excerpt from main image - ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Gruppetta, 2006b)

This excerpt from the sky above the Raven’s left shoulder in the main image represents the stars of the Southern Cross. Although many Aboriginal Dreaming stories exist for the meaning of the Southern Cross, Aboriginal people count seven stars not the five shown on the Australian flag. For many Aboriginal people the story of the ‘seven sisters’ is linked to this constellation (Possum, 2005). Some of the language groups of the Aboriginal people of Eastern Australia call the cross ‘Mirrabooka’.

“Mirrabooka was a kind and clever man who was immortalized by being put into the night sky by Biami, the creator. This was to assist with watching over the people on earth. The pointers are Mirrabooka’s eyes – seeing all of the earth” (Oracle Think Quest, 2006). The researcher’s Indigenous background is represented through the use of traditional dot painting techniques within this section of the canvas. Also as the participants were located and interviewed within ‘Gadi Mirrabooka’ territory, meaning ‘under the Southern Cross’ (McKay, 2006), these are the stars most commonly recognised by all, and an apt representative for research conducted within Australia (Gruppetta, 2006b).
2. ORIENTATION

2.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

There is little information available on the experiences of Gifted Adults within Australia. The majority of gifted research conducted within Australia investigates the experiences of gifted children or adolescents, and/or their teachers. Despite the recent interest in investigating the experiences of gifted adults within other countries, such as the United States of America (U.S.A) little research into this area has been conducted in Australia.

Gifted individuals often present with experiences and perspectives that are quite different from the dominant social norm, challenging educational provisions in this area. The majority of studies into gifted individuals, of any age group, concentrate on the experiences of those in mainstream Western cultures, specifically the Anglo Saxon middle-class, excluding those of minority or other cultures. Moreover, any discussion of religious or moral values within the literature is weighted toward Christian beliefs (Lovat, Follers, Parnell, Hill & Allard, 2000), which also fails to include the beliefs or values of other religious groups.

The majority of research currently available in the field of gifted education focuses on gifted children or adolescents, although few studies provide a voice for these young participants to express their own opinion of educational provisions or evidence of differences in life experience. Despite this concentration on gifted youth some studies have investigated the experiences of gifted adults. The works of Piirto (1999), Reis (1998), Freeman (1979), Gardner (2003), Clark (2002), Strenewski (1999), Kerr (1996), and Wilson (1994) involve retrospective viewpoints of gifted individuals with a view to inform current gifted educational practices. The majority of these studies are related to the experiences of gifted adults in other countries, and do not effectively provide information related to the Australian experience. Only Wilson (1994) investigated Gifted Australian adults and then concentrated entirely
on women. Leonie Kronborg (2008) also completed her Doctorate on eminent
Australian women. Therefore this study will contribute to the literature on giftedness
by examining the life experiences of gifted Australian adults across the range of
cultures presented by Australia’s multicultural population.

The 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) refers to the difficulties
experienced by gifted and/or talented students due to lower socio-economic
disadvantage and cultural issues. However, it does not specify particular areas and
makes little distinction between the disadvantaged students in rural and urban areas,
or those from particular cultures. While the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of
Australia, 2001) highlights the broader aspects of these issues in the context of
Australia in its entirety, not enough specific information is given to aid the individual
schools or their staff in addressing these issues. Therefore this study examines these
issues in more depth providing a forum to explore the phenomenon of giftedness,
specifically as it applies to gifted adults across cultures within the context of
multicultural Australia, a topic that is both intriguing and related to my own
experiences as stated in the researcher’s bias.

2.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In order to funnel a broader interest into a specific area, the research project was
focused on investigating the experiences of Australian Gifted adults, from a variety
of cultural backgrounds, nominated to participate in the research. The main purpose
of the research project was to conduct in-depth narrative inquiry into the life stories
of gifted adults. The focus of the inquiry was to investigate the life experiences of
these gifted adults as they were manifested in a range of cultures and situations
through the course of their lives. The study researched specific information relating
to their family, cultural and religious histories, with an emphasis on their educational
experiences to address areas of need within the individual school environment. This
illuminated the development of moral, ethical and spiritual beliefs among gifted
individuals, as well as their educational and life experiences. This research therefore
provides a range of knowledge to inform future gifted educational practices in Australia.

2.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Australia since first ‘settlement’ has been multicultural and multi-religious; indeed religious and cultural contact took place much earlier in our history. The first Muslim contact took place as early as the 17th century when Macassarese fishing expeditions resulted in contact with the Australian Aboriginal people (MacKnight, 1976 cited in Kabir, 2005). There are also claims that Buddhist contact may have occurred as early as 1405 when several large Chinese ships were sent to explore the South (Adam & Hughes, 1996).

Settlement is sometimes referred to as colonisation but known as ‘invasion’ from an Indigenous perspective (Craven, 1999)

It is known that among the various Christian faiths represented amongst the passengers of the first fleet were sixteen Jewish individuals (Carey, 1996; Rutland, 2005), and it was estimated that about 800 Jewish convicts had arrived by 1845 (Rutland, 2005). The musters of 1802, 1811, 1822 and the census of 1828 “listed a number of Mohammedans, the term used for Muslims at the time” (Kabir, 2005, p.3), and 19 Muslims were registered in the 1928 census (Carey, 1996). The first Chinese representative arrived in 1791 (Watson, 1995), long before the later influx of Chinese settlers during the Gold rush in 1851. The Chinese miners who came to Australia during the gold rushes beginning in 1848 practiced a blend of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, with approximately 1 per cent of Chinese immigrants identifying themselves as Buddhist (Adam & Hughes, 1996, p.6). The current population statistics for Australia reveal a range of ancestral backgrounds and faith communities (Gruppetta, 2008).

This research was conducted within the Sydney region of New South Wales, Australia, therefore the specific statistical information relating to ancestry and religious background was confined to only those statistics relating specifically to the population of Sydney. Although Sydney is not the official capital of Australia, it
does have the largest population of any Australian city (Australian Bureau of Statics, ABS, 2007) and thus the population statistics are representational of the range of cultural ancestry and religious beliefs of broader Australia. These statistics are important to this study as the participants were drawn directly from this varied pool of cultural backgrounds and communities.

2.3.1 POPULATION STATISTICS

According to the latest statistical data from the Australian Census results 71.4 percent of Australians reside in major cities; 23.2 percent of the population were born overseas and 18.7 percent speak a language other than English at home, with only 2.1 percent of the population listed as Indigenous Australians (ABS, 2007). The total population of Sydney in 2007 was stated as 3,904,815 persons and represented a range of ancestral and cultural backgrounds (Table 1. Appendix A2). Of these ancestral backgrounds 2,625,386 persons speak English only; 874,587 persons speak English very well; 165,762 persons speak English but not well; and 48,001 persons do not speak English at all, although 234,278 persons did not state their proficiency in the English language (ABS, 2007).

The statistics for religious communities and beliefs represent a similar range of responses (Table 2. Appendix A3). The predominate religion followed in Sydney, Australia is Christianity with 2,680,679 persons of varying Christian denominations. Buddhism with 135,971 followers and Islam with 134,366 are the next largest religious groups, with Hinduism at 48,462 and Judaism with 32,941. The next largest groups are the ‘Nones’ (Bouma, 2006) those individuals who simply check ‘none’ when asked about their religion, although this group could be larger because 361,592 people were ‘not stated’ and 61,913 were ‘inadequately described or not defined’ (ABS, 2007). Carey (1996) contends Atheists account for 23% of the Australian population, however Bouma (2006) argues atheism needs to be further defined before people can be categorised within this group. There were also 22,455
people from ‘Other Religious Groups’ and only 187 persons practising ‘Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions’ (ABS, 2007).

Of these range of statistics another facet should be considered. As discussed in more depth in Chapter Four, based on international research, a certain percentage of any given population should be gifted. Terman (1925 cited in Gross, 2001) preferred percentages designating the top one percent of the population as gifted, whereas Gross, MacLeod, Drummond and Merrick (1997) permit five percent, and Braggert, Day and Minchin (1997) contend ten percent of the population to be in the gifted ranges. Therefore based on these assumptions at least one percent of the population of Sydney should be gifted, which means of those 3,904,815 persons there should be at least 390,481 gifted individuals. This provides a large pool of possible participants for this study. The participant pool was narrowed by seeking only those gifted adults from cultures other than the mainstream Anglo Saxon Christian population of Sydney. For the purpose of this study nine gifted adults were nominated by their cultural or religious groups to participate in the research.

2.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the literature on giftedness by exploring an under utilised source, the gifted adults of multicultural Australia, whilst honouring their narrative life stories. This study also explores the realms of qualitative research through a bricolage of research methodology beginning with auto-phenomenology, using autobiography to state the researcher’s bias and ‘bracketing’ the researcher’s own beliefs throughout the research (Gruppetta, 2004e), and the use of art inquiry methodology to document phases of the research through metaphoric imagery (Gruppetta, 2006b). Furthermore this study includes specific ethical guidelines written expressly for this research, an ongoing ethical review of the research during the collection period, and a post-ethical review (Tolich, 2003) to examine the ethical conduct of the research.
2.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Mason and Bramble (1997) recommend the definition of terms as an integral part of all reports and theses in order to provide clarity. Due to the subjective interpretation of some educational terminology the specified definition of terminology used within this research study is defined as follows:

(a) Gifted students – are those with the potential to exhibit superior performance across a range of areas of endeavour (DET, 1991). Giftedness refers to potential distinctly beyond the average for the student’s age and encompasses a broad range of abilities in the intellectual, creative, socio-emotional and physical domains (DET, 2006).

(b) Talented students – are those with the potential to exhibit superior performance in one area of endeavour (DET, 1991) Talent denotes achievement distinctly beyond the average for a student’s age as a result of application to training and practice (DET, 2006).

(c) Deficit view – A viewpoint where individuals, usually teachers, have difficulty recognizing ability due to the perception the student is disadvantaged by race, culture, gender, disability and/or socio-economic status (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001; Connell, 1990; DET, 1991; Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002; Frydenberg & O’Mullane, 2000; Gallagher, 2000; Hatton, 1999).

(d) Opportunity Class (OC) – A specific class established for gifted and talented students in the last two years of Primary School (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

(e) Selective High Schools – Secondary schools established for high achieving and/or gifted and talented students (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).
2.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with any research, and also to this study, there are limitations associated with research methodology. In any research or study the researcher will attempt to reduce or balance the limitations using various techniques. Each of these limitations have been identified and their effects balanced to reduce their impact. In this study, these limitations are:

2.6.1 SCOPE AND TIME FRAME

As the researcher is a Doctorate of Philosophy student, the constraints and requirements of the PhD course limited the scope of the study and the time spent in the field in contact with participants and this remains a limitation of the study.

2.6.2 SMALL SAMPLE SIZE

The main limitation of this study is the small number of participants. It is understood that the study, due to its small sample size, may not generate data that would be transferable to larger populations (Vockell & Asher, 1995). Despite the small sample size, case study reporting displays “transferability to other sites” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 42) due to its “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 42), therefore the descriptors provided concerning the participants’ backgrounds would provide links to individuals from similar backgrounds. Also, the findings of this research through ‘triangulation’ (Burns, 1997; Leedy, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985a; Merriam, 1989; Vockell & Asher, 1995) are found to have internal consistency across participants, and the findings are consistent with previously published material, which engendered confidence that the generalisations are valid.

2.6.3 THE POSSIBILITY OF INACCURATE DATA

There is a possibility of inaccurate information being supplied by the participants (Burns, 1997). This can be due to the participant giving a “socially desirable response” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.53) to please the interviewer, or omitting
information to hide something from the interviewer (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In balance the initial use of open questioning techniques and guaranteed anonymity (Burns, 1997) has reduced the possibility of inaccurate information being supplied by the participants. Also “a study by Esposito, Agard, and Rosnow (1984) found that a written assurance to subjects that their responses would be kept strictly confidential substantially reduced the likelihood of response distortion due to socially desirable responding” (cited in Kimmel, 1988, p.96). Therefore the provision of a written statement to participants, within this study, assuring confidentiality also reduced the likelihood of inaccurate information.

Again there is the possibility of inaccurate data being collected due to the ‘Hawthorne effect’ – a phenomenon where the use of observation in a situation introduces distortion and what is observed does not represent normal behaviour. This is explained as occurring “when a change in the behaviour of persons or groups is attributed to their being observed it is known as the Hawthorne Effect [sic]” (Kumar, 1996, p.106). In order to reduce the ‘Hawthorne effect’ (Kumar, 1996) tape recording rather than obtrusive note taking was used as a recording strategy during interviews, however, it remains a possible limitation of the study.

2.6.4 THE POSSIBILITY OF RESEARCHER BIAS

The possibility of inaccurate findings due to Researcher Bias - Kumar (1996) specifically refers to this issue: “If the observer is biased he/she can easily introduce bias and there is no easy way to verify the observations and inferences drawn from them” (p.106).

In order to address issues of Researcher Bias the qualifications and bias of the researcher are clearly stated (Leedy, 1993); an exhaustive literature review was conducted to broaden the researcher’s perceptions of issues surrounding the study (McCracken, 1988; Hart, 1998); and transcripts of all data supplied were ‘member checked’ (Merriam, 1989; Vockell & Asher, 1995) to ensure accuracy of transcription and verify the researcher’s interpretation of the data. Also data collected
and conclusions drawn from the findings were discussed with the researcher’s supervisor to provide additional triangulation (Merriam, 1993) and those known intimately to the researcher within the specified recruitment area were excluded from the participant pool.

2.6.5 THE POSSIBILITY OF GENDER BIAS

There exists the possibility of gender bias as the majority of the participants, and the researcher, were female. Due to the ‘snowball recruitment’ method of locating participants, as explained in Chapter Six, the researcher had no control over the selection of participants, therefore was unable to determine or influence the gender of participants. In order to address this issue, discussion of gender perspectives, where pertinent, is included in the study findings.

2.6.6 THE POSSIBILITY OF CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS BIAS

Recruitment resulted in a range of participants from various cultures and religious backgrounds; however, due to time constraints; the recruitment method; and the vast range of ancestral backgrounds in Sydney, it was not possible to locate participants from every cultural and religious group represented within Australia. Discussion of a range of religious and cultural perspectives is included within the study findings where relevant, however it will remain a possible limitation of the study.

This chapter provided an overview of the background, purpose, context and significance of this study. Definitions of basic terms used in Australia to define areas within gifted education were also provided, and any other definition of subjective terminology required will be explained within the text where it is relevant to the discussion. Furthermore this chapter provided a comprehensive review of the possible limitations of this study and the measures taken to address these limitations.

The next chapter will discuss the ethical and legal challenges encountered, including the literature informing my ethical decisions, which needed to be addressed in order to begin the research.
CHAPTER 3

GAUNTLET

Illustration 5 – Iconic Duality of Perspectives
(excerpt from main image - ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Gruppetta, 2006b)

This picture represents the researcher’s Indigenous background through the traditional snake and circular dots at the top of the centre circle. The perspectives of other Indigenous people, particularly the influence of Maori research methodology (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) are represented via the Maori ‘curl’ at the bottom of the centre circle. Although spirals are also representative of Australian Aboriginal culture, this particular symbol is indicative of Maori culture and acknowledges the infinite circle of life. The Patterson’s Curse is used to signify duality of perspectives.

Within Australia, Patterson’s Curse (*Echium plantagineum*) is an introduced species recognized as a noxious weed by farmers, yet the beekeeper’s call it ‘Salvation Jane’ as the only pollen available to produce honey in drought conditions. Patterson’s Curse is much maligned and its existence in Australia debated by many, however few can argue that it is aesthetically pleasing to discover waves of purple rippling across the ranges when travelling through the Australian countryside.

The original sketch of the artwork was then enhanced by the addition of some traditional colours. The black and red used are representative of both Maori and Aboriginal traditions. The orange and yellow, although brighter than traditional ochre, are also representative of Indigenous usage. The contrast with the introduced Patterson’s Curse, represented by non-Indigenous colours of purple and green, is deliberate, a non-traditional form joining traditional perspectives.
3.1 THE CHALLENGES

The challenges faced within this research were numerous. There were times when the research journey felt like a gigantic game of snakes and ladders; every time it was begun an obstacle was encountered that sent planning back to the beginning. Some of these obstacles were surmountable, some could be circumnavigated, but some required a rethinking of strategy and ultimately a different approach. Rather than perceive these ‘obstacles’ as barricades barring the way forward they have been reconfigured as ‘challenges’, a gauntlet thrown down at each and every stage, which required new approaches and solutions to ensure the research continued.

As epitomized by Illustration 4, the contrasting perspectives of giftedness made even the basic identification of suitable participants difficult. The solution as discussed in Chapter Six was to use ‘snowball recruiting’ (Jeffri, 2004), therefore relying on external identification of giftedness to recruit participants. Further challenges were encountered within the ethical and legal requirements for academic research. Therefore, as an element of this research, the ethical considerations were stated at the outset, and then reviewed throughout the course of the research by using the researcher’s journal entries to monitor ethical considerations, dilemmas and decisions. At the conclusion of the study, through review of these journal entries and in consultation with the participants, a ‘post-ethical review’ (Tolich, 2003) was conducted to ensure that the required standard ethical guidelines were met, cultural sensitivity was maintained and any ethical dilemmas were resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

The challenges for this research also included conflicts with traditional positivist research methodology (Allen, 2004), which is the basis of most gifted research, and underpins academic requirements for presentation of research. This thesis includes elements of sociology, psychology and ethical theory; however it does not claim to be a dissertation on any of those areas – merely includes the literature and elements pertinent/relevant to the current research on gifted educational areas across multicultural Australia.
3.1.1 CHALLENGES WITHIN TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO GIFTEDNESS

As discussed in detail within Chapter Four the study of giftedness has traditionally been located within the realm of cognitive and behavioural psychology (Gross, MacLeod, Drummond & Merrick, 2001; Howe, 1997; Landvoigt, 1998; Sternberg, Grigororenko & Bundy, 2001). Although in recent decades educational research has impacted on gifted education, it is difficult to move beyond the dependence on measures of achievement, specifically the perceived importance of Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) scores. The use of such quantified measures is referred to as ‘positivism’ (Allen, 2004). Within this paradigm, it was argued that quantified measures were value free and provided objectivity (Kell, 2004). Similarly Functionalist perspectives perceive individuals as possessing innate talents and abilities which are refined by schools (Germov, 2004). Based on this viewpoint “genetic deficiency was the first popular explanation for the educational failure of working-class children” (Germov, 2004, p. 257) and Intelligence Quotients (I.Q.) test scores were used to prove these viewpoints. The Functionalist approach was further developed into a ‘cultural deprivation’ or ‘deficit theory’ (Germov, 2004) which suggested students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and cultures other than Western mainstream middle class lacked the necessary cultural values, and indeed intelligence, to achieve educational success (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Lynne, 2006), a viewpoint that impacts on this study due to the nature of the multicultural participants.

Gifted research has recently moved into other areas, but always appears to retain the structuralist, functionalist, positivist viewpoint that demands empirical data to prove ‘giftedness’ prior to exploring perceptions of gifted individuals. As Intelligence tests have also long been known to be culturally weighted (Kincheloe, Steinberg & Gresson, 1996; Howe, 1997), the first challenge for this research was to overcome the need for empirical data to ascertain the giftedness of the research partners. Holbrook (1997, cited in Allen, 2004) captures this dilemma, suggesting that positivistic approaches to the study of humanity limit research if they cling to an
approach which demands that nothing must be regarded as real unless it can be described by empirical science and rational methods, by ‘objectivity’.

As stated in more detail in the ‘recruitment’ section, participants were not required to complete Intelligence tests to ‘prove’ their giftedness, rather individuals were contacted via recommendations of their giftedness as it was defined within their own culture’s expectations of giftedness. The completion of a ‘giftedness characteristic survey’ (Macy, 2006) was never intended to provide empirical data on their giftedness per se, rather it served to confirm gifted traits to the individuals themselves, a factor explained in more detail in Chapter seven. Nevertheless, the tensions between these seemingly opposing viewpoints have been incorporated into the discussion.

3.1.2 TRADITIONAL PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

As previously mentioned the dual presentation of this thesis is necessary as, regardless of cultural background, in order to reach the inner workings of academia, the doctoral student must appease the gatekeepers by completing a dissertation that proves they should be permitted to enter into the shared monopoly of power (Morley, Leonard & David, 2003, cited in Gruppetta, 2005c). “A PhD is a form of accreditation that certifies that the holder has proved himself or herself as a researcher and warrants admission to the community of licensed academics or competent scholarly independent researchers” (Yates, 2004, p. 61). Thus each university or college has academic requirements to be fulfilled by the doctoral candidate in order to assess their ability to competently research and then present their research findings in a manner acceptable to academia.

Students are told to research their passion, or at least a topic they are passionate about (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, cited in Gruppetta, 2005c). Yet, at some point their passion is eroded as they are also told ‘not to try and change the world’ (Gollin, 2005), that the completion of a dissertation is merely a ‘gate-keeping exercise’ (Gollin, 2005; Yates, 2004) to prove that they can research effectively at
this level (Gruppetta, 2005c). Students are also told to ‘consider their audience’ (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001; Burns, 1997; Gollin, 2005) when writing, and advised not to be ‘too creative’ within their presentations lest they fail to meet academic requirements (Gollin, 2005). Such restrictions hamper the student exploring new areas of research and presentation, and inhibit researchers from non-mainstream backgrounds by permitting a single viewpoint of academic presentation (Gruppetta, 2005c).

As discussed in Chapter Five these presentation viewpoints are based on scientific positivist perspectives and contrast with postmodern presentations which explore more creative presentations. Therefore the thesis is presented with some creative and Indigenous components; however, in all other aspects the thesis follows a standard academic presentation to ensure academic accreditation.

3.1.3 ETHICAL CHALLENGES

This study marks the culmination of an ethical journey throughout the planning and implementation of this research. The dilemma presented during the planning of this research was to ensure interview questions and interaction with those recruited would not impose my own cultural and moral values and spiritual beliefs onto the participants. It was also to acknowledge all participant responses as valid and create an environment where the participants would feel comfortable enough to share intimate aspects of their personal lives and beliefs, whatever they may be. The initial planning of this research was fraught with difficulty and one of the areas of most concern was to address the ethical challenges encountered, beyond the standard ethical guidelines (Gruppetta, 2004b).

One of the key requirements of a Doctoral dissertation is the need to conduct ‘original’ research (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001), yet if the topic or methodology are indeed original, then specific ethical guidelines may not exist to inform the research (Gruppetta, 2004b). Originally the core of the proposed research involved questioning the participants about their personal beliefs, in particular their moral
values and spiritual philosophies, yet research into the literature surrounding the ethical requirements for this type of questioning revealed few guidelines. Specifically the initial goal was to interview for narrative life stories to investigate how a gifted individual forms their moral and spiritual beliefs throughout their lifetime.

The focus of the research changed during the course of the project; however the need for sensitivity when interviewing across cultures remained an ethical challenge. As it was always my intention to seek participants across cultures and religions, including those beyond my own personal experience, there was a real risk of ethical infraction. Investigation into ethical guidelines for cross cultural interviewing resulted in two publications (Gruppetta 2004b; 2005d) and an invitation to participate on a panel investigating the issue at the ‘National Health and Medical Research Council: Ethics in Human Research Conference’ in 2005. Despite intensive investigation into this area there have proved to be no official guidelines for interviewing across cultures.

3.1.3.1 Ethical Codes

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) statement on ethical conduct in research involving humans notes that “unethical behaviour need not always be a glaring act of infraction. It often includes subtle or only sub-consciously intended encroachments on values and principles” (NHMRC, 2003:3). Specifically they refer to the possibility of an “infringement of deeply held values arising from cross-cultural insensitivity – despite researchers’ compliance with the legal requirements of ethical guidelines” (NHMRC, 2003:4).

These ethical guidelines provided only general statements for dealing with cultural issues. Such codes emphasised four main areas of research conduct, ensuring participants give informed consent, deception during research privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy during the collection and reporting of data (Christians, 2002). Whilst these directives were addressed and followed during the course of the research, another issue was relevant.
Australia is a multicultural country, yet until recently ethical guidelines provided little toward guiding the researcher through cultural issues that arise during the research process. The main directive concerning participants from minority cultural groups, or those from a distinctive collective, concentrates on discrimination within recruitment procedures (NHNRC, 1999). Specifically the guidelines state that no participant could be excluded from participating in research due to gender, race, culture, religious or other beliefs (NHNRC, 1999). As such the codes covered the broad aspects of ethical conduct without providing specifics useful to inform the research for this dissertation, nor were guidelines given for intentional recruiting from specific cultural groups.

There were directives concerning the research of collectivities: “Collectivities are distinct human groups with their own social structures that link members with a common identity, with common customs and with designated leaders or other persons who represent collective interests in dealing with researchers. Examples of collectivities may include cultural or ethnic groups, and indigenous communities (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p.31). Although these directives suggest possible consultations with leaders of these collectivities, the only specific guidelines were supplied for ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ (NHMRC, 2003), and again contained no mention of recruiting individual participants from various cultural groups. This raised a dilemma for this study as I was specifically recruiting from a range of cultural groups.

Despite this, ‘The Values and Ethics – Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research’ (NHMRC, 2003) was quite comprehensive. The document notes that “how people see the world is generally informed by their own experiences, values, norms and learning” (NHMRC, 2003, p.1). It further contends: “To misrecognise or fail to recognise (Cultural difference) can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone [or a group] in a false, distorted and reduced model of being…Research cannot be difference blind” (Taylor, 1992, cited in NHMRC, 2003, p.3). It is recognized that “research is also influenced by what is not said: Problems [emerge] if we do not recognise that values
operate in the everyday world from undeclared evaluations and judgements about other people, their behaviours and practices” (Cameron, 2001, cited in NHMRC, 2003, p.3).

Yet, both of these quotes (Taylor, 1992; Cameron, 2001) came from ‘multicultural’ arguments, weighted to all minorities, rather than specifically Indigenous communities. Whilst there were no provisions for other cultures or religions, not even the five major world religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or Islam, despite current consultations with Arab and Muslim communities to eliminate prejudice within research, similar guidelines could be used for all cultural collectivities (Gruppetta, 2004b; 2005d). One of the main reasons the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guidelines (NHMRC, 2003) appeared so comprehensive is that particular collectivity were involved in writing it. Gordon and Newfield (1995) refer to cultural identity as a descendant of racial identity. Equally it is not always possible to separate religion from culture (Lovat, Follers, Parnell, Hill & Allard, 2000) as our cultural beliefs can be intrinsically linked to our religious beliefs. Therefore consultation with each cultural and spiritual community involved within this research was necessary to ensure ethical standards were maintained.

Researchers are also instructed to ensure the beneficence of their study. Beneficence is explained as the need to maximise benefits and minimise possible harms (NHNRC, 1999). It implies that research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p.339). Clearly a participant must not be used as a means to an end. Furthermore, researchers are directed to non-maleficence, that researchers have an obligation to do no harm to participants (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001; NHNRC, 1999).

To ensure these principles are upheld researchers are instructed to treat their participants with ‘respect’. Respect refers to the welfare, rights, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage, both individual and collective of persons involved in the research (NHNRC, 1999). Respect is further defined as an inherent dignity and
rights of persons and a commitment not to use a person only as a means to an end (NHNRC, 1999). However, the dictionary definition of ‘respect’ is to “regard with deference, avoid degrading or insulting or injuring or interfering with or offending or corrupting or tempting” (Moore, 1999).

Respect is therefore an ambiguous term and has different meanings within other cultures (Gruppetta, 2004b; 2005d). Pack-Brown and Williams (2003, p.61) concur stating that “the abstraction of respect varies from culture to culture and context to context.” When dealing with minority cultures it can be difficult for a researcher with little knowledge of that particular culture to avoid offence or insult. It may also be difficult to avoid corruption of a person’s beliefs if one is intending to use dialogue between participants as part of the research process. For example, if the participants do not share similar cultural bases, inter-participant dialogue, however well intentioned, may cause the participants to question their own beliefs and therefore change their original mindset through the course of the research process, an outcome that would violate the concept of ‘respect’ by corrupting their initial belief systems (Gruppetta, 2004b). Many research bodies have codes of ethics to inform the research of their members (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). All rely on the concept of ‘respect’ but this is only defined in the sense of the majority culture (Gruppetta, 2004b; 2005d). Therefore the notion of respect needed to be negotiated with individual participants to ensure that my conduct was respectful in the terms that they defined it.

As the need for cultural sensitivity during interviewing was not specifically addressed by the NHNRC (1999) other ethical codes were examined. Although anthropologists are concerned with the study of culture, their code of ethics is equally ambiguous. The code of ethics provided by the Society for Applied Anthropology (2004) merely states “to the communities ultimately affected by our activities we owe respect for their dignity, integrity, and worth. We recognize that human survival is contingent upon the continued existence of a diversity of human communities, and guide our professional activities accordingly”. Again this uses ‘respect’ as key terminology without stipulating the use of the term. The Register of
Professional Archaeologists (2004) also relies on the concept of ‘respect’ in terms of investigating the cultural histories that are the subjects of archaeologist investigations.

Part of the problem is that ethical guidelines for social science and educational research are still based on medical guidelines. Consequently, much of the literature debates the use of these guidelines as a basis social science research. The major contention seems to be that as social science researchers are not using medical procedures, they have different requirements and are often faced with ethical dilemmas that cannot be solved using these medically based guidelines (Lowman & Palys, 2001; McLean, 2001; Punch, 1998; Strauss, Sengupta, Quinn, Goeppinger, et al. 2001; Tsalikis, Seaton & Shepherd, 2001; Van den Hoomaard, 2001). Another problem is that the current code of ethics grew out of the climate of very unpopular research during WWII, and is directed to the problems of that era rather than those of today. Therefore, it is woefully inadequate for dealing with the many diverse ethical problems that confront anthropologists (Hill, 2004), educators and other researchers working in the wide variety of academic and non-academic contexts they do today. Another problem is that the majority of ethical codes “reflect a predominantly Eurocentric worldview” (Pack-Brown & Williams, 2003, p.31). It seems specific guidelines for the type of recruitment, interaction and questioning required of this research are simply not available, and therein lays the dilemma.

3.1.3.2 Ethical dilemmas

In order to ensure that the proposed research was ethical it was necessary to address ethical issues as they were identified within the initial planning stage. However, an ethical dilemma for which there appears to be no solution is difficult to address and caused me great anguish as an ethical researcher. De Laine (2000) cites Hill, Glaser and Harden (1995) in defining an ethical dilemma: “An ethical dilemma arises when the researcher’s experiences conflict, especially conflict that cannot be clearly addressed by one’s own moral principles, or the establishment of ethical codes” (p.3). De Laine further contends that an ethical dilemma is defined as a problem for
which no course of action seems satisfactory or a situation where there is no ‘right’
decision, “only a decision that is thoughtfully made and perhaps ‘more right’ than the
alternatives” (Hill et al, 1995, cited in de Laine, 2000, p. 3). She also suggests that
such dilemmas are more often the realm of the student or novice researcher. She
claims the more experienced researcher is able to address such issues through
repeated research experience and that students may find themselves “enmeshed in
dilemmas because they may not have foreseen how research may impact” (Sieber,
dilemmas may arise at any time throughout any form of research, and serious thought
must be given to these situations.

Whilst not entirely a novice researcher, having already completed both a Honours
and Masters degree, and having worked in partnership with others on various
research projects, technically I was still a student. Therefore the advice of Tolich
and Davidson (1999) for students to seek the guidance of supervisors, colleagues and
more experienced researchers in answering ethical questions, offered little, as such
advice was subjective to the interpretation of ethical guidelines by others, and often
contravened my own personal beliefs. Moreover, present colleagues have yet to
advise of specific guidelines to address the ethical challenges of interviewing across
cultures, and merely suggest further perusal of the literature. Apparently they failed
to see my conundrum (Grupetta, 2004b).

3.1.3.3 Ethical Dilemmas from other Studies

The investigation of other ethical dilemmas presented in the literature did not assist
in addressing this dilemma. Jacobs (2004) presents various case studies relating to
ethical dilemmas; however the only discussion of culture relates to how far a
researcher should immerse themselves into the culture under observation, in terms of
accepting stolen goods, sharing alcoholic beverages or illegal substances or
indulging in sexual practices, and/or whether they should interfere with these
practices amongst their participants if they are known to be illegal or detrimental to
their health and well being. None of these issues were relevant to this study.
Phillion (2002) conducted ‘narrative inquiry in a multicultural landscape’ yet provided little discussion of the ethical issues this entailed. However, she did discuss her own prior assumptions and how these were manifested and addressed through the course of the study, until they were resolved. As discussed in Chapter seven, a researcher’s journal was used in a similar manner to record my own prior assumptions and document any ethical issues that needed to be addressed through the course of the study. Such ethical issues have the effect of forcing the researcher to come “face-to-face with who they are, what moral characteristics they possess, and what ethically responsible actions they can take” (Pettifor, 1996, p. 4). When “the rules are insufficient, applying professional standards in new settings is difficult” (Pettifor, 1996, p. 4), difficult but not impossible (Gruppetta, 2004b).

Tolich and Davidson (1999, p.71) added to the debate by referring ethical questions back to “the sensitivity and judgment of the researcher” in ensuring no harm is done during research. Similarly Noddings’ (2002) reference to Dewey’s (1972) “Ethical Principles” in discussing the mental rehearsal of moral and ethical situations in order to plan a course of future action raises more questions than answers. “If the long-range consequences outweighed the short-term miseries, and most of the substantial citizens in society agree with me, is it moral to go ahead with the plan?” (Noddings, 2002, p.83). Basically, all this discussion centres around the age old question in research and one that must be answered by every researcher, whether the end justifies the means. Does the long term benefit of this research justify the possible harm to my participants? But it also relates to the question of ‘who’ is making the rules/writing the guidelines – usually the dominant society, which within Australia is the White Christian Middle-class (Partington, 2004).

Many such ethical issues are “situational” (Punch, 1998, p. 157) and require the researcher to make adaptations and decisions regarding ethical dilemmas on the spot, within the actual situation, without recourse to consulting another colleague or the actual ethical body responsible for the research approval. Consequently Christians (2002) contends that for social science research the moral task cannot be reduced to professional ethics. The challenge for those writing culture is not to limit their moral
perspective’s to their own codes of ethics, but to understand ethics and values in terms of everyday life (Christians, 2002, p. 147). He calls for an ethical epistemology that makes the researchers responsible, not to a removed discipline or standardised ethical code, but to those being studied. Therefore within this study it was necessary to negotiate directly with the participants themselves.

3.1.3.4 Participant negotiation

Negotiating with participants to ensure an equal partnership in how the research was conducted and which findings are valid and acceptable permits the recognition of disagreement, mutual understanding and the honouring of moral commitments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, p.34). However, the issue of negotiating with the participants can also prove to be a dilemma. Taking the final report back to the participants can be problematic as it leads to conflict among members who later disputed “what even they will accept as true interpretation” (Johnson, 2002, p.116). Hammersly and Atkinson (1995) agree that feeding the findings of research back to the participants is seen as an obligation on ethical grounds. Moreover, if the participants view the results negatively, they may request changes or omissions, not because the findings are essentially incorrect but because they do not wish to be portrayed in this way (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Taylor et al. (1994 cited in Christians, 2002, p.147) also contends the non recognition of culture can inflict harm, oppressing and “imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being”. In order to reduce this effect Ivey and Ivey (2003), counselors engaging in interviews and studies across cultures, reviewed the ethical codes currently available in America, Canada and Australia, and again found no specific guidelines. However, they suggest that to be ‘culturally competent’ the interviewer needs to be both culturally aware, ask culturally neutral questions and be flexible in response to the answers.

Ivey and Ivey (2003) recommend very open questions in order to gather maximum information from the participant. Although this advice appears sound and would
support interviewing across cultures and belief systems, Johnston (2002) cautions against the consequences of very open questions aimed at in-depth probing. Researchers often find it difficult to predict the consequences of deep questioning techniques as they fail to anticipate the effect on the participant. If it is not enough to face having one’s thoughts, feelings, and intimate knowledges portrayed in print, the shock is far greater if they are portrayed as ‘other’ to the point of being unrecognisable, and perhaps unable to be lived with (Malcom, 1990 cited in Plummer, 2001). The shock Malcolm (1990) referred to is not the expected deception of covert research, or misrepresentation of the topic of the research, or any other obvious deception by a researcher. It is the realisation that the interviewer had their own agenda for the research, their own interpretation of what the participant saw so clearly, and yet the researcher as external observer subjectively saw something else.

Trickett and Espino (2004) agree within their review of the model of collaborative research. Whilst they note that collaborative research is the goal, there are conflicts with the collaborative model. No decision rule is going to be entirely satisfactory, for instance, ‘doing what the participant wants’ cannot be a hard and fast rule (Trickett & Espino, 2004). Such a rule will ultimately come in conflict with the multiple loyalties to groups with conflicting agendas (Trickett & Espino, 2004). Additionally, the release of all information to the participants, however well intentioned, may in fact corrupt the research by forcing the biases of the researcher or other participants onto that individual. Thus the ideal is achieved but the results are ultimately compromised.

Lovat et al. (2000) suggest social researchers should not place themselves or others at risk, particularly if their research touches on a controversial area. In particular they note that asking questions about religions or religious beliefs could cause concern for potential participants as the area of belief may be considered too personal (Lovat et al. 2000). Yet Lovat et al. (2000) also suggest that a phenomenological approach is the best way to approach the vast area of belief and value systems, an idea that would seem to conflict with the discussion by Trickett and Espino (2004). As discussed in
Chapter Five, phenomenology assumes the participant’s ‘truth’, therefore my negotiations with participants have acknowledged their truth, and their choice of sharing elements of that truth in the final publication.

3.1.3.5 Non-discriminatory research

O’Riley (2003:154) discusses the ‘right to know’ as a western assumption. That the researcher, student, academic world in general believes they have a ‘right to know’ all facets of the culture or individual being presented. Yet she also speaks of the “right of those who know not to share what they know” (O’Riley, 2003, p.154). There are intimate knowledges within most cultures that are understood by the members of that culture. From habits to secrets, they are not easily explained to an outsider, and many are not intended to be shared beyond the circle of that specific culture. A participant’s right to withhold such information must be respected (Gruppetta, 2008). The “professionalism of knowledge within western culture has made it a commodity” (O’Riley, 2003, p.154), yet that does not give the researcher permission to lack sensitivity when dealing with intimate cultural knowledge (Gruppetta, 2008). The participants in this study were given the right to withdraw their comments, particularly if they had committed a ‘faux pas’ and inadvertently shared knowledge generally confined to their own cultural arena. Although I found it frustrating to remove an illuminating comment, my own conscience ensured the ethical standards set for this study were adhered to throughout the entire research period.

Hymes (1996) refers to cultural assumptions of language and linguistic understanding that cause minority cultures to be misinterpreted; much is lost in the translation to the accepted discourse of the dominant culture. He further discusses the idea of freedom of voice; the “freedom to have one’s voice heard” (Hymes, 1996, p.64) rather than be denied the opportunity due to linguistic differences in speaking, reading or writing. To support this idea Jodry, Robles-Pina and Nichter (2004) suggest using research assistants that are familiar with the culture and language to interpret for participants, specifically a research team to cross-check conclusions to
ensure validity of findings. Such a team was not possible within the singular research required of a doctoral dissertation. However, they also stress using reflexivity, specifically self-reflection about potential biases and predispositions to minimise researcher bias (Jodry et al. 2004). In terms of this study I made a concerted effort to represent the voice of each participant by incorporating their linguistic differences into their narratives, rather than correcting grammar or word choice. I have also constantly reflected on my own possible bias and discussed any potential conflicts with the participants to ensure the research was not discriminatory.

Ford and Harris (1999) reveal little of their research methods into multicultural giftedness, beyond noting that the majority of research into minority groups is conducted by white researchers. They question whether such research can ever truly be objective, that is bias or value free. Whilst criticising the notion of a multicultural researcher, they provide strategies for the multicultural educator that are quite informative. “Culturally competent educators seek greater self-awareness and understanding regarding their biases, assumptions, and stereotypes” (Ford & Harris, 1999, p.162); They attempt to increase multicultural awareness, understanding and equity. Culturally competent educators seek to understand the worldviews of minority students without negative judgments. Rather than adopt these views they respect them as legitimate not inferior, and more to a pluralistic viewpoint of unparalleled diversity (Ford & Harris, 1999). Delamont (2002) debates whether anti-racist research is ever possible, raising the question that researchers external to the culture being studied are likely to detrimentally portray beliefs that conflict with their own. Again reinforcing Taylor et al. (1994 cited in Christians, 2002) point that such non-recognition of culture can inflict harm, however “what constitutes harm may be a matter of judgment and may be contentious” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.280).

I understand that the adherents and non-adherents of any religion will view religious symbols and concepts differently (Sachs, 1998). I also know that researchers external to the culture being studied are likely to detrimentally portray beliefs that conflict with their own (Delamont, 2002), and any study involving individual belief, religious
or otherwise should be approached with caution. Therefore every ethical dilemma that arose throughout the research was addressed through consultation with the participants and their cultural leaders in order to ensure cultural sensitivity.

3.1.4 LEGAL CHALLENGES
3.1.4.1 Racial Laws

Committees reviewing ethics nowadays are more often concerned with issues of confidentiality, fraud, plagiarism, data tampering, misrepresentation, researcher indiscretions involving participants or students, or coercion of subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hill, 2004). In addition to the standard ethical guidelines, within Australia there are laws concerning discrimination. Human Research Ethics Councils (HRECs) need to be satisfied that the conduct of research that they approve is lawful, specifically, “In the event that both the legal requirement and an ethical guideline apply, the legal requirement will prevail” (NHNRC, 1999). Yet little advice is given to researchers concerning the legality of their research, therefore it was also necessary to investigate the legal implications of intercultural research prior to beginning the interviewing phase.

Within Australia there are laws concerning discrimination in addition to the standard ethical guidelines. Racial discrimination consists of someone being treated less fairly because of their race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin (Racial Discrimination Act, 1975.) It may be direct or indirect discrimination; for instance ‘Direct’ discrimination is where someone would not give you a job due to your race, whereas ‘Indirect’ discrimination is where the requirements of the job exclude your racial characteristics. For instance the height requirements for the Australian police force were found to exclude Asians; therefore these requirements had to be removed. There are exceptions to the Act, termed ‘Special Measures’. The research must provide a benefit; have the sole purpose of advancing that group to equal status, must be necessary for the group to achieve that purpose, stop once that purpose has been achieved, and must not permanently set up separate rights for different racial groups. Research conditions would rarely apply to these situations. There is also a “Racial
Hatred Act” (1995) which forbids any public act done because of race, colour or national ethnic origin of a person or a group that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate that person or group. Whilst academic publication, discussion or debate are exempted from this act, they are exempt only if the research or discussion are conducted reasonably and in good faith, to benefit the group. Thus the concept of beneficence is emphasized in relation to this directive.

This is exemplified in a study by Harcourt and Harcourt (2002), which assessed the extent to which job application forms violate the New Zealand Human Rights Act because they included questions regarding nationality, ethical and religious beliefs, providing evidence of such violations. Bennington and Weir (2000) found similar questions on application forms in Australia, again in conflict with existing anti-discrimination laws. Both studies refer to the difficulty in questioning a person regarding their religious affiliation, as such questions impact on the participant, and the way that others perceive them. This could create ‘psycho-harm’ by “diminution of social reputation” (NHNRC, 1999). However the Harcourt and Harcourt (2002) study notes that non-discriminatory questions are possible. They contend that asking whether a person has a legal right to work in New Zealand immediately establishes nationality, citizenship or residency status, without the need to ask directly. The challenge for this dissertation was to design interview questions to address this issue, to achieve wording that attains cultural sensitivity in consultation with the participants themselves.

Therefore, questions for this study were designed to be open to the participant’s lived experience but not weighted to a particular religious or cultural viewpoint. For example, in investigating beliefs about what might occur to an individual after they die, the question was phrased as “what do you believe will happen when you die?” specifically questioning their personal belief, rather than “what happens when we go to heaven?” as this question is weighted toward Christian beliefs (Gruppetta, 2008). According to Kameniar (2004), using the terms ‘we believe’ and ‘they believe’ positions all religions and cultures other than your own as the ‘other’, reinforcing the idea that all of society believe the same things, therefore marginalising all those who
have different beliefs. Therefore it is preferable to ask ‘what do you believe?’ to ensure that language is consistent in presentation and does not ‘other’ the participant (Gruppetta, 2008).

Again the perusal of other studies did not exemplify adherence to the legality within ethical codes. For example, Chusmir (1988) researched whether members of some religions have a better work ethic than others. The study used a Likert scale to measure the degree of participant religiousity regardless of religious affiliation, displaying little cultural sensitivity. Furthermore Chusmir (1988) concluded that the protestant work ethic was most desirable for employers, yet stated that religion should not be used as a basis for employment decisions. If the results were not to be used by employers what justification exists for the undertaking of this research? Indeed, by basing the research on employee religious affiliation the study violated anti-discrimination laws. Therefore within my study, although participants were recruited through either cultural or religious affiliation, it did not violate anti-discrimination or racial hatred laws because none were excluded, and no comparison of which culture or religion is ‘better’ occurred.

3.1.4.2 Privacy Issues

In the early stages of the research there were changes to the Privacy Act in NSW that impacted on data collection and the legalities of working with research participants (Privacy Commissioner, 2007). Although the provision of anonymity is provided within ethical conduct, the possibility of an individual’s identity being ascertained from peripheral information is not made clear within ethical guidelines. According to the Privacy Commissioner (2007), it is critical that personal information must be de-identified to prevent any possibility of inadvertently exposing their identity. This means that any potentially identifiable characteristics of each individual concerned with the study, or their families, was changed or eliminated from the final presentation format. For instance, their specific age may be given, but exact date of birth and place of birth may not. A general description of their career choice may be
provided, but only in general terms; no specific information concerning their exact role is included within this study.

This area caused the most difficulty within the presentation of this study. Information concerning four of the participants is readily available on the Internet, and two are quite well known in their respective fields and the wider Australian community due to their successes and consequent media reporting. Therefore it was necessary to change some details in order to protect their identities and their privacy. The altering of descriptors was a transparent process negotiated with the participants concerned, although some failed to see why this tactic was necessary. Again this reflects the difference in perspectives between the Eurocentric ethical codes, as “some cultures hold a collectivistic life approach in high esteem and personal privacy is less valued, in some cases to the degree that those who engage in such behaviour are considered selfish” (Pack-Brown & Williams, 2003, p. 40). Some participants found it difficult to understand why pictures of their loved ones included in their collages must be blurred beyond recognition within the final presentation of this thesis, whilst others were relieved by the measures I had taken to ensure they could not be recognized.

The Privacy Act also stipulates that data collection “must be direct and only collected from the person directly concerned, unless they have given consent otherwise” (Privacy NSW, 2007, p.1). The difficulty with this part of the directive is the need to directly contact any person concerned with the research. It is ridiculous to assume that the participants could tell their life stories without mentioning any siblings, parents, children or friends. Therefore it was necessary to gain permission from any person mentioned in a narrative for information to be retained as part of the research. In the case of a deceased family member, it was necessary to gain permission from the next of kin, unless that person had been dead for more than 30 years (Johnston, 2004). The information provided about relatives therefore needed to be accessible and able to be updated should details be inaccurate. However this aspect of the privacy directives again conflicted with the notion of the participant’s truth being accepted as accurate, as required by phenomenology and this issue is discussed in relation to each participant’s information as presented in Chapter Eight.
Again this aspect of the Privacy laws conflicted with the stipulation that information must be *Safeguarded*. Therefore sensitive personal information, for example, information about a person's ethnic or racial origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, health or sexual activities must not be disclosed without consent (Privacy NSW, 2007). In cross checking information with relatives the researcher has to be quite careful about exactly which information is disclosed in order to safeguard elements of the participant’s personal life that may not be known to siblings, spouse or parents.

In regard to *Storage* of personal information and data, although guidelines merely state that it should be stored securely and “protected from unauthorised access, use or disclosure” (Privacy NSW, 2003, p. 1), further explanation of this directive posed some interesting challenges. Technically, to safeguard information it must never be visible to another person on a computer screen or written document, and must not be overheard by another person (Privacy NSW, 2003). To prevent unauthorized access to personal information and data all transcripts were ‘cleaned’ of identifiers and saved as ‘locked’ documents with password protected access. The original tape recordings were recorded on a specific tape recorder using ‘long play’ which meant they could not be played with any clarity on another tape recorder.

3.1.4.3 Copyright Issues

Although there is a growing body of research using ‘collage’ as data, the publication of such collages is subject to copyright law, and this was an area of concern in regard to the final publication of this thesis. The Copyright Act 1968 allows people to use copyright material without the copyright owner’s permission in certain situations (Australian Copyright Council, 2007). The Copyright Act allows “fair dealing” for certain purposes, but in Australia there is no equivalent to the ‘fair use’ defence in the United States copyright law, which can apply to use for any purpose (Australian Copyright Council, 2007, p.1). Educational Institutions have special provisions, and a person can make a “fair dealing” with copyright material for research or study; criticism or review (Australian Copyright Council, 2007, p.1).
Although permission is not needed if what you are using is not a “substantial” part of the copyright material, there is no set percentage of an original work, even a very small part of the original may be considered a ‘substantial’ part if what is used is important, essential or distinctive to the original work (Australian Copyright Council, 2007, p1). Educational institutions and researchers are exempt and may use all or a substantial part of copyright material without the owner’s permission provided the use is ‘fair’ within the educational or research context (Australian Copyright Council, 2007, p.2). For example, it is fair dealing for criticism or review if the person making the reproduction is the person making the criticism or review, but would not be fair for that work to be reproduced for another to critique (Australian Copyright Council, 2007, p.2). Nor is it fair to use the material for commercial purposes, particularly if the copyright owner is out of pocket from the use of the copied material (Australian Copyright Council, 2007, p.2).

For these reasons the images used by the participants in the construction of their collages has for the most part been dutifully recorded and a separate reference list (A49) is provided for this purpose documenting exactly which magazines, and where possible the exact pages numbers, articles or advertisements, the images have been gathered from. In presentation of an article concerning the interpretation of collage (Grupetto, 2006c) none of the created collage work was included within the publication to avoid misuse of these images. The only pictures presented for explanation of the technique were those ‘drawn/sketched’ by the research partners, and any future publications arising from this dissertation will not include the collage work created through the use of images collected from magazines or websites in order to ensure no violation of copyright laws ensues.

### 3.1.5 DEVELOPING MY OWN ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

As research into ethical guidelines provided by various institutions in Australia, America and Canada has not clarified these ethical challenges nor provided effective guidelines for cultural sensitivity within research situations. This section therefore presents the guidelines, based on wider research, that I have developed to address
these issues within this study. It further calls for the development of more specific guidelines to address multicultural sensitivity within research situations.

Maner (2002) supplies a specific checklist based on Kohlberg’s (1981) moral stages: “Make the choice that shows the greatest respect for the rights and dignity of all people” (Kohlberg’s Stage 6, cited in Maner, 2002). “If you are developmentally unable to do that, make the choice that is most responsive to the needs of others within your society” (Kohlberg’s Stage 5, cited in Maner, 2002). But he makes the point that these decision-making precepts are only of use; when the stakeholders share ethical codes, policies and principles, and share laws and values; when the situation is relatively simple and will change little over time, and the decision-maker is also a stakeholder; when the decision-maker can tolerate ambiguity, complexity or conflict, has a working knowledge of several ethical theories and easy access to advisors and stakeholders; and when the decision-maker is highly sensitive to ethical features and skilled in conflict resolution methods and consequential reasoning (Maner, 2002).

Therefore specific guidelines were designed for this particular study in order to address the ethical challenges faced by the researcher (Gruppetta, 2005b). Firstly, as a researcher I must work within the existing ethical guidelines in terms of beneficence, respect, participant consent, member checking of data, etc. Then I constructed the following additional guidelines (Gruppetta, 2005b) and incorporated these guidelines into my research practice:

1. The researcher must acknowledge their lack of specific information about the participant’s culture or religion.

I acknowledged that my own view could be ethnocentric and culturally biased. Despite the fact that I have studied the basic beliefs of the five dominant world religions; Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, as a teacher of World Religions within the ‘Human Society and Its Environment’ Syllabus (Board of Studies 1998). The knowledge I have gained of basic beliefs within these
religions is quite generic, encompassing more of a broad overview of general beliefs rather than specific information pertaining to individual practices, beliefs and values. Therefore I was open to learning more about culture and religion as each participant experiences it, rather than relying on generic information.

2. Questions should be examined for cultural weighting prior to interview situations when possible.

As previously stated questions concerning the participant’s beliefs or life experiences were not asked in terms that reflected the dominant Christian viewpoint and risked offending participants, or unfairly influencing their beliefs. Questions were phrased to specifically request the participant’s own individual viewpoint and therefore were specific to their own experiences without cultural weighting (Gruppetta, 2008).

3. Apologise for any infringement or offence inadvertently caused by the researcher’s bias.

Any perceived offence was immediately addressed with an apology, acknowledging that distress had been caused and offering to address the issue (Gruppetta, 2008). If I was unable to resolve the participant’s anxiety or distress due to the perceived infringement then further assistance was sought from their cultural leader and information referring the participant to an external counsellor was provided (Appendix).

4. Continually review the ethics of questions, conduct and situations throughout the course of the study period.

Within the research study participants were constantly asked, via verbal or written reviews of researcher conduct, whether there had been any infringement or offence caused. Specifically my own possible bias and lack of intercultural understanding was discussed at the beginning of the study and a dialogue begun with the participant concerning the best way to address such infringements. The participant was permitted to discuss such situations as they arose and were assured that the situation
would be addressed and any ethical dilemmas would be resolved to the satisfaction of the participant. Each issue was dutifully recorded within the researcher’s journal and analysed to ensure that the issue had been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

5. Use an external reviewer to check your ethical conduct

As a Doctoral student, I requested my supervisors provide this service. They were asked to review journal entries regarding my own conduct during the course of the research, and/or to be available for the discussion of any ethical dilemmas that arose. Although I also had the option of contacting the Human Research Ethical Council at UWS to query any possible dilemmas, this proved unnecessary.

3.1.6 POST ETHICAL REVIEW

There would be few that would argue that ethical guidelines are required for research. Hill (2004) refers to historical incidents of army intelligence officers using anthropologists’ notes during the Vietnam War in order to identify friend from foe. Although this discussion of secret and clandestine research was completed by 1972 suspicions still linger over the effective use of researchers’ notes should they fall into the wrong hands, hence the need for tighter privacy laws in relations to research. In contrast Johnson (2002) provides several recent examples of ethical researchers willing to go to gaol rather than turn their research notes over to authorities. But Roworth (2002) and Gibelman and Gelman (2001) again cite further examples of unethical researchers, from non-medical fields, being caught in violation of ethical standards and the long-term effects of these cases on other researchers. Yet any suggestion of unethical conduct affects all researchers. If researchers are viewed with suspicion it becomes difficult to establish the participant trust necessary for effective research, which is essential in terms of investigating sensitive issues and minority cultures where trust is imperative for accurate research (Gruppetta, 2008).
Equally, De Laine’s (2000) solution of selecting “a new form of research that is more moral and less morally objectionable” (Schwardt, 1995, cited in de Laine, 2000, p.4) proved to be neither helpful nor practical. As research areas evolve beyond the existing guidelines, it makes more sense to extend ethical and legal guidelines than to restrict newer forms of research. It is therefore disappointing to find that the revised National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 guidelines (NHMRC, 2007) only refer to respecting other cultures in terms of ‘overseas’ research but do not give specific guidelines to researchers within multicultural Australian conditions. A great deal of work still needs to be done in this area to provide consistent advice to researchers negotiating the multicultural landscape within their studies.

If such ethical dilemmas remain “to haunt our enterprise” (Johnson, 2002: 116), throughout the course of research, perhaps that is fortunate. It is often “only in hindsight are we aware that our course of action had consequences that we had not forseen and now regret” (Cassell & Jacobs, 2004). Pre-approval of ethical practice is simply not sufficient for some research studies, particularly the proposed dissertation. Tolich (2003) raises such issues of cultural sensitivity and ethical dilemmas occurring during data collection or the publication of results. He contends that a post-ethical review would level the ethical playing field, that if researchers were obliged to justify their own ethical decisions and whether such issues were resolved during the course of the research, as part of the research process, unethical studies would be a thing of the past (Tolich, 2003).

As discussed, the notion of establishing trust with research participants has been fraught with issues. Researchers are often thought to have hidden research agendas and be inclined to misrepresent participant data in order to achieve their own research goals. Techniques such as member checking have been commonly employed to verify interview transcripts. Despite this, participants are frequently concerned with how they are ultimately portrayed by the researcher, often contending their words were taken out of context and twisted to suit the researcher’s needs. This study presents an example of qualitative methodology that seeks to
incorporate an ‘ethic of trust’ with participants, thereby maintaining participant trust throughout the term of the research.

By including an autobiographical element, the researcher’s own bias was clearly stated at the onset. Also the researcher was established as the first participant in the study, thereby sharing the research experience with the participants rather than maintaining a more remote stance. Member checking by participants was actively encouraged and not limited only to interview transcripts. All research processes and findings were open to the examination of the participants. This included the ‘researcher’s journal’, data analysis and reports on findings. By maintaining transparency of the research goals, methodology, analysis and reporting techniques throughout the research process, issues of participant misrepresentation were avoided and their perspectives and opinions included.

Ethics is state of mind that abstains from engaging in any situation or event that would prove harmful to others. The perfection of ethics is accomplished when you have developed to the ultimate point the conviction not to harm others (Dalai Lama, 1994, cited in Pettifor, 1996).

Although it is ironic to cite a Buddhist statement when arguing for religious and cultural neutrality within research, it is also unrealistic to exclude religious precepts from any study on moral values and spiritual philosophies as so many of societies’ current values and laws are based on religious principles (Smith, 2001). In this particular multicultural society a range of perspectives and subjectivities must be acknowledged and incorporated into any research pertaining to the Australian multicultural landscape.

3.1.7 MY OWN PERSONAL CHALLENGES

I am aware that my own voice weaves in and out of the text as the thesis progresses. This is partially due to the challenge of contrasting perspectives between my own Indigenous ways of knowing and the requirements of academia. In terms of Indigenous ways of knowing (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999) the use of I – where ‘I’ is myself as an individual, is alien to my upbringing as an Aboriginal woman in a
collective society where an individual is simply not as important as the whole body of knowledge collectively shared by all. Therefore, if I must refer to myself, I prefer to write in the third person, referring to myself as ‘the researcher’ rather than claim I decided, or achieved, or found, displayed, etc as this suits my cultural perception of the presentation of information as explained in more detail in subsequent chapters. In contrast this research must be presented as entirely my own work, which it is, however defining the research as such remains a difficulty for me. This challenge is also a constant trial to my supervisors, who painstakingly ensure I remain completely connected to my own research by using first person language.

In terms of academic expectations the use of the first person also seems to be at odds with the notion of standing aside from your own prior assumptions when using phenomenology (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Yet this also contrasts with my own decision to include myself as the first participant in order to provide clear statements of any possible researcher bias and ensure ethical consistency for the rest of the participants. This apparent contradiction remains a challenge within the presentation of this thesis.

Another challenge has been maintaining a consistent voice throughout the thesis as many aspects of this research, particularly the literature reviewed for the ethical and methodological sections, has already been published as conference papers, articles and a book chapter (Gruppetta, 2008). As most of these publications occurred earlier in the research my writing style and focus has changed somewhat since they were written. However, as most of these publications were favourably reviewed by academics in the field pertinent to the relevant subject areas I am reluctant to completely edit the original writing. Therefore these sections have been referenced to my own publications and only edited where necessary for fluid reading of the thesis.

This chapter discussed the ethical, legal and personal challenges encountered throughout this research. The next chapter will review the literature pertinent to this research study.
Illustration 6 – Contrasting Perspectives
(excerpt from main image – ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Gruppetta, 2006b)

This picture first suggested itself through a view of the contrast between my own dual viewpoints, and is inherent to the structure chosen for the final dissertation. In all things there is an element of Ying and Yang, light versus dark, positive versus negative. For most of my life I have been betwixt and between, with a foot in both camps, ‘neither fish nor fowl’ as my paternal grandmother used to say. Therefore my own ‘bicompetency’ (Henare-Solomona, 2004) in the world of academia, and the visual and spiritual world I am rediscovering in the search for my ancestral people, is represented by the visual tracking of the research journey (Gruppetta, 2006b). Although this picture was computer generated, the original was completed by hand and then scanned into the computer and digitally enhanced in order to honour the bicompetent approach to presentation.
In all aspects of life all perspectives, and experiences add to the final culmination (Gruppetta, 2006a). Australia itself is a land of extremes, however much of the beautiful bushland requires fire to regenerate, therefore to gain the best of Australia one has to endure the worst of Australia. The picture on the previous page (Illustration 4) is an iconic representation of cross cultural perspectives, not just a two dimensional viewpoint, but a multifaceted perspective of the phenomenon of giftedness across multicultural Australia, as represented by the myriad of Australian cultural groups.

Australia’s early development during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century included periods of isolation due to its distance from the rest of the world, but had a significant British influence since colonisation began in 1788 (Gruppetta, 2008). In recent decades the American perspectives have provided greater influence, although, due to ongoing immigration from a variety of cultures, other perspectives are growing in influence within Australian research forums. In order to investigate the phenomenon of giftedness within multicultural Australia a range of research perspectives must be incorporated to identify trends in gifted research that impact on the contextual setting of this research.

There is a wealth of literature related to the education of the gifted and talented, most is American but increasingly Australia and other countries are contributing to the research. The extensive American studies are not always transferable to Australian educational settings. They do however suggest areas of interest to pursue within Australian research and can be applicable to Australian conditions, if only as broad generalisations. Therefore Australian studies have been cited, where possible, in order to provide an effective knowledge base for this study.

The 2001 Senate Report on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) triggered a surge of interest in gifted education within Australia. However, the Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) was concerned with providing an overview of the education of gifted and talented
students Australia wide rather than data specific to the designated study area of Sydney, New South Wales.

The 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) reviewed the findings of the 1988 Report by the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and found little improvement in the educational provisions for these children during the intervening years. Although the 2001 report made several recommendations toward policy changes, the report specifically recommended research into a single area, that of the reasons for negative attitudes toward gifted children. The issues relating to the study of these negative attitudes, and their specific impact on the designated study area, involved a range of topics pertinent to this study. For ease of reference, these issues of underachievement, tall poppy and imposter syndromes, will be dealt with separately within this chapter with links between these issues explained when applicable. Although it is not possible to include a review of all the literature researched during the refinement of the study, only literature most pertinent to the current focus of the study is reviewed within this chapter.

4.1 GIFTEDNESS

When conducting any study into gifted education, it is necessary to establish a definition of giftedness. Giftedness is an elusive concept. Although it has been recorded since Socrates time that there were those individuals who achieved, performed or accomplished extraordinarily compared to the general population (Frasier & Carland, 1982), it was not considered a measurable concept until the advent of the Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) test in the early twentieth century (Howe, 1997).

4.1.1 DEFINING GIFTEDNESS

Gross, MacLeod, Drummond and Merrick (2001) provide an extensive timeline of the investigations into giftedness during the last century, beginning with Galton in 1869 through to Feldhusen in 1986. Another Australian author, Landvogt (1998)
covers giftedness from Terman in 1925 through to Renzulli in 1996. There are some discrepancies between the dates attributed to the definitions in the timelines presented by Gross et al. (2001) and Landvogt (1998), and indeed some discrepancies in the presentations of the definitions themselves. Both publications omit Hollingsworth (Konstantopoulos, Modie & Hedges, 2001) and Spearman (Howe, 1997; Plucker, 2001). Yet, used as a base, these timelines (Gross, et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998) when collated with additional sources, in the following Figures 1, 2 and 4, display a comprehensive history of both the search for a definition for giftedness and a suitable method of identification.

Figure 1 displays the early definitions from 1800-1978. The earliest definitions of giftedness attributed high intelligence or outstanding abilities in specific areas to some quite bizarre theories, as shown by the example of phrenology in the early nineteenth century (Howe, 1997). The investigation of intelligence began to turn to more scientific investigations with Galton’s 1869 (Gross et al. 2001; Howe, 1997) contention that intelligence is hereditary. The development of the intelligence test by Binet, with his colleague Stanford, in 1905 changed the way intelligence was viewed. It became a measurable concept (Howe, 1997). The test provided an Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) score, ranking individuals according to their perceived intelligence level. It is important to note here the original Binet test was never intended to measure giftedness, the test was initially designed for identifying students with learning difficulties. It was later used to locate those with higher achievement ability (Howe, 1997).

As shown in Figure 1 in 1925 Terman refined the original Intelligence test (Howe, 1997) for use in his studies of giftedness, and later tests were developed such as the Weschler’s Adult Intelligence Scale (W.A.I.S.) and his Intelligence Scale for Children (W.I.S.C.) (Howe, 1997). Both the Stanford-Binet and W.I.S.C. tests have been continually refined and are still in common usage in the present day. The most widespread use of Intelligence testing was initiated during World War I, when the American government assigned soldiers to ranks according to their I.Q. (Howe, 1997).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DEFINITION OF GIFTEDNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Phrenology – mental faculties measured by size of bumps on one’s head (Howe, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Mill</td>
<td>Differences in ability are attributed to outcomes of experience (Howe, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Galton</td>
<td>Intelligence related to ‘keen’ senses and is largely hereditary (Gross, 2001; Howe, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Binet</td>
<td>Introduced the idea of ‘mental age’; created the first intelligence test (Gross et al., 2001; Howe, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Terman</td>
<td>The gifted are defined as those who score in the top 1% on I.Q. tests such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Landvogt, 1998). Gifted children are high achievers, find learning easy, and are usually physically and emotionally healthier than children of average ability (Gross et al., 2001; Howe, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Spearman</td>
<td>The ‘g’ factor. The concept that intelligence is caused by the presence of a specific factor termed ‘g’ measurable by I.Q. score. Considered to be inherited characteristic (Howe, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Witty</td>
<td>Gifted children may show remarkable performance in any potentially valuable field (Gross et al., 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Hollingsworth</td>
<td>Confirmed much of Terman’s work regarding advanced physical development as a characteristic. Investigated individuals with I.Q. of over 170, contended those beyond 140 have social adjustment problems. (Konstantopoulos et al., 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Passow, Goldberg, Tannenbaum &amp; French</td>
<td>Gifted students have a capacity for superior achievement in any socially valuable area of human endeavour (Landvogt, 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>DeHaan and Havigurst</td>
<td>Gifted children show unusual promise in some socially useful area (Gross et al., 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Sumption and Luecking</td>
<td>Gifted children possess a superior nervous system and are characterised by the ability to perform tasks, which require a high degree of intellectual abstraction or creative imagination (Gross et al., 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Marland</td>
<td>Gifted children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided in order to recognise their contributions to self and society. Gifted children possess outstanding abilities, and are capable of high performance in the areas of general intellectual and/or specific academic ability; creative/productive thinking; leadership; visual and performing arts; psychomotor ability (Landvogt, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>US Congress, Educational Amendment</td>
<td>In this version, the last category – psychomotor ability was omitted because students with exceptional athletic and sporting ability were already well catered for (Landvogt, 1998).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Gross et al., 2001; Howe, 1997; Landvogt, 1998; Konstantopoulos et al., 2001, cited in Gruppetta, 2003)
Whether this proved to be useful for them is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless the assumption that I.Q. predicted one’s ability became engrained into civilised society during the twentieth century (Howe, 1997). From ranking students within classrooms through to employers sorting applicants (Howe, 1997) the I.Q. test was welcomed as a measurement for the most elusive of qualities.

Figure 1 demonstrates that many of the earlier definitions, those of Terman in 1925, Spearman in 1930, and Hollingsworth in 1930 (Gross et al., 2001; Howe, 1997; Konstantopoulos et al., 2001) were entirely dependant on the I.Q. score of individuals as a measure of giftedness. The refinement of the I.Q. tests throughout the last century has been due to the belief in the accuracy of the test to assign intelligence levels. However, there are some difficulties with this concept. All refinements of the basic I.Q. test are based on the original test. As Howe explains:

> Nevertheless, it remains true that the tests currently in use are the descendants of batteries made up of questions that were assembled on the basis of largely practical considerations, rather than evolving from measuring instruments based on a definition of intelligence. If only for that reason, the idea that intelligence tests perform a measuring function that is comparable with the measurement of physical qualities, is completely mistaken (1997, pp.18-19).

The major difficulty with this continued focus on the original test format is that the original test questions were weighted to a specific cultural group, mainly White European middle-class males, hence the tendency for females and other cultural groups to perform poorly (Howe, 1997).

Although female I.Q. scores have improved due to access to education during the last century (Kerr, 1994; Reis, 1998; Walker & Mehr, 1992; Wilson, 1994), many cultural minority groups still perform poorly and achieve lower I.Q. scores (Howe, 1997). The controversy surrounding this issue remains the subject of much debate. Fraser’s (1995) reference to the racist nature of the test in “The Bell Curve Wars” is a prime example, although it was known to be an issue decades before (Goodenough, 1949). The relationship between this assumption and the difficulties experienced by disadvantaged groups will be discussed later in this chapter.
There are other controversies surrounding the I.Q. tests that relate to the scoring itself. The distribution of the scores is accepted to be that of a standard bell-curve, although standards differ on the actual scores that signify giftedness. The standard bell curve used by statisticians measures a population against the assumption that the bulk of the population will score within an average range (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2001). In terms of I.Q. scores it means the majority of the population, approximately 65 percent depending on construct used, will have an I.Q. score of score between 85 and 115 (Gross, et al., 2001; Howe, 1997; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2001). The bell-curve itself is an artificial construct, it “is an artificial product that results from test-makers initially assuming that intelligence is normally distributed” (Howe, 1997, p.20). As I.Q. testing is costly and time-consuming only small populations of subjects are tested, the actual distribution of I.Q. scores amongst the general population will never truly be known. Despite this artificial construct, scores are assigned and intelligence measured dependent on these scores.

Therefore, it is almost impossible to discuss giftedness without some reference to intelligence testing and the ‘bell curve’ (Gruppetta, 2004d). Feldman and Piirto (1995) contend that the term ‘gifted’ is often considered synonymous with high I.Q. It is generally agreed that the gifted represent a relatively small percentage of the population. In fact Tolan (1996 cited in Piirto, 1999) contends the gifted have become statistically insignificant, and their occurrence is too rare for schools and institutions to consider serving them.

Terman (cited in Gross et al. 2001) designated only the top one percent of a test population as gifted. Gross et al. (2001) considered the top five percent as gifted, whereas Braggert, Day and Minchin (1997) considered the top ten percent of a test population to be gifted. In general the majority of the population will have an I.Q. score of between 85 and 115 (Gross et al, 2001; Howe, 1997; Salvia & Yssledyke, 2001), with the Mean I.Q. score given as 100, depending on the test and mathematical construct used. Those with an I.Q. score above 130 are considered to be intellectually gifted (Braggert et al, 1997; Gross et al., 2001; Terman, 1925 cited in Gross et al., 2001; Howe, 1997; Konstantopoulos, Modi, & Hedges, 2001), whilst
those scoring below 70 are considered to be intellectually challenged (Salvia & Yssledyke, 2001). The degree of giftedness or intellectual challenge is directly related to the distance of an individual’s I.Q. score from the accepted Mean.

The basic figure that is representational of a normative population of any test group is the normal or ‘bell’ curve (Heiman, 1996). As shown by a typical ‘bell’ or Normal Curve (Figure 2) the statistics representative of the majority of a given population will show 68% of the population within one standard deviation of the mean (34% each side of the Mean). A further 28% fall between one and two standard deviations from the Mean (14% above and below), and only two percent will fall beyond two standard deviations from the Mean (Heiman, 1996; Salvia & Yssledyke, 2001). The further beyond the Mean that represents the ‘norm’ that a statistical result falls, the more chance there is of encountering an “outlier, extremes that should be ignored” (Fiske, 2004, p.135). Therefore the gifted represent those at least one Standard Deviation above the Mean within a normative sample group and the highly gifted represent those at least two Standard Deviations above the mean within a normal sample group, whereas the exceptionally gifted are often considered outliers (Salvia & Yssledyke, 2001). As stated, this curve (Figure 2) most often results from charting the intelligence test scores of a standard sample group (Heiman, 1996) however, a similar curve will result from population statistics representing cultural groups.

Roth, Bevier, Switzer and Tyler (2001) conclude that a minority group includes any individual that falls within an area one standard deviation away from the mean, regardless of test type. Ones and Anderson (2002) also found that individuals from minority groups averaged scores at least one standard deviation away from the mean. Goldberg, Sweeney, Merenda and Hughes (1998) used similar statistics to describe minority groups. Again those within the standard 68% that could be expected to indicate a normative group, with statistical representation within one standard deviation of the Mean, are indicative of the dominant norm. Those beyond the first standard deviation are considered a minority, whilst the 2% falling two standard
deviations beyond the mean are considered an exception (Fiske, 2004; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2001).

Figure 2. A Standard Bell Curve

![Normal (bell) Curve](image)

Figure 2 displays a standard bell curve that would result from statistical data typical of a normative population. The circled areas indicate the statistical results falling beyond one standard deviation from the mean. As Figure 2 highlights, the gifted, due to the small percentage within the category and distance from the mean, also constitute a minority group. Clearly - if a minority group is represented by their distance beyond one standard deviation from the mean, then the gifted should also be considered a minority, as they are statistically represented equidistance from the mean.

In confirmation of this premise, Alsop (2003, p.119) contends that “difference is a fundamental constituent of giftedness” and directly compares the social adaptation required by gifted individuals to the social adaptation required by minority groups. This premise is confirmed by Hollingworth’s extensive studies which found those with I.Q. scores above 140 have social adjustment problems (Konstantopoulos et al. 2001). The loneliness (Gross, 1993; Sak, 2004), isolation (Gardner, 2003; Tolan, 1998) and ostracism (Garner, 2003; Herbert & Neumeister, 2002; Piirto, 1999; Sak, 2004) of gifted children is well documented in the literature and comparable to the
isolation, loneliness, alienation and cultural difference felt by those of minority cultures (Delpitt, 1995; Possamai, 2004; Schneider, 2001).

Along with the persistent assumption that I.Q. scores designate actual intelligence, there are other pervading themes. Galton’s original heredity factor of intelligence in 1869 (Gross, et al., 2001; Howe, 1997) was revitalised by Spearman’s ‘g’ factor. Spearman’s 1930 dispute of Mill’s (Figure 1) earlier contention that experience is the major factor in intellectual ability was based on his own belief “that each individual should remain in his or her allotted position in the social hierarchy” (Howe, 1997, p. 22). Spearman’s belief that those with lower I.Q.s should be restricted from breeding is further proof of his elitist stance (Howe, 1997).

Later studies have shown that I.Q.scores can be improved through education or a change in circumstance, such as the improved scores in adopted children mentioned by Howe (1997). The fact that I.Q. can be improved is evidence that it is not entirely dependant on hereditary factors, that environmental and educational factors have an impact (Howe, 1997). Irrespective of these findings, the belief that I.Q. is largely hereditary is common, and due largely to the pervading influence of Spearman’s research. As Plucker (2001) states, “The death of ‘g’ has been exaggerated” (p.124).

Another controversial issue relating to the earlier definitions of Witty in 1940, Passow, Goldberg, Tannenbaum and French in 1955, DeHann and Havingurst in 1957, and Marland in 1972 (Gross, et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998) is the concept that the achievement of gifted individuals must be of social value. This is a belief that also relates to the Christian belief that giftedness is a ‘gift from God’ and must therefore be used for the good of society. The Catholic concept of “stewardship” (Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, 1992) is a prime example:

The fact that people have different gifts and talents is seen as an expression of God’s love of individuals…the Church community needs to use the variety of talents and gifts present among its members...Gifted and talented people can be seen as a resource for the community...in a fundamental sense, the success of the Catholic school can be measured by the way it fosters and develops talent (Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, 1992).
The belief that the gifted individual has a responsibility, a stewardship, to develop their God given gift for the good of the society is balanced with the Church’s belief that it has a stewardship to aid the gifted individual in developing their gift, thereby ensuring that society benefits. Intriguingly, this belief coincides with the hereditary concept, that giftedness is something with which you are born.

4.1.1.1 Recent Giftedness Theories

More recent giftedness theories have moved into broader definitions, although I.Q. for many remains a basic measure, and must be tested by a psychologist, current theories include specific gifted traits and characteristics. Figure 3 demonstrates the movement away from I.Q. scores during the last two decades. As additional research was conducted and various theorists pursued their ideas more detailed explanations were provided, and more emphasis put on specific character traits.

As shown by Figure 3, although giftedness is still measured by achievement level in an area, the areas of competence have been broadened. Sternberg’s inclusion of ‘street smart’ in 1981 (Landvogt, 1998), and Tannenbaum’s inclusion of ‘anomalous’ giftedness in 1986 (Landvogt, 1998) are expressions of giftedness that could not possibly be measured by I.Q. testing. Renzulli’s inclusion of creativity in 1978 (Landvogt, 1998) is also difficult to measure (Wilson, 1996).

The inclusion of environmental factors by many of the theorists (Figure 3) emphasises the move away from entirely hereditary factors, as the acknowledgement of the effect of external factors on the development of giftedness is incorporated into theories (Landvogt, 1998). As an example, Feldhusen’s inclusion of motivation in 1986 (Landvogt, 1998) is a forerunner of Sternberg’s inclusion of motivation as a necessary trait in his more recent theories as shown in Figure 4.

Tannebaum and Gagne’s separation of giftedness and talent (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998 – Figure 3) is also a controversial issue.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Definition of Giftedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Renzulli</td>
<td>Developed the ‘Three-ring Conception of Giftedness’: the gifted are those who possess high levels of three critical traits: above average ability, task commitment, and creativity (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Gardner</td>
<td>Developed the ‘Theory of Multiple Intelligences’: linguistic; musical; logical-mathematical; spatial; bodily kinaesthetic; interpersonal; intrapersonal [naturalistic, existencialism] (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Tannenbaum</td>
<td>Developed the ‘Psychosocial Definition of Giftedness’: giftedness = potential, talent = developed abilities. Five factors interact: general ability, special ability, non-intellective factors, environmental and chance factors (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1986  | Tannenbaum     | Four kinds of giftedness:  
• Scarcity – makes life easier, safer (penicillin discovery)  
• Surplus – enrich world but do not change it (Mozart)  
• Quotas – specialised skills (doctors, lawyers, teachers)  
• Anomalous – no societal value (Guiness Book of Records)  
Developed talent only exists in adults, giftedness in children denotes potential to develop talent in adulthood (Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1985  | Gagne          | Giftedness corresponds to competence, which is distinctly above average in one or more domains of ability.  
Talent refers to performance, which is distinctly above average in one or more fields of human performance (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1986  | Feldhusen      | Giftedness is a synthesis of general ability, special talents, self-concept, and motivation that predisposes the gifted individual to learn, to achieve, to strive for excellence (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998) |


Whilst many rely on Tannenbaum’s definition that giftedness is merely potential in a child, and talent the expression of that potential in an adult, others prefer Gagne’s definition (Gross et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998). In Gagne’s distinction between the two terms, he states that giftedness is extraordinary ability in a range of areas, whereas talent is extraordinary ability in a single area (Gross et al., 2001). His description of giftedness as “perhaps you know of people who astound their friends
with the ease and rapidity with which they improve…all the while gaining the envy of those who have to ‘slave away’ in order to achieve a comparable level of skill” (Gagne, 1991, p.66) highlights the jealousy aspect of ‘tall poppy’ syndrome and leads into the later discussion of ‘talent’ as needing more practise in an area in order to develop it fully.

Gagne (1991) also makes some interesting points about talent recognition and development in regard to there being “no absolute threshold for talent” (p.75). His comments on being judged best in your neighbourhood not necessarily indicating that you are best in the world are apt. No matter how impressively a person may perform in an area, there always exists the possibility that there is someone, somewhere who is bigger, stronger, faster or more clever, just basically better than you. Others have valid opinions, ideas or talents that may surpass your own.

Gagne’s (1991) discussion of catalysts is also intriguing. Gagne (1991) included ‘motivation’ as an intrapersonal catalyst which is a necessary element of developing talent. Tannebaum (1983) explained this concept in more detail in his explanation of environmental factors. His premise is that sometimes giftedness is shown “in response to pressure or even oppressiveness in their environment” (Tannebaum, 1983, p.87), although he states usually a “stimulating environment” (Tannenbaum, 1991, p.87) is required. This internalizing, or “intrapersonal catalyst” (Gagne, 1991, p. 71) explains why some people succeed despite all odds and some people stop trying at the first obstacle. The element that differs is something internal.

Gagne (1991) also refers to Tannebaum’s (1983) “chance factor” (p.88) particularly in reference to “hidden talents” (Gagne, 1991, p.73). This point is emphasised by Gagne’s (1991) discussion concerning the possibility of a “great talent for surfing or downhill skiing [is] not likely to be nurtured in the Midwest” (p.72), nor is a horse whisperer like to be identified in the middle of a city. There must also be an external catalyst in terms of the chance to discover a gift or talent in any domain.
Gardner’s (1982 cited in Gross, et al., 2001; Landvogt, 1998 -Figure 3) “Theory of Multiple Intelligences” (M.I.) is another area of controversy. Although support for this theory was initially slow, it became more popular in recent years (Fasko, 2001). Gardner (1983) divided intelligences into specific domains:

- Linguistic intelligence (Word smart)
- Logical-mathematical intelligence (Number/reasoning smart)
- Spatial intelligence (Visual or picture smart)
- Kinesthetic Intelligence (Body smart)
- Musical Intelligence (Music smart)
- Interpersonal Intelligence (people smart)
- Intrapersonal Intelligence (Self smart)
- Naturalist Intelligence (Nature smart)  
(\text{Gardner, 1983})

The last area ‘Naturalist intelligence’ is a recent addition, and Gardner considered adding a ninth area that of ‘existential intelligence’ but as yet has been able to find a way to measure this domain. Gardner has, in Smith and Smith’s (1994, cited in Smith, 2008) terms, been a paradigm shifter. He has questioned the idea that intelligence is a single entity that can be measured simply via I.Q. tests (Smith, 2008). Moreover he has challenged the cognitive developmental framework, particularly the work of Piaget with evidence that at any one time a child may be at very different stages (Smith, 2008). For example a child may be at one stage in number development and in a different stage of spatial and/or visual maturation (Gardner, 1999, cited in Smith, 2008).

Teachers welcomed M.I. theory as a levelling tool, as students at all achievement levels could be shown to have strengths and weaknesses in one or more domains. Lower achieving students improve in self-esteem if they are felt to have a strength in at least one area, at least one intelligence, whilst higher achieving students do not appear to be as far beyond the norm. Delisle (2001) disagrees and argues that this type of thinking is egalitarian:

As a theory, M.I. is convenient, simple… and wrong…So many people have jumped on to the bandwagon with the idea that ‘Everyone is gifted at something” that many gifted programs have been eliminated or watered down. Some people are under the illusion that the needs of gifted students can be met in a setting that allows multiple forms of expression. M.I. is a simplistic, wishful-thinking approach that seems like a good thing to people who are uncomfortable admitting that
According to Delisle (2001) using Multiple Intelligences to level student ability allows educational bodies to hide giftedness, and encourages gifted children to hide themselves. He praises elitism as “an indication that abilities – intellectual and emotional – differ among and between people” (Delisle, 2001, p.2). Then further contends we must “give up the notion that ‘elitism’ is a bad word and an evil concept when applied to gifted children and those who care about them” (Delisle, 2001, p. 3). Obviously Delisle (2001) feels strongly that basing classroom teaching on Multiple Intelligence theory is detrimental to the education of gifted students.

More recent research shown in Figure 4 indicates the definitions and identification procedures are moving further away from the single unitary concept of an inherited I.Q. Feldhusen (2001) disagrees:

We now see giftedness as factorial or multifaceted but still recognize the broad power of g or general intelligence that characterises intellectually precocious youth. Now from the work of Francoys Gagne (1993) and others we see giftedness represented by diverse talents, but we have the corroborating research of John Carroll (1999) showing quite conclusively that intelligence can be seen both as general ability (g) and factorially as many specific aptitudes or abilities (p.165).

Despite these trends, Sternberg, Grigororenko and Bundy (2001) confirm Feldhusen’s (2001) contention that the newer theories have not yet displaced the original ones:

Yet almost by definition, I.Q. is a culturally, socially and ideology rooted concept. It could scarcely be otherwise, as this index is intended to predict success (i.e. predict outcomes that are valued as success by most people) in a given society (i.e., in a large social group carrying its own set of values). I.Q. has been most studied where it was invented and where it is most appreciated, that is, in the established market economies and especially in the United States. Oddly enough, the country where its testing originated – France – largely ignores it (p.2).

As shown by Figure 4, many theorists largely ignore the need for an I.Q. score as well, and giftedness is being more broadly defined. Trends indicate the identification of gifted individuals is more dependent on recognising the accompanying complex behaviours and characteristics as indicators of giftedness, rather than rely on identification based on I.Q. scores.
Figure 4. Timeline of Development of Definitions of Giftedness (Recent definitions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DEFINITION OF GIFTEDNESS</th>
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</table>
| 1986 | Gruber, Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson; Feldman; Walters & Gardiner | • Each individual creates his/her own giftedness  
• Talent can only be understood against the culture, this affects whether the talent is recognised.  
• A ‘crystallising experience’ or ‘chance’ factor is important for the development of talent.  
• Talent unfolds over a lifetime (Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1991 | The Columbus group | Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity (Silverman, 1993 cited in Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1991 | Sternberg & Lubart | Creative performance is the result of congruence between intellectual processes (including insight skills), knowledge, intellectual style, personality, motivation and environmental context (Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1993 | Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen | Talent is made up of three elements:  
• Individual traits (partly inherited, partly developed)  
• Cultural domains (systems or rules which define certain ranges of performances as valuable)  
• Social fields (people or institutions whose task is to decide whether a certain performance is to be valuable or not) (Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1995 | Sternberg & Zhang | The Pentagonal Implicit Theory of Giftedness:  
To be judged as gifted a person needs to meet five criteria:  
• excellence (relative to peers)  
• rarity (high level of an attribute that is rare relative to peers)  
• productivity (superior capacities must lead to productivity)  
• demonstrability (through valid assessment tests)  
• value (superior performance must be in an area valued by the person or society) (Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1995 | Goleman | The Emotional Intelligence Theory: where an individuals ability to cope emotionally impacts on their ability to achieve (Goleman, 1996). |
| 1996 | Maker | Giftedness can be defined as the ability to solve complex problems in effective, efficient, elegant and economical ways (Landvogt, 1998). |
| 1996 | Renzulli | Giftedness is a complex set of behaviours which occur in certain people, at certain times, and under certain circumstances…Identification practices have shifted from a one time fixed pronouncement to an ongoing flexible assessment within the learning context (Landvogt, 1998). |

(Sources: Landvogt, 1998; Goleman, 1995, cited in Gruppetta, 2003)
Although the use of I.Q. to measure intelligence has lessened, the Western economies do appear to be the most resistant to abolishing the dependence on I.Q. as an indicator for achievement. As Sternberg, et al. (2001) contended, this dependence is linked to the assumed ability of I.Q. tests to predict those factors for success that Western culture most prizes. Goleman (1995) also refers to the differences between Western and other cultures. That Western culture is so fixated on achievement and possesses such a “narrow view of intelligence” (Goleman, 1995, p. xi) regarding it as genetic and unchangeable, that the testers ignore environmental factors. He also compares the supportive family structures and permission for emotional expression amongst other cultures to the Western nuclear family and more stoic view, contending most other cultures to be emotionally healthier than Western society (Goleman, 1995).

As shown by the lists in Figures 1, 3, and 4, theories abound, from the conservative theories of I.Q. scores to the more liberal use of various gifted traits or characteristics. The list is only finalised as each literature review for each consecutive study is completed. From Csikszentmihalyi’s (1998; 2000) concept of ‘flow’, where it is necessary for an individual to immerse him or herself in the total concentration of an experience to produce optimum achievement, to newer identification theories such as the Planning, Attention, Simultaneous, Successive (P.A.S.S.) theory, which is based on creativity testing (Naglieri & Kaufman, 2001), the conjectures continually arrive. Each claims to provide a better method of identification, nevertheless a conclusive method of identifying and defining giftedness still eludes researchers.

For the purposes of this study an I.Q. test was not practical or desirable. An I.Q. test has to be given by a qualified psychologist, involving considerable time and expense. Given the known cultural weighting of such tests and the multicultural nature of the participants it was unlikely that an I.Q. test would be useful to identify giftedness. Therefore alternative means of identifying gifted individuals were investigated including the possibility of using characteristics known to be evident in gifted individuals.
4.1.2 GIFTED CHARACTERISTICS

To enhance identification, Braggert et al. (1997), Gross et al. (2001), and Landvogt (1998) present lists of traits attributed to the gifted. While these traits vary, however most have common themes of the ability to learn earlier, faster and retain more. These themes are consistent with the list of characteristics provided by the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) listed in Figure 5. However, Braggert, et al. (1997) particularly emphasized that “one of the characteristics of many gifted/talented students is the increased speed at which they can operate” (p.30), a point which is not emphasized by other sources.

The majority of these gifted characteristics are confirmed by an American study by Robinson and Clinkenbeard (1998), which reviewed several other studies and found three common cognitive characteristics. Gifted students have “advantages over other students particularly in quantity, speed, and complexity of cognition” (Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 1998, p. 122). The inclusion of the speed aspect confirms Braggert, et al. (1997) view. However, they also state that “several authors caution that both creativity and motivation probably influence the research on cognitive characteristics” (Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 1998, p.122), relating again to Wilson’s (1996) point concerning the difficulty of testing creativity.

The extensive list of traits and characteristics compiled by the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) was based on submissions received nationwide (Figure 5). The list includes more general personality traits rather than just traits related to ability at schoolwork, and the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) are cited as commenting:

It is those social-emotional traits, even more than the cognitive traits, that alert other students to the fact that a student is ‘different’ – and this difference may cause the different student to be distrusted or resented (GERRIC cited in Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, p.10)
Figure 5. Characteristics of Gifted Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• They learn and understand material in much less time than their peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They have often learned to read before school age and they enjoy reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They tend to remember what they have learned (making reviewing previously learned concepts a painful and boring experience for them).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Their vocabulary is often more extensive than that of their peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They perceive ideas and concepts at more abstract and complex levels than peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They can distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They become passionately interested in specific topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They enjoy challenges and intellectual activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They have difficulty moving on to other learning tasks until satisfied they have learned as much as they possibly can about their current passionate interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are able to operate on many levels of concentration simultaneously, so they can monitor classroom activities without paying direct or visual attention to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They have often mastered much of the year-level work previously, so they need opportunities to function at more advanced levels of complexity and depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They often have wide interests and like to tie their own passionate interests into their schoolwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They exhibit meta-cognitive understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They have rapid insight into cause-effect relationships and ask many provocative questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They display a great deal of curiosity about many things; are constantly asking questions about anything and everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They generate a large number of ideas and solutions to problems or questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are uninhibited in expression of opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are high-risk takers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are very alert, have a long attention span, advanced vocabulary, vivid imagination, more than one imaginary companion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They achieve stages of literacy or numeracy earlier than age peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They have taught his or herself to read chapter books before entering school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are introverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are emotionally intense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Braggert et al. (1997), Gross et al. (2001), Landvogt (1998) and the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) agree that not all children will display all of the characteristics outlined in Figure 5. The characteristics can be developmental and although some children will manifest them at an early age, other children may not display them until they are older, and some children will only reveal these characteristics when engaged in an area of interest or aptitude (Braggert et al, 1997; Gross et al, 2001; Landvogt, 1998; Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). The 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) also contends the difference in intellectual ability and sporting ability is that intellectual and creative ability appear to be deeply bound within the whole personality, whereas sporting ability is a stand-alone trait. The ‘emotional intensity’ (Figure 5) attributed to gifted children is not examined in great depth in the 2001 Senate report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) although it has been investigated in more depth overseas.

4.1.2.1 Dabrowski’s Intensities

Dabrowski (1972) was a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist who developed a theory of personality development, known as the Theory of Positive Disintegration. Many in the field of gifted education have found Dabrowski's theory to be particularly relevant for understanding giftedness (Fiedler, 1997). Dabrowski's theory has two key facets: the levels of emotional development and the overexcitabilities or areas of intensity that individuals may possess. The five levels of emotional development range from self-serving, egocentric self-interest through relativism and a focus on compliance with group values to a stage of dissatisfaction with discrepancies between one's actions and one's ideals leading to transformative growth, self-actualization, and at the highest level, attainment of the personality ideal (Fielder, 1997) and these developmental levels will be included in subsequent discussion of moral and spiritual development later in this chapter.

Dabrowski (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) also identified five "overexcitabilities", "supersensitivities" or ‘intensities’ that could be found amongst gifted children:
Psychomotor, Sensual, Emotional, Intellectual, and Imaginational. These intensities correlate to many of the characteristics in Figure 5. Gifted children tend to have more than one of these intensities, although one is usually dominant. These intensities are cited by many gifted theorists and Piirto (1999) contends these characteristics have been used to identify gifted children, although no studies were cited as evidence. However, Ackerman’s (1997) study of secondary school students compared the intensities in ‘gifted’ students to the intensities in students who had not been identified. The gifted students had significantly more of Dabrowski’s intensities than their peers, even those that had not been previously identified as gifted students.

Figure 6 shows the characteristics of each of these intensities. ‘Intellectual’ intensity is the one most recognized in gifted children. It is characterized by activities of the mind, thought and metacognition or thinking about thinking. Children who lead with this intensity seem to be thinking all the time and want answers to deep thoughts. Sometimes their need for answers will get them in trouble in school when their questioning of the teacher can look like disrespectful challenging. This intensity relates to the usual definition of ‘giftedness’. Children with a strong ‘logical imperative’, who love brain teasers and puzzles, enjoy following a line of complex reasoning, and figuring things out. This intensity brings a love of things academic, new information, and cognitive games (Tolan, 1999).

‘Psychomotor’ intensity is often demonstrated as a surplus of energy, however children with a dominant psychomotor overexcitability are often misdiagnosed with ADD or ADHD since the characteristics are similar. This intensity is often thought to mean that the person needs lots of movement and athletic activity, but it can also refer to the issue of having trouble smoothing out the mind's activities for sleeping. This intensity displays lots of physical energy and movement, fast talking, lots of gestures, and sometimes nervous tics (Tolan, 1999).
## Figure 6 – Dabrowski’s Overexcitabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>• Deep curiosity&lt;br&gt;• Love of knowledge and learning&lt;br&gt;• Love of problem solving&lt;br&gt;• Avid reading&lt;br&gt;• Asking of probing questions&lt;br&gt;• Theoretical thinking&lt;br&gt;• Analytical thinking&lt;br&gt;• Independent thinking&lt;br&gt;• Concentration, ability to maintain intellectual effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychomotor</td>
<td>• Rapid speech&lt;br&gt;• Impulsive behavior&lt;br&gt;• Competitiveness&lt;br&gt;• Compulsive talking&lt;br&gt;• Compulsive organizing&lt;br&gt;• Nervous habits and tics&lt;br&gt;• Preference for fast action and sports&lt;br&gt;• Physical expression of emotions&lt;br&gt;• Sleeplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensual</td>
<td>• Appreciation of beauty, whether in writing, music, art or nature. Includes love of objects like jewellery&lt;br&gt;• Sensitive to smells, tastes, or textures of foods&lt;br&gt;• Sensitivity to pollution&lt;br&gt;• Tactile sensitivity (Bothered by feel of some materials on the skin, clothing tags)&lt;br&gt;• Craving for pleasure&lt;br&gt;• Need or desire for comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginational</td>
<td>• Vivid dreams&lt;br&gt;• Fear of the unknown&lt;br&gt;• Good sense of humor&lt;br&gt;• Magical thinking&lt;br&gt;• Love of poetry, music and drama&lt;br&gt;• Love of fantasy&lt;br&gt;• Daydreaming&lt;br&gt;• Imaginary friends&lt;br&gt;• Detailed visualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>• Extremes of emotion&lt;br&gt;• Anxiety&lt;br&gt;• Feelings of guilt and sense of responsibility&lt;br&gt;• Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority&lt;br&gt;• Timidity and shyness&lt;br&gt;• Loneliness&lt;br&gt;• Concern for others&lt;br&gt;• Heightened sense right and wrong, of injustice and hypocrisy&lt;br&gt;• Strong memory for feelings&lt;br&gt;• Problems adjusting to change&lt;br&gt;• Depression&lt;br&gt;• Need for security&lt;br&gt;• Physical response to emotions (e.g. stomach aches caused by anxiety)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Tolan, 1999; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008; Mendağlio, 2008).
As shown in Figure 6 the primary sign of ‘Sensual’ intensity is a heightened awareness of all five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Children with a dominant sensual overexcitability can get sick from the smell of certain foods or as toddlers will hate to walk on grass in their bare feet. The pleasure they get from the tastes and textures of some foods may cause them to overeat. These are the children who complain about the seams in their socks, and the tags in their clothing. These children quite often cover their ears when sounds are loud, for instance when the movie starts in the movie theatre. However, these are also the children who are awed to breathlessness at the sight of a beautiful sunset or cry when hearing Mozart (Tolan, 1999).

An ‘Imaginational’ intensity (Figure 6) is the free play of the imagination (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Children with this intensity can use their vivid imaginations to visualize the worst possibility in any situation. It can keep them from taking chances or getting involved in new situations. These are the dreamers, poets, the "space cadets" who are strong visual thinkers, and use lots of metaphorical speech. They day dream, remember their dreams at night and often react strongly to them, they believe in magic and resist the loss of Santa, fairies, elves, etc (Tolan, 1999).

The primary sign of ‘Emotional’ intensity (Figure 6) is characterised by exceptional emotional sensitivity. Children with a strong emotional overexcitability are sometimes mistakenly believed to have bipolar disorder or other emotional problems and disorders. This includes being happier when happy, sadder when sad, angrier when angry. These children display an intensity of emotion, but also a very broad range of emotions, and in particular empathy and compassion. They are often the children about whom people will say, ‘He's too sensitive for his own good’. These are also the children who are moved to tears by a piece of music, work of art or poem, and are frequently upset by their relationships with others. A child who needs a committed relationship will think him/herself betrayed by a child who plays with one child today and another tomorrow and refers to both as ‘friends’.
Children with emotional intensities have a need for deep connections with other people or animals. When unable to find close and deep friends they invent imaginary friends, or make do with pets or stuffed animals. This is also the overexcitability that makes these children more susceptible to depression (Tolan, 1999).

These overexcitabilities describe the unusual intensity of the gifted as well as the many ways in which they look and behave ‘oddly’ when compared to ‘norms’. Highly gifted people tend to have all five of these overexcitabilities, but different people lead with different overexcitabilities. For instance an engineer type might lead with an Intellectual intensity, the poets with Emotional and Imaginational, etc (Tolan, 1999). Yet all those experiencing these intensities or overexcitabilities experience the world differently from most people:

One could say that one who manifests a given form of overexcitability, and especially one who manifests several forms of overexcitability, sees reality in a different, stronger and more multisided manner. Reality for such an individual ceases to be indifferent but affects him deeply and leaves long-lasting impressions. Enhanced excitability is thus a means for more frequent interactions and a wider range of experiencing.” (Dabrowski, 1972, p.7)

Dabrowski (1972) believed ‘emotional overexcitability’ to be central and therefore the energy center from which the whole constellation of overexcitabilities were generated.

Dodd (2004) contends the heightened awareness and capacity for emotional depth is an affective characteristic of the gifted (Silverman, 1993; Dabrowski, 1977, cited in Dodd, 2004) and found a consensus amongst the theoretical, predictive and anecdotal works in the research literature regarding the heightened sensitivities of gifted children, however little empirical research was available. Dodds (2004) conducted her own empirical study of the phenomenon and found there was a higher degree of emotional sensitivity amongst gifted children.

For Piechowski (1991), emotional sensitivity is multi-faceted and encompassing: sensitivity to their own feelings, the feelings of others and particularly a strong sense of justice are paramount. Silverman (1993) defines sensitivity differently, stating
that sensitivity is being sensitive to your own feelings, whereas being sensitive to others’ feelings is in fact empathy. Both Roeper (1982, cited in Dodd, 2004) and Silverman (1993) assert that sensitivity and empathy do not necessarily co-exist. Some children are highly sensitive but lack empathy for others whereas some gifted children are empathic and this motivates them to action on the behalf of others (Dodd, 2004).

The majority of these traits, characteristics and intensities in gifted individuals are used to assist in identifying gifted children rather than adults. In contrast Macy (1996) attempted to disprove these characteristic theories and hypothesised that gifted college aged students would not have characteristics that would distinguish them from non-gifted students in the same college. Yet she found there were indeed substantial differences in the characteristics between the two groups and instead established a characteristic survey that would assist in identifying gifted adults (Macy, 1996). With Macy’s permission (Appendix A12) this characteristic survey was used within this study, and its effectiveness will be discussed in Chapter Seven as part of the data analysis.

Not all the characteristics of gifted and talented students are seen as positive (DET, 2004). As shown in Figure 7 there are extensive lists of negative character traits presented in the literature on gifted and talented students. The characteristics highlighted in the table (Figure 7) summarise those most commonly viewed as negative traits across the literature.

In contrast to the agreed negative characteristics some traits are only attributed to particular groups of gifted and talented students. Davis and Rimm (2004) listed additional negative characteristics that gifted students may display. They contend these traits are often exhibited by gifted underachievers (Figure 7).

4.1.2.2 Negative Character Traits

Freeman (2005) also contends that any of the lists of supposed characteristics of gifted children can be viewed negatively as in the list provided in Figure 7 which
Figure 7. Negative Character Traits of Gifted and Talented students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonly perceived negative traits</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insomnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possess moral understanding beyond their classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overly sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfectionism – including the belief that others have perfectionistic expectations for oneself, and compulsive obsessive behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easily Frustrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: (Alsop, 2003; Clark, 2002; Commonwealth of Australia, 2001; Herbert & Neumeister, 2002; Lovecky, 1997; Piirto, 1999; Sak, 2004; Siegle & Schuler, 2000; White, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gifted underachievers</th>
<th>Stubbornness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non participation in class activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncooperativeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cynicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sloppiness and disorganisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A tendency to question authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absentmindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low interest in detail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Davis & Rimm, 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits that can be perceived negatively</th>
<th>Prefers friendship with older pupils or adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is excessively self-critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is unable to make good relations with peer groups and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is emotionally unstable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has low self esteem, is withdrawn and sometimes aggressive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

contends the gifted child prefers friendships with older pupils or adults and then contradicts this by stating that these gifted children are unable to form relationships with their peer groups and teachers.

The key point is that these lists are based on local conceptions of giftedness, therefore the characteristics can vary widely and will present as negative character traits where the culture views giftedness as a negative rather than positive feature. Freeman contends this negativity is widespread and cites Plucker and Levy’s (2002) description of the gifted and talented in the United States as beset with emotional problems such as depression and feelings of isolation.

Mika (2002) also focuses on the negative aspects of Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities in her analysis, referring to such intensities as a ‘tragic gift’ and providing possible causes for each aspect. For instance she contends that ‘emotional intensity’ is caused by a range of psychological factors such as trauma, humiliation and excessive external prohibitions and punishments leading to feelings of inferiority; improper parenting (abuse, neglect), excessive parental sensitivity; emotional tension in the family, unfairness in treatment of siblings; excessive or disorganized attachment; excessive parental ambition; or a too abrupt separation from their mother. For some gifted children this type of childhood trauma may have contributed to their development of an emotional intensity, but some may exhibit the same emotional intensity without having experienced any of these psychological factors.

Gifted children and adults are often misunderstood. Their excitement is viewed as excessive, their high energy as hyperactivity, their persistence as nagging, their imagination as not paying attention, their passion as being disruptive, their strong emotions and sensitivity as immaturity, their creativity and self-directedness as oppositional (Daniels & Piechowski, 2008). These assumptions about the gifted and talented are part of the mythology that surrounds giftedness.
4.1.3 MYTHS ABOUT GIFTEDNESS

As with definitions of giftedness, the myths concerning giftedness abound and have been believed since early times. However, few have educational research to confirm them. The term ‘gift’ itself has been in common usage for centuries, thereby making it difficult to ascertain its origins. However, the term itself has connotations. A ‘gift’ is defined in dictionary terminology as something freely given (Oxford university Press, 2005), whereas ‘gifted’ is defined as a faculty miraculously bestowed, a virtue looked upon as an emanation from heaven or a natural endowment (Oxford university Press, 2005). These are the first two myths of giftedness. The first being that it is a property given not earned, the second is that once given it must be used (Gruppetta, 2003). Both of these myths relate directly to the religious concept of stewardship (The Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, 1992) previously outlined.

Another myth is the one previously disputed by Delisle (2001) that all people are gifted. Gross et al. (2001) answers this myth with the point that we must “distinguish between gifts and strengths” (p.17). Whilst every student has an individual strength, that does not mean it is a gift (Gross et al. 2001). Some are unable to distinguish between the two concepts. Gross et al. (2001, p.17) use this humorous but logical quote to refute the concept:

Unfortunately there are still some people who accept a pseudo-scientific belief that the human mind consists of many discrete abilities, and that if you break down these independent abilities and keep on breaking them down, you will eventually reach a point where there are more special aptitudes than there are people walking on the face of the earth. And the logical conclusion and absurdity that arises from this belief is the idea that if there are more aptitudes around than people, then surely each human being must have a chance of possessing at least one superior aptitude. Sadly, however, this is not so. God was not a democrat when She distributed abilities (Tannenbaum, 1988)

Ironically, whilst refuting the myth that all are gifted, this quote confirmed the myth that the gift is bestowed from above.
The 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) listed several of these common myths, termed “widely held mistaken beliefs” (p.32) with their rebuttal provided by Professor Smart. Both lists are provided in Figure 8. Berger (2000) also produced an extensive list of common myths about gifted students believed by teachers, parents and students, including the gifted students themselves, again balanced with a comprehensive list of truths about gifted students as well.

Berger’s (2000) list of myths and truths includes many of those listed by the 2001 Senate Report, however, she uses the term ‘nerds’ mentioned by Moulton, et al, (1998) and expands this concept to include the view that gifted individuals are “social isolates” (Berger, 2000, p.1). A myth that perpetuates despite the findings of Terman’s study which demonstrated gifted students to be physically, socially and emotionally above their peers (Wilson, 1996), challenging the “public perception of the gifted child as frail, visually impaired and socially isolated in a world of books and lofty thoughts” (Wilson, 1996, p.7).

Many of the other myths presented by Berger (2000) imply that gifted students do not need any assistance in academic or emotional areas, or indeed in life itself, and this is consistent with the findings of the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001 – Figure 5).

Equally the myth that the gifted must “assume extra responsibility and serve others” (Berger, 2000, p.1) can be seen to relate directly to the previously discussed concept of stewardship (The Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, 1992). However, the majority of the “truths” (Berger, 2000, p.1) presented relate to the social and emotional needs of gifted students, rather than their academic needs, suggesting Berger (2000) herself believes that the gifted students need less assistance with academic achievement.

Hall’s (1997) study confirmed many of the myths presented by Berger (2000). She found that teachers often felt redundant, as it was felt students could learn without teacher assistance, without being taught, basically without human intervention (Hall, 1997).
Figure 8. Common Myths about Gifted Students with Rebuttal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYTH</th>
<th>REBUTTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All children are gifted.</td>
<td>All children cannot be in the top 5/3/1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every child has a gift.</td>
<td>All children have relative strengths not ‘gifts’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They will learn anyway, the gifted will succeed regardless.</td>
<td>They do not, in fact they learn not to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimising their education will put them at risk of social and emotional damage.</td>
<td>While anecdotes about “My husband’s cousin’s child” abound the results of large scale quantitative evidence is to the contrary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They become snobs.</td>
<td>Research evidence is to the contrary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They cannot fit into society.</td>
<td>Isolation occurs because their intellect is not tapped rather than the reverse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gifted children are male and from upper socio-economic homes.</td>
<td>In fact children of high intellectual potential come from homes at every level of income, every religion, every ethnic group, including those with disabilities, and there are as many girls as boys. In fact the denial of support put the less privileged children at greater risk that the more privileged…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Test result (e.g. I.Q.) are probably wrong if performance is low and behaviour unsatisfactory. A child with poor motor skills and low attention to task could not be gifted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping of gifted students as studious and compliant.</td>
<td>Attitudes among the general public are very much influenced by media accounts of wonder children, leading to a fairly stereo- typical perception of gifted children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted children ‘burn out’.</td>
<td>There is no quantitative evidence to support this. A very perceptive American expert commented that she had never met a ‘burn out’, though she had seen many who had ‘never ignited’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Commonwealth of Australia, 2001; Smart, 2001 cited in Commonwealth of Australia, p. 33; adapted from Gruppetta, 2003)

She also found that these perceptions could impact on identification as “sometimes due to lack of training or experience in gifted education, their discussions are based on mistruths or wrong information” (Hall, 1994, cited in Hall, 1997, p.29).

These myths about giftedness that influence the perception of teachers, parents, students and gifted individuals themselves are commonplace, yet where do they
Gifted children have held many pivotal roles in modern, popular cinema. The Neverending story (1984) and Beauty and the Beast (1991) both featured misunderstood young adults who spent more time with their nose in a book than in reality. The plots of Ferris Bueller’s Day Off (1986), Explorers (1985), and The Goonies (1985) all depended on ingenious, mischievous, and clearly gifted children. Movies like The Cutting Edge (1992), The Natural (1984) and The Sandlot (1993) center around children or young adults with remarkable athletic talents. Despite the abundance of characters, the actual children are typically presented as one dimensional oddities or abnormalities. By being aware of how the media portray gifted children, teachers, parents, and other adults may have a better idea how the gifted children in their lives perceive themselves (Cox, 2000, p.14).

The 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) confirms this belief in media influence, although, again it was not examined in detail.

Cox (2000) investigated the concept in more depth. She used two sources to investigate common movies that portray gifted individuals. The first were university students enrolled in a gifted education course who were asked to name as many movies as possible portraying gifted individuals. The list generated contained over 50 titles. Secondly an Internet Movie Database was searched using the key terms “child and gifted, genius, brilliant and other terms” (Cox, 2000, p. 15) which generated a list remarkably similar to the one constructed by the students. These movies were then analysed to provide categories for the characters (Cox, 2000).

There were found to be four main types:

- **The brilliant rebel** – Turbulent and misunderstood, the gifted young adult demonstrating characteristics of asynchronous development, such as the Will Hunting character in Good Will Hunting (1997) (Cox, 2000).

- **The ‘Super-crip’** – courageous and stoic, the child with a disability who overcomes all to develop an amazing gift or talent, such as Sara, the deaf protagonist in Children of a Lesser God (1986), or those with unique dual-exceptionalities such as the autistic-savant in Rain Man (1988) (Cox, 2000).
• **The Geek** – Complete with plastic black glasses and cowlick, is the perpetual sidekick and staple of almost every children’s movie. This character usually ends up providing the necessary actions or words to save the day (The Breakfast Club, 1985) or stand at the wall during school dances while the hero dances with the heroine (Sixteen Candles, 1984) (Cox, 2000).

• **The Environmental Genius** – Depicted as the genius in hiding waiting for the patient mentor to discover and nurture them. Movies such as Dangerous Minds (1995) and Stand and Deliver (1987) are examples (Cox, 2000).

Although the movies in Cox’s (2000) investigation were American productions, all were screened in Australia, and most are now available on television, shown frequently by various channels. Jacobsen (1999) also refers to this issue: “Doogie Howser and Little Man Tate are modern-day media images of ‘gifted children’: super-smart kids who enter accelerated programs and go to college before their peers can form complex sentences…” (Azar, cited in Jacobsen, 1999, p.57). These depictions of gifted children make it difficult for myths to be overcome.

Cox’s (2000) media investigation only involved movies. However, a swift perusal of the television guide revealed shows such as “The Pretender” (MTM Enterprises Inc & NBC Studios, Inc, 2000) where a genius who can become anyone he chooses is portrayed; “Mysterious Ways” (NBC Studios Inc & PAX Television, 2000) with the enigmatic and eccentric Miranda, a character stated to have an I.Q. of over 200; and “Freaks and Geeks” (Dreamworks LLC, 1999) which portrays every possible stereotype, including the bespectacled character suggested by Cox (2000).

Currently in Australia there are three television shows delivered in prime time depicting misunderstood gifted characters. The first show ‘Monk’ (NBC, 2008) portrays a brilliant detective with a severe obsessive compulsive disorder. Another show, ‘Criminal Minds’ (CBS, 2008b), depicts Dr. Reid, a scrawny genius who gained his doctorate at an early age, never fitted in at school, cannot interact socially or get a girlfriend and cannot shoot. But ‘NCIS’ (CBS, 2008a) actually depicts three
eccentric and gifted characters. Abby is a forensic scientist who is covered in tattoos, dresses in gothic clothing and sleeps in a coffin. McGee is a computer nerd who dresses in tidy suits and has written a best selling novel in his spare time. ‘Ducky’ is the nickname of Doctor Donald Mallard, a coroner who talks to his corpses. All of these shows display characters with the stereotypical eccentric image of a gifted person and perpetuate the myths that surround giftedness.

Apart from the fictitious portrayal of gifted individuals, there is also the issue of the media portrayal of real gifted individuals. Kearney (1991) reports on a ten year old home-schooled student who inadvertently made headlines when her parents refused the local educational board’s request for their daughter to sit a fourth grade achievement test. As the student was a full-time college student the parents could not see the value of the test required. The “headlines screamed ‘Genius Child is Denied Home Teaching’” (Kearney, 1991, p.1) and the family were harassed by the media for over a year.

Kearney’s (1991) contentions from over a decade ago concur with Cox’s (2001) more recent findings. Kearney’s (1991) discussion includes both real and fictitious reports:

Extraordinary children occasionally receive extraordinary attention. Magazines, newspapers, radio, and television have portrayed the plight of highly gifted children in various ways since the turn of the century. From the vicious press attacks on celebrated child prodigy, William James Sidis, in the century’s early decades to “Doogie Howser, M.D.”, ABC’s sensitive and well-written weekly series about a highly gifted 17-year-old doctor, both press coverage and dramatic portrayals of this population reflect the consistent ambivalence Americans feel toward highly gifted children (Kearney, 1991, p.1)

Kearney’s (1991) discussion also raises another issue, the concept of ‘tall poppy syndrome’. Although this term appears to be an Australian colloquialism (Wilson, 1996), the phenomenon is found in most Western countries. As Kearney (1991) explains:

The 9-year-old college student, the 14 year-old published novelist, and the 6-year-old composer are bound to draw at least some attention to their unusual accomplishments. Though they are fascinating to the public, such accomplishments also can make some people uncomfortable – uncomfortable, perhaps, with how they have developed their own abilities; uncomfortable because
there is nothing in their own experience to explain such a phenomenon; and uncomfortable because these children often have not used the conventional routes to their achievements: conformity to the status quo is not the way a 9-year-old ends up in college. Historical tensions in American society between excellence and equality introduce political and sociological issues as well. Thus, the public reaction to the 9-year-old’s college placement is more likely to be “I’m certainly glad I don’t have your problems, Mrs Grost. These children always turn out to be unproductive failures...” (Grost, 1970, p.136) than it is “How nice, Mrs Smith, that your daughter is enjoying her new school” (Kearney, 1991, p.1).

The 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) also noted the egalitarian concept of tall poppy syndrome. However, during this discussion Kearney (1991) also raises more myths, those relating to the concept of “pushy parents” (Wilson, 1996), and the concept of “early ripe, early rot” (Kerr, 1994, p.94) in addition to the egalitarian view of the gifted.

Tannenbaum (1983) discussed the egalitarian outlook at length. He refers to the view of gifted individuals as simultaneously being two opposing currents:

On the one hand, the public has demonstrated an almost insatiable demand for newness in the arts, sciences and humanities and has consequently lavished encouragement and renown on people with great ideas. On the other hand, it has manifested a tenacious will to remain culturally conservative and often views the creative spirit with suspicion and disdain (Tannenbaum, 1983, p.4)

Tannebaum’s reference to the suspicion with which the gifted are often viewed is felt to be the basis of the ‘madness’ myth that is often perpetuated. Tannebaum (1983) discusses “the militant anti-intellectualism and pressures toward a middle standard of intellectual attainment” (p.4) along with the “common belief that only a thin line separates genius from madness” (Tannenbaum, 1983, p.4). He contends this belief has persisted from Aristotle through to Freud, was given scientific credence in the late nineteenth century by Lambroso (1891 cited in Tannenbaum, 1983) and Nisbet (1891 cited in Tannebaum, 1983), and was then confirmed by Galton.

Although psychologists deny links between genius and abnormality (Tannebaum, 1983), and Terman’s (1925 cited in Tannebaum, 1983) findings completely refuted it, the myths persist. Tannenbaum (1983) further contends that this myth inhibits identification, as psychologists are reluctant to use the term genius due to its negative
connotations. That “those labelled talented or gifted are still sometimes stigmatised as eccentrics and as strangely handicapped people suffering from some kind of developmental deficit (Tannenbaum, 1983, p.5).

Both West (1997) and Taylor (1995) confirm the presence of these madness myths throughout history. However, whilst West (1997) perpetuates these myths with his discussion of the eccentric behaviour and disabilities attributed to various gifted individuals such as Einstein’s supposed dyslexia and Galton’s epilepsy, Taylor (1995) refutes them. Taylor’s (1995) discussion accords the mythology as perpetuated by Church officials determined to restrict the advancement of gifted individuals in science due to the perceived evil consequences.

Tannenbaum (1983) also refers to the issue previously raised by both the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001 – Figure 6) and Kearney (1991) regarding the belief that gifted children will fail to achieve their promise in adulthood. His view is that these children are denied developmental opportunity, or the ‘chance’ environmental factors that would reveal or enhance a gift, rather than lose their actual giftedness.

Kerr’s (1994) discussion of the myth of “early ripe, early rot” (p. 94) in her study of adult gifted women attributed this phenomenon to various causes, the majority related to deliberate underachievement. Gross (1989) contends this myth is perpetuated due to a conscious decision to choose intimacy over achievement (Gross, 1989). Whereas Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen (1993) consider it a socially acceptable option, that students deliberately conceal their abilities and fail to meet their promise in order to fit into society. If being labelled as mad is the other option, one can see why some students would make this choice.

Wilson (1996) refers to the labelling aspect as evidence that few parents actually push their children to be identified, parents do not appreciate the connotations associated with the label of ‘gifted’. He cites studies by Ehrlich (1984) and Jacobs (1971) that found that parents were more efficient in identifying gifted children and
“were quite conservative in their nominations” (Wilson, 1996, p.57). Both Hall (1997) and Gross, et al (2001) confirm the abilities of parents to accurately identify gifted children. Gross, et al (2001) further contend that the parent attempting to obtain educational provisions for his or her gifted child is perceived as pushy by teachers due largely to the challenge of the teacher’s power.

Additionally the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) cites a submission by the Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of Western Australia:

There is a misconception that parent ‘hothouse’ their children and teach them to read. The common belief amongst teachers and principals seems to be that once the child is away from the parent influence they will revert to ‘normal children’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, p.32)

This perception is refuted by considerable evidence (Commonwealth Of Australia, 2001), however, it is noted the perception persists in many schools across Australia.

In order to investigate the effects of labelling on gifted adolescents Moulton, Moulton, Housewright, and Bailey (1998) conducted a partial replica of a previous study by Kerr, Colangelo, and Gaeth (1988, cited in Moulton, et al. 1998). Although the qualitative survey only included fourteen adolescents, the results confirmed previous findings by Kerr, et al. (1988, cited in Moulton, et al. 1998) that being labelled as gifted had both positive and negative effects. The positive effects were a greater sense of accomplishment, the feeling of being unique, and the ability to cover material in more detail (Moulton, et al. 1998).

The study also found that negative aspects included reduced guidance from the teacher, being taken advantage of by other students during group work; increased expectations and pressure from their teachers, and stereo typing (Moulton, et al. 1998). The stereotypes proved to be the most negative feature of labelling. Moulton, et al, (1998) found the worst aspect of being labelled gifted were the stereotypes and labels such as a nerd, teacher’s pet, or a snob and cite a previous study by Manaster, Chan, Watt, and Wiehe (1994, cited in Moulton, et al. 1998) as producing similar
findings. These negative stereotypes relate directly to the many myths surrounding the concept of giftedness.

Other myths persist, such as that of the overrepresentation of Asian students in gifted programs (Kitano & DiJiosa, 2002). The myth that these students are actually not gifted, simply receive additional tutoring to achieve better results has some foundation. Despite poverty and linguistic difficulties these students as a subgroup represent 21.65% of the enrolment in American gifted education programs, whilst only representing 11.8% of the school enrolment (Kitano & DiJiosa, 2002). Kitano and DiJiosa’s (2002) investigation of this trend was inconclusive in its findings, however, they did find evidence to suggest that the higher value placed on educational achievement by this sub-group contributed to the students’ success.

Another myth poorly presented by the literature is the issue of privacy in relation to student marks. Friedman (1996) discusses this notion in regard to lower ability students and the embarrassment they feel when forced to announce their marks to the class. However, Berger’s (2000) list of truths includes two references to the grades of gifted children. The first is that “gifted students who do well in school may define success as getting an ‘A’ and failure as any grade less than an ‘A’” (Berger, 2000, p.1). The second is that “gifted students may equate achievements and grades with self-esteem and self-worth, which sometimes leads to a fear of failure and interferes with achievement” (Berger, 2001, p.1).

These comments indicate that the reading aloud of gifted students’ marks could be as much of an issue for gifted students as it is with lower achieving students. Yet, this issue is not considered in the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) or other Australian sources (Braggert, et al., 1997; Gross, 2001; Landvogt, 1998). The omission of this issue indicates a general belief that gifted students would have no issue with this habit; they would feel little embarrassment in having their marks read aloud, and yet this practice could be as detrimental to the gifted as it is for most students.
Friedman (1996) contends the practice of reading marks aloud is widespread in America and saves the teachers’ time. He cites several American privacy laws restricting the release of test scores to any beyond the student or their legal guardians. He also makes the point that although the privacy laws cover standardised assessment tests and I.Q. scores, they are generally not expected to cover the classroom quizzes or homework assignments standard to most classrooms. Friedman (1996) contends they should be. Although similar studies could not be located concerning this issue in Australian schools, this area should be investigated in order to reduce discrimination against the gifted.

Changeaux and Ricoeur (2000) argue the discrimination point in their contention that the recognition of giftedness will lead to a new racism:

If race is essentially a genetic heredity phenomenon, and if I.Q. scores are the measuring tool for gifted and talented people, then we are actually perceiving a new race of people based on their genetic predispositions. Instead of skin colour, we are looking at their capacity to receive, organise and apply information as the distinguishing racial attribute. Determining individual worth and social value based on this thinking is no less racist or dehumanising than the thinking of eugenic scientist of bygone era. If I.Q. scores can be increased with the right environmental conditions, then these conditions must be equally available to all, not only to the ‘gifted and talented’ (pp.1-2).

Further to their discussion they refer to the commonly held historical belief that “skin colour and genetic heredity made indigenous Australian people less human, sub-human or not human at all!” (Changeux & Ricour, 2000, p.1), and add that “at the time, a lot of empirical scientific research actually supported these beliefs” (Changeux & Ricour, 2000, p.1).

Unfortunately this belief still persists within some current research areas. Lynne (2006) has published some highly controversial statistics on the intelligence of various races. He contends that the East Asians (Chinese, Japanese and Koreans) have the highest mean IQ at 105. These are followed by the Europeans with an I.Q. averaging 100. Some way below these are the Inuit (I.Q. 91), South East Asians (I.Q. 87), Native American Indians (I.Q. 87), Pacific Islanders (I.Q. 85), South Asians and
North Africans (I.Q. 84). Well below these come the sub-Saharan Africans (I.Q. 67) followed by the Australian Aborigines with an average I.Q. of 62 (Lynne, 2006).

According to Lynne (2006) the least intelligent races are the Bushmen of the Kalahari desert together with the Pygmies of the Congo rain forests (I.Q. 54). He further contends that although the average I.Q. of blacks [sic] in sub-Saharan Africa is approximately 70, blacks [sic] in the southern states of America with very little white ancestry have an IQ of about 80, but those with some white ancestry can achieve an I.Q. score of up to 85 (Lynne, 2006). Once again raising the opinion that I.Q. is hereditary (Howe, 1997), and restricted to certain cultures or socio-economic conditions.

The myths that genius is male (Frasier & Carland, 1982) and restricted to individuals from upper class Western society (Howe, 1997) are confirmed by the findings of the 2001 Senate Report (Figure 4). Although the 2001 Senate Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) found little discrimination due to gender, they did find the perception that the gifted were more likely to be male. They also found that children in minority cultures and underprivileged children in lower socio-economic or disadvantaged areas were the least likely to be identified (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

Whilst the eccentric, socially isolated, and physically underdeveloped nerd perceptions, certainly are myths, tall poppy syndrome and gifted underachievers certainly are not, any more than there is truth in the myth of pushy parents. These myths do however influence the perceptions of giftedness, and along with the various definitions and identification viewpoints, they effect the educational provisions for gifted and talented students. These myths also encourage the gifted to hide their abilities as few wish to be labelled gifted, if gifted means living up to the mythology. “Faulty images of the gifted have been around for centuries, culturally defined as truths” (Jacobsen, 1999, p.55). Even if gifted individuals “never acknowledge their membership in the gifted ranks, they are at risk because at an unconscious level they know the criticisms are aimed at them” (Jacobsen, 1999, p.55).
4.2 MASQUERADE

Given the pervading myths about gifted individuals very few would acknowledge their giftedness and many underachieve to hide their gifts (Dole, 2000; Gross, 1989). However those minority members of the population, already viewed as deficit would find it easier to hide their abilities, after all there is no expectation to achieve, no expectation of giftedness.

4.2.1 DANDELION SYNDROME – THE DEFICIT VIEWPOINT

I am somehow less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein’s brain than in the near-certainty that people of equal talent have died in cotton fields and sweat shops (Stephen Jay Gould).

The deficit viewpoint is a peculiar phenomenon. It is not just a polite way of describing bias or prejudice, although there are clear links to these perspectives. The deficit view toward cultures other than White European middle-class was introduced during the discussion concerning Giftedness Definitions as it related to identification issues and the I.Q. debate. Howe’s (1997) discussion on the expectation that non-White Europeans scored lower on I.Q. tests, is consistent with a deficit view because these cultures were often considered deficit in I.Q., and confirms the cultural weighting of I.Q. testing procedures. Terman's (1916) initial studies provided some of the basis for this view. He administered English tests to Spanish-speakers and non-schooled African-Americans, concluding:

High-grade or border-line deficiency… is very, very common among Spanish-Indian and Mexican families of the Southwest and also among negroes. Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stocks from which they come… Children of this group should be segregated into separate classes… They cannot master abstractions but they can often be made into efficient workers… from a eugenic point of view they constitute a grave problem because of their unusually prolific breeding (Terman, 1916, p. 91-92).

Therefore Terman's biased tests gave "scientific" proof that, for many Whites, justified racial discrimination, segregation, and even eugenics.
Fraser (1995) cited findings by Martin (1989 cited in Fraser, 1995) disputing this notion finding that “the intellectual range of black students, from the exceptional to the ordinary is very much like that of the range among Jews, other Whites and Asians” (p.148). O’Sullivan’s (1994) study of cultural differences concurs with Howe’s (1997) commentary, that “I.Q. tests are culturally biased” (p.37). Yet, although this bias is well known, the deficit view of cultures other than White-European middle class persists.

Yet, the deficit viewpoint is an interesting perspective when one considers the calculations performed by Ford and Harris (1999). They contend that if we could shrink the world’s population down to a village of precisely 100 people, with the same human ratios presently found amongst the world’s population, the results would be as follows:

- There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere (North and South), and 8 Africans.
- 51 would be female; 49 would be male.
- 70 would be nonwhite; 30 would be white.
- 70 would be non-Christian; 30 would be Christian.
- 50 percent of the entire world wealth would be in the hands of only 6.

(Ford & Harris, 1999, p. 3)

Considering the dominance of Western Society over the multitude of minority cultures, it is enlightening to view the cultural mix of the world population in this manner. So very few hold so much power, and yet their culture dominates the multitude of others (Ford & Harris, 1999).

O’Sullivan (1994) describes culture as beyond nationality and ethnicity, that these are distinctly different concepts. She defines culture as “the ways people agree to be” (O’Sullivan, 1994, p.2) within a given area or environment. She further contends that those within a culture are unable to recognise aspects of their own culture, often viewing culture as applying to others:

Our cultural behaviour becomes so natural and so programmed that we sometimes tend to think that only other cultures have rituals and customs...If however, adults are unaware they are not conforming, they will usually be regarded as having a personality problem or a mental health problem (O’Sullivan, 1994, pp 7-8).
O’Sullivan’s (1994) last point relates to the Myths About Giftedness category, where any who behave differently are viewed as having some sort of problem. However, this view of culture is also a factor in relation to the deficit viewpoint where the culturally “other” (Delpit, 1995, p. xiii) is viewed as being deficient in some way because they are unable to function in the dominant culture.

Delpit (1995) is mainly concerned with the experiences of Negro students in American classrooms. However, during her references to the power of the dominant White European culture she also includes any low-income or minority child. Despite the American focus of her study, her explanation of the deficit viewpoint is the most comprehensive. She contends the issue is the reluctance of people, especially those with power and privilege “to perceive those different from themselves except through their own culturally clouded vision” (Delpit, 1995, p. xiv). She also contends this inability to perceive clearly is particularly destructive in classrooms where teachers view low-income and minority children as “other” and “see damaged and dangerous caricatures of the vulnerable and impressionable beings before them” (Delpit, 1995, p.xiii).

Previously (Delpit, 1988) had quoted interviewees as stating ‘White’ people won’t listen:

> You can try to talk to them and give them examples, but they’re so headstrong, they think they know what’s best for everybody, for everybody’s children. They won’t listen, White folks are going to do what they want to do anyway…they listen, but they don’t hear (Delpit, 1988, p.280).

In this example Delpit (1995, 1988) explains the ‘White’ people referred to are participants in the White American mainstream middle class, particularly educators, rather than those in the disenfranchised underworld, once again excluding any low-income or minority group.

Despite the consistent effort to broaden the minds of those who enrol in teacher education courses Brown (2004) confirms that many pre-service teachers exit cultural awareness courses unchanged or with their stereotypical prejudices reinforced: “Many prejudices are established in early childhood” (p. 326) and
therefore difficult to change. Tertiary students use selective perception where information is accepted or rejected according to their prior experience, current beliefs and cultural inculcation prior to storage in long-term memory or rejection. They may also use ‘avoidance strategies’ (Brown, 2004) to protect their own worldviews by not preparing or participating in classes, or use ‘group support strategies’ by seeking alliances with those who will defend and protect their shared values and beliefs, and avoid interaction with those who hold different views (Brown, 2004).

Brown’s (2004) research supports Delpit’s (1995) contention of the inability of the dominant culture to hear the voices of minorities. This in turn is related to MacKay’s (1995, p. 135) ‘Magic Bullet’ theory. He contends that some people are afflicted with the opinion that communication works by firing powerful messages like magic bullets into the minds of others. The reason this technique very often fails is due to the distinction between a message and its meaning (MacKay, 1995).

When a message is sent to another it “is actually devoid of meaning. If the message is to have meaning for my listeners, they will give it that meaning themselves” (MacKay, 1995, p.136). He further explains that we are both products and prisoners of our past experiences, and in a parallel to the concepts of phenomenology (Byrne, 2001a; Hall, 1997), contends these past experiences affect the way we view the world (MacKay, 1995). He then uses a cage metaphor to explain this concept:

We are engaged in a lifelong process of constructing ‘cages’ around ourselves. The bars of our cages are all the things that life have taught us: our knowledge, our attitudes, our values, our beliefs, our convictions. As the cage becomes stronger and more complex, we feel increasingly comfortable inside it…it gives us a clear sense of personal identity and a deep sense of personal security…it also acts as a filter or an insulator in the process of interpretation…the bars impose their own pattern on what we see: our values and beliefs affect the way we perceive and interpret what’s out there. Once we have made up our minds about something – once our experience has taught us something – we will tend to look at the world through the filter of the expectations created by the conclusion we have previously drawn, or that predisposition which has been generated by prior experience…most of the time we use communication to obtain reinforcement of what we already believe (MacKay, 1995, pp. 137-138).
This metaphor is expanded further, however, his major point is that we respond more favourably to messages, which confirm our expectations and strengthen the existing ‘cage’, and are easily able to deflect “messages which rattle the bars of our cage” (MacKay, 1995, p.138). Arguments against our beliefs lead to defence and fortification of the existing cage structure and “tend to positively reinforce the very attitudes and beliefs we are trying to change. That is why the persecution of minority groups tends to have the effect of strengthening their beliefs. Faith is fortified by attacks upon it” (MacKay, 1995, p.138).

Delpit (1995) confirms this premise when she refers in her earlier work to the silenced dialogue of minority educators:

The saddest element is that the individuals that the Black and Native American educators speak of in these statements, are seldom aware that the dialogue has been silenced. Most likely the White educators believe that their colleagues of colour did, in the end agree with their logic. After all, they stopped disagreeing, didn’t they? (Delpit, 1988, p. 281).

Although she weights her discussion toward specific minority groups, she still includes any who are considered deficit in status when compared to the mainstream middle-class. All are effectively “silenced” (Delpit, 1988, p.281) by the dominant culture.

Schneider (2001) also refers to the ‘silencing’ of unacceptable ideas in her qualitative study of teachers and students. The teacher practice of silencing the elementary writer by restricting topics or language rather than nurturing their efforts was based on the sensitivity of the teacher toward embarrassing or taboo subjects (Schneider, 2001). Teachers, who were uncomfortable with colloquialisms used by students, or student experiences of violence or abuse used as subject matter for writing assignments, would punish students for their usage of these terms and ideas, thereby effectively silencing the voices of their students altogether (Schneider, 2001). All because they chose not to ‘hear’ the message, chose not to see the world beyond their cage (MacKay, 1995).
Kim and Markus (2002) again discuss the silencing of students, but concentrate on the ‘silence’ of students in University tutorial groups. Their findings indicated that some chose to be silent and not speak out in tutorial groups because they were culturally raised not to speak out, and especially not to disrespect or disagree with the teacher or tutor. The possibility of natural shyness or reticence is raised as well, but the possibility of ‘avoidance strategies’ (Brown, 2004) where students remain silent to protect their own belief systems had not been considered.

Gifted students, with their very different minds (Lovecky, 1994) and asynchronous development (Gross, 1993), are equally likely to present as a culturally different “other” (Delpit, 1995, p.xiii, cited in Gruppetta, 2004d). The gifted student may express interest in topics beyond the teacher’s experience, and be restricted from exploring these areas due to the teacher’s sensitivity. Those raised in disadvantaged areas may use colloquialisms in order to express their ideas and therefore be silenced by teachers uncomfortable with these terms (Schneider, 2000). The effects of such bias and prejudice are likely to be felt more deeply by the gifted student with their heightened moral sensitivity (Lovecky, 1997, cited in Gruppetta, 2004d).

The issues surrounding prejudice, bias and deficit viewpoints are well documented in the literature. Rehner, Ishee, Salloum and Valeques’ (1997) contend that the attitudes of service providers toward their clientele are most important as it influences the service they provide. Wolfe and Spencer (1996) refer to the overt and subtle influences of prejudice and stereotype in the classroom. They contest that it is pathological and suggest it arises from ordinary conflicts between groups, agreeing with Delpit’s (1995) view. They further contend that only working co-operatively toward shared goals reduces inter-group hostility, more contact and discussion do not rectify the situation (Wolfe & Spencer, 1996). MacKenzie (1997), however, refers more directly to the incidence of bias in the classroom. “Bias is something we all deplore, and which is especially deprecated when it appears in a classroom. A teacher, a textbook, a course of study, should not be biased” (p.487).
Considerable discourse toward a critical race theory is provided by Solorzano and Yosso (2001), they contend it is time to be realistic about the persistence of racism in America, that there is a need to challenge the dominant ideology and commit to social justice. Whereas Bradfield-Krieder (2001) provides details of a study designed to nurture the growth of monocultural teachers toward multicultural competence. Grobman (2001), Rumberger and Larson (1998), and Robinson (2001), tend toward research into the differences in language structures between dominant culture and minority groups. All investigate the linguistic disparity between minority and dominant cultures and provide various strategies to address these differences.

Tett and Crowther (1998) concur with the issue of linguistic differences weighting the deficit view, that colloquialisms and language differences effect interactions between classes within society. They discuss the issues surrounding diverse literacies and “the problems of privileging a dominant form of literacy at the expense of those from non-mainstream cultures” (Tett & Crowther, 1998, p. 449). They also contend educating family literacy, rather than just the students, provides opportunity for the development of “a more inclusive, democratic literacy process which encourages, rather than silences, the voice of marginalised groups, communities and social classes (Tett & Crowther, 1998, p.449). Their investigation of a program linking school literacy to family literacy, although stating familiarity of the dominant forms of spoken and written language is essential to success, also contends this familiarity must not be the sole goal of education (Tett & Crowther, 1998).

While these studies into the issues of bias and linguistic disparity (Grobman, 2001; Robinson, 2001; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Tett & Crowther, 1998;) do not discuss the situation pertaining to gifted students directly, Ford and Harris (1999) include many of these issues within their discussion of multicultural giftedness. The differences in language structure and cultural expectations inhibit identification and often prevent the multicultural gifted child from pursuing academic achievement. Yet, compliance with the standards of the dominant culture can remove the support the gifted child previously received from their minority cultural group (Ford & Harris, 1999).
The 2001 Senate report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) recognised the need to address the deficit viewpoint of some educators toward disadvantaged groups, particularly in terms of identifying gifted children:

Teachers need to be trained to identify gifted children. Untrained teachers are more likely to identify as gifted children of the dominant culture and less likely to notice giftedness among minority or underprivileged groups. This training should pay particular attention to the need to identify gifted children who have disadvantages such as low socio-economic status, rural isolation, physical disability or Indigenous background (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, p. xiv).

In regard to the deficit view held by some educators, which interferes with the identification and educational provisions for gifted and talented students, the literature presents a variety of perspectives. Ford, Harris, Tyson and Trotman (2002) and Gallagher (2000) both present American perspectives of teaching gifted students with a perceived educational deficit and therefore their findings may not be transferable to an Australia setting. However, they concur in stating a deficit orientation held by educators hinders the identification of gifted students and limits their access to programming to develop their gifts (Gallagher, 2000; Trotman, et al., 2002). McKenzie (2001) reports on similar perceptions in New Zealand:

Some teachers still believe the ‘deficit theory’ and associate it with the Maori – thinking that their home environment is lacking and that this impacts on their schooling. Often there are reduced teacher expectations of Maori children, assuming they cannot do as much or as well as their Pakeha [White Anglo-Saxon middle class] counterparts. This can lead to Maori underachievement and low self esteem (Rawlinson, cited in McKenzie 2001) Cultural diversity may not always be seen in a positive light and become another obstacle to overcome (McKenzie, 2001).

Overcoming educational disadvantage has long been an issue for those from non-mainstream cultures. Gallagher (1995) further contends the education of gifted students is a civil rights issue, regardless of race, culture or class, lending weight to Delisle’s (2001) previous contention regarding gifted education as equity rather than elitism. Wright (2002) raised this issue for all students disadvantaged by lower socio-economic circumstances as he reported on a civil action brought “on behalf of poor children in the Rochester public schools that contended students were denied a sound, basic education because the state had failed to alleviate concentrations of poverty in
the 37,000-student district” (p.5). The case was dismissed, however, the group intends to appeal the decision (Wright, 2002).

The predetermination of the achievement levels of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds is again discussed by Sadovnik and Semel (2001). “These students are not going to be lawyers and psychiatrists…They’ll be lucky to get jobs as medical assistants or sanitation workers with a union and good health benefits…” (p.27). They cite Kozol (2000 cited in Sadovnik & Semel, 2001) as stating “we owe it to these children not to let the doors be closed before they’re even old enough to know how many rooms there are, how many other doors there are beyond the one or two they can see” (p.27).

Another factor in the identification of gifted students appears to be in relation to whether the student has a one or two parent family. Ford, Wright, Grantham and Harris (1998) conducted a study into the factors affecting identification of black students, comparing the orientations between students in single and two-parent families. They found that the students from single parent families were less likely to be identified, whilst the students from two-parent families were no more likely to be gifted, but were more likely to be identified. Their discussion includes the idea that two-parent families represent a culture closer to that of the dominant culture and this aids in identification (Ford, et al., 1998).

Konstantopoulos et al. (2001) also investigated a number of factors relating to identification of gifted students. They also found two-parent families were more likely to have their children identified, particularly if the father held professional employment status rather than a lower paid position, and the mother worked outside the home. Conversely Connell (1990) found that mothers in full time employment contribute to the disadvantage of students. Konstantopoulos, et al. (2001) also found that high levels of parental educational aspirations combined with high family socio-economic status are important predictors of academic giftedness. They also found that students with access to a computer in their home are more likely to be identified as gifted.
Begoray and Slovinsky (1997) refer to low-income gifted students as ‘pearls in shells’. They contend that “like pearls hidden in shells, they are frequently difficult to discover, but certainly worth the search” (p.45). Hebert (2002) substantiates this premise in his investigation of three students from low socio-economic backgrounds and the educators who looked beyond the circumstances of the students and maintained high expectations for them. His citation of Renzulli (1973) as stating “there can be little doubt that our nations’ largest untapped source of human intelligence and creativity is found among the vast numbers of individuals in the lower socio-economic levels” (p.127) lends weight to his study, as he discusses the provisions that changed the circumstances for these three gifted children.

From the first case study of the “bright boy” (Hebert, 2002, p.131), once a discipline problem for most of his teachers, and then identified as gifted by a concerned social worker, to the other two students who were both identified early by open-minded teachers, Hebert (2000) provides positive examples of the improvements that can be made by committed teachers. He refers to the failure of other approaches toward educating students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and suggests more individualised programming, once again citing Renzulli (1994) to make his point:

That the lack of success from years of compensatory programs should convince educators to explore alternative models to the traditional remediation approaches that have grossly underestimated the potentials of poor children...children from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds have been the victims of the ‘drill and kill’ approach to learning and suffer most from declining enrichment opportunities in public schools...children from low socio-economic homes cannot afford the computer camps, dance lessons, science programs, and athletic competitions that more affluent families use to compensate for unchallenged schools (Renzulli, 1994 cited in Hebert, 2002, p.135).

This reaffirms the contentions by Connell (1994 cited in Smyth, 2000) and Gannicott (1997) that funding for compensatory programs is not enough to rectify the situation.

states that to be identified as gifted you must be White, have two parents, and they must be college educated. Frasier (2002 cited in Grantham, 2002) contends that “things like poor kids and gifted programs just don’t go together” (p.50).

She explains that “people really think when kids are poor they can’t possibly perform at the level of kids that are advantaged because they haven’t had certain kinds of advantages in their homes” (p.50). Frasier (2002 cited in Grantham, 2002) discusses her work with dealing with the under-representation of minority groups in gifted programs and maintains “that you can’t make Black people gifted if they aren’t, and you can’t make White people gifted if they aren’t. You really can’t” (p.51). She also bluntly refers to the deficit viewpoint as bias and prejudice:

You are dealing with a very sensitive social problem. There is no one who would say to you ‘well, the reason that these kids aren’t in the program is because I am prejudiced. I discriminate. I am biased in my opinion about giftedness.’ But what you do get from people is ‘I am very interested in finding more gifted Black kids, gifted minority kids, but I can’t, I have never discriminated against kids in my life.’ It would be unheard of for people to say, ‘I am biased’ or I am prejudiced’ or “I don’t think Black kids are gifted.’ People just won’t say that (Frasier, 2002 cited in Grantham, 2002, p.51).

In summation she contends it is not simply a matter of finding the right tests, because even then the ingrained attitudes would thwart the best efforts to identify and provide for gifted students (Frasier, 2002 cited in Grantham, 2002).

The majority of the studies concerning the deficit view and the identification of gifted students are American based. However, Renzulli (1994) contends talent is defined against the culture. In an Australian study, Fryenberg and O’Mullane (2000) investigated the development of gifted and talented students but summarise their viewpoint by referring to the Australian culture of an egalitarian outlook which values social justice and eschews privilege rather than concentrating on the deficit viewpoint of educators.

Hatton’s (1999) study of Australian classroom practice concentrated on the Eastern Metropolitan area and did not include those in Western Sydney or gifted students. However, it did confirm a deficit viewpoint of those disadvantaged by poverty. She
contends that it is not the poverty that causes the educational disadvantage but the viewpoint of some teachers and service providers due to the negativity and hostility resulting from the perceived social distance between themselves and the parents and students in the area (Hatton, 1999). A point echoed by Howe’s (1991) comment that students residing just thirty blocks away had a “world so different to mine they could have come from another continent” (p.2), and equally confirming Delpit’s (1995) contention regarding the dominant culture’s view of the “other” (p. xiii), and again substantiated by Lasley’s (1997) contention that “all too often, teachers possess but one view: their own” (p. 311).

Hatton (1999) also found that teachers in disadvantaged areas often adopt survival strategies of lowering their expectations and concentrating on discipline and basic instruction, whereas students often feel intimidated by school work and will adopt strategies of avoidance, usually creating a discipline problem, which only perpetuates the cycle (Hatton, 1999). These types of issues are prevalent in any area deemed to be disadvantaged by poverty or lack of opportunity, and effect the implementation of projects and services in the area.

In line with the gardening analogy relating to tall poppy syndrome, I referred to this type of deficit viewpoint as ‘dandelion’ syndrome (Gruppetta, 2003a) in a previous study. My study of gifted and talented co-ordinators found the majority of educators in lower socio-economic or highly multicultural areas have no intention of cultivating ‘small poppies’ (Gross, et al, 2001) or any other kind of ‘flower’:

In terms of the way they view their schools and their pupils, they saw no ‘poppies’, in fact they see no garden at all. They were only interested in keeping the ‘weeds’ in some sort of acceptable order. Therefore they cultivated the dandelions and encouraged the clover to bloom in order to provide some sort of flowers for their patch. They are blind to the underachieving shrinking violets that could provide such colour (Gruppetta, 2003a, p. 242).

The educators in that study were unable to recognise and acknowledge a ‘small poppy’ (Gross, et al., 2001). Even when they recognised behaviour that could be attributed to a gifted child, the signs were relegated to just a ‘bright child who is
bored' (Mary, cited in Gruppetta, 2003a) and often the gifted student was referred to counselling to address their perceived behavioural problem.

The Co-ordinators in the previous study revealed a pervading deficit viewpoint of the abilities of all students in the area, which resulted in an inherent belief among the majority of the participants that no gifted children are present within the geographical study area (Gruppetta, 2003a). This deficit view toward the possibility of giftedness was also influenced by their personal definitions of giftedness. Their view was obscured by the myths they believed, and emphasised by the focus on classroom management issues (Gruppetta, 2003a). Despite challenging their beliefs, and the myths surrounding gifted individuals, these viewpoints could not be defied (Gruppetta, 2003b). Gross (2004) found similar results and shares reports from parents about educators who refused to provide advanced learning opportunities and downplayed children’s clearly advanced abilities. She cited some as directly stating their intention to reduce the amount of difference existing among students in a classroom, with one teacher stating “It’s my duty to pluck the tall poppies” (Gross, 2004, p.171).

The implications of these viewpoints, the inability to comprehend the reality of cultural bias in I.Q. testing, the invalidity of the myths, impacts on already disadvantaged students. The deficit viewpoint is all pervasive, inherent, entrenched and apparently unassailable (Gruppetta, 2003b). The deficit viewpoints of some educators shape the lens with which they view the parents in the area, and students within these schools. In their view there cannot possibly be a gifted student within their class, or their school. Such a notion is beyond their perception, their experience and their belief; they are surprised even to encounter a bright student (Gruppetta, 2003b). This deficit view impacts severely upon the identification of gifted students within certain geographical areas in Australia, most notably those with lower socioeconomic circumstance and highly multicultural areas.
4.2.2 THE GIFTED AS ‘OTHER’

Much discussion has been presented regarding the discrimination and lack of opportunity provided for individuals amongst minority groups (Brooks, 2004; Gruppetta, 2003; Gruppetta, 2004a; Lovat, 2000; Possamai, 2004). Whether these minority groups are cultural, religious or those with disabilities, individuals representing experiences different from the dominant culture are considered to be ‘other’ (Delpitt, 1995). The gifted individual may also present with experiences and perspectives beyond the dominant social norm (Alsop, 2003; Gross, 1993; Lovecky, 1997; Siegle & Schuler, 2000; Tolan, 1998), yet the literature does not support the assumption they are ‘othered’ in the same sense as minority groups. Equally little literature indicates a specific culture of giftedness (Gruppetta, 2004d).

As previously stated, compared to the dominant social norms, Gifted students, with their exceptionally different minds (Lovecky, 1997; Siegle & Schuler, 2000) and asynchronous development (Alsop, 2003; Gross, 1993; Tolan, 1998), are equally likely to present as culturally different others (Gruppetta, 2004d). Alsop (2003) cites Morelock (1996, p.118) in defining giftedness as being “asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are quantitatively different from the norm”, and asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. This asynchrony (Alsop, 2002; Gross, 1993; Tolan, 1998) can cause difficulty within classrooms. The gifted student may express interest in topics beyond the teacher’s experience, and be restricted from exploring these ideas because they are not valued by the dominant cultural group the teacher represents (Neuliep, 2000; Schneider, 2001).

The hyperactivity of a gifted child may annoy the teacher that requires students to sit still and listen (Feldman & Piirto, 1995). The poverty or minority cultural status of some students may mean they are unable to meet the expected stereotype or criteria of a gifted individual, and therefore be restricted in access to opportunities by teachers blinded by their deficit viewpoint (Gruppetta, 2003a). Again the effects of
such bias and prejudice are likely to be felt more deeply by the gifted student with their heightened moral sensitivity (Lovecky, 1997).

While there is no literature to support defining giftedness as an actual culture (Gruppetta, 2004d), it is a concept that should be explored through research amongst groups of gifted individuals. As previously stated there are common traits or characteristics recognised amongst gifted children. Whilst not all these characteristics are likely to be present in any single gifted individual, there are a variety of combinations of these characteristics that may be present in gifted individuals.

Equally, there are commonalities amongst the less desirable traits found in gifted individuals that are comparable to the symptoms presented in culture shock. As shown in Figure 9 some of the less desirable traits found in gifted children appear to have a direct correlation, or at least an eerie similarity, to the symptoms of cultural stress. The traits of anxiety, depression and insomnia are consistent within both categories. Whereas the other traits and symptoms in each category appear to be related, for instance the ‘perfectionism’ considered a concern in some gifted individuals may present as ‘obsessive compulsive behaviour’ (Clark, 2002; Siegle & Schuler, 2000). Ward et al (2001) also discuss compulsive obsessive behaviour as a reaction to cultural difference. The individual portrays perfectionist tendencies as a reaction to cultural difference, in an effort to present themselves perfectly and thereby avoid notice within a conflicting culture (Ward et al, 2001).

The aspect of perfectionism expressed as a belief that others have perfectionistic expectations (Siegle & Schuler, 2000) could relate to the suspicion of others motives (Lovat, et al. 2000) expressed as a symptom of cultural stress. Clark (2002) confirms that the gifted display unusual sensitivity to the expectations of others, and this sensitivity can cause great distress.
### LESS DESIRABLE GIFTED TRAITS
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Introverted
- Isolates
- Possess moral understanding beyond their classmates.
- Overly sensitive
- Self-critical
- Perfectionism – including the belief that others have perfectionistic expectations for oneself, and compulsive obsessive behaviour.
- Loneliness
- Easily Frustrated

### SYMPTOMS OF CULTURE SHOCK/STRESS/BURNOUT
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Preoccupation with self
- Feeling of separation
- Confusion - in role, role expectations, values, feelings and identity
- Feeling of being constantly watched
- Feeling vulnerable
- Suspicion of others and their motives
- Compulsive Obsessive behaviour
- Impotence - due to inability to cope with a different culture to one’s own.
- Rejection - as in being rejected and/or rejecting members of the new culture.
- An intense desire to be elsewhere.


Indeed the ‘loneliness’ (Gross, 1993; Sak, 2004) felt by gifted individuals could be a direct consequence of ‘rejection from the cultural group’ (Lovat et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001). Therefore it is possible that the less desirable traits found in some gifted individuals are actually a reaction to the cultural stress of living within a culture that presents as alien to their essential selves (Gruppetta, 2004d).

Alsop (2003) contends that as being like others is central to the perception of self, the gifted will exhibit behaviours of adjustment including ‘dumbing down’ to mask their enhanced intellect, and avoiding the stigma of giftedness through denial. Such denial of giftedness is concurrent with Vialle and Patterson’s (1996) findings that few willingly identify themselves as gifted, and Quatman and Swanson’s (2002) contention that few high achievers will disclose results to those of lesser abilities.
However Alsop (2003:125) contends that denial of giftedness consists of a “denial of self” and ultimately causes a “denial of flow” (Alsop, 2003:125), severely impeding achievement. Yet this very denial of giftedness also relates to Neuliep’s (2000) point regarding the external categorisation of a microculture, the gifted do not choose the label and resist the category.

Much of the recent research on the experiences of gifted individuals is investigated and reported through the use of case studies. Although quantitative studies completed in previous decades contained larger participant groups, case studies, reporting on a small data base, often produce rich and extensive information which more closely examines the experience of gifted individuals (Feldman & Piirto, 1995). The cultural perspective of the gifted as it relates to symptoms of cultural stress or displays evidence of a microculture is highlighted through the literature relating to these in-depth case studies (Grupetta, 2004d).

4.2.2.1 Evidence from Case Studies

Moore (2002) discusses the issues of peer interaction through case study interviews with profoundly gifted siblings. The sister managed to fit in socially by never discussing her passion for mathematics with her peers (Moore, 2002), however, the brother chose to “act more dumb than I am” (Moore, 2002, p.139) in order to gain peer acceptance. Both children had difficulty maintaining peer friendships until they learned to appear “average” (Moore, 2002:139). Interestingly, these siblings found little comfort in each other’s company. Although both were incredibly gifted in similar areas, the isolation they felt was not relieved by the shared experience of being gifted (Grupetta, 2004d).

Herbert and Neumeister (2002, p.17) also reported on gifted children as feeling different from their peer group, ostracised, “alienated and alone in a classroom of peers with different interests”, and never being invited to join in playground games. They refer to gifted students as not only being misunderstood by their peers, but also finding adults may ridicule their ideas or make them “conform to a more normal
mold” (Delisle, 1992 cited in Herbert & Neumeister, 2002). Webb, Meckstroth and Tolan (1982 cited in Herbert & Neumeister, 2002) contend gifted students feel sadness, anxiety and anger as a result of their difficulty with social interactions, relating directly to symptoms of cultural stress (Figure 9).

Gifted students with perfectionist tendencies, heightened sensitivity and advanced moral and ethical concerns face great difficulty (Herbert & Neumeister, 2002) in normative school cultures. “As they progress through school, the desire to conform and be accepted by their peers and teachers causes many of these children to leave their originality behind” (Torrance & Safter, 1999, cited in Herbert & Neumeister, 2002, p.17).

Seon-Young (2002) also presents a case study of a gifted twelve year old male where his relationship with his peers was examined. The findings indicated that peers were selected for high ability, although only one was as gifted as the participant. The participant, Chris, contended that he had deliberately chosen his friends because he did not want to be considered weird by “association with weird people” (Seon-Young, 2002, p.30). This statement apparently restricted his association with highly gifted individuals, as these students presented as ‘weird’ and were therefore unacceptable to the majority of the student body.

These studies display commonalities in the choices made by the gifted students. It is better to ‘act dumb’ (Moore, 2002) and avoid association with weird/gifted people (Seon-Yong, 2003) in order to appear ‘average’ (Moore, 2002). Thus the gifted mask their giftedness and leave their originality behind in order to conform and be accepted by their peers and teachers (Torrance & Safter, 1999, cited in Herbert & Neumeister, 2002). The feeling of being ‘other’ and the need to isolate one’s self from others to protect their giftedness can be represented with metaphoric imagery.

In my discussion of this issue I used the example of a Siamese fighting fish forever separated from their peers due to the difficulty with interaction (Gruppetta 2006a). These images portray the gifted as the ultimate ‘other’ – always slightly apart from
those they interact with. The walls may not be as visible as the fish tanks portrayed below but they still exist, and therefore giftedness must be masked in order to interact with others.

Illustration 7 – Siamese fighting fish separated
This photograph (Aqualand, 2007) depicts a particular type of fish called Siamese fighting fish or bettas in the U.S.A. These fish must be kept separated because they are unable to interact with each other except for brief periods of time when mating. Contrary to popular opinion Bettas rarely kill each other. However, they will tear each other's fins off for entertainment. You usually wind up with two ragged, badly colored bettas. This type of interaction is an apt metaphor for the interaction of the gifted with others, it will not kill them but it will leave them wounded and they will lose a piece of themselves.

Illustration 8 – Siamese fighting Fish painting
(excerpt from main image – ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Gruppetta, 2006b
In the cover image (Illustration 1) The ‘Siamese fighting Fish’ is placed on the canvas under the eye. Its presence signifies the researcher's initial view that the gifted themselves are ‘other’ (Gruppetta, 2004, Gruppetta 2006a). The cultural ‘otherness’ portrayed by many is added to their gifted ‘otherness’ and in fact ensures that most are dually othered. Not only are they othered from mainstream culture due to their multicultural origins, but in many cases they are othered from their own cultures, as well as the mainstream culture through the characteristics of their giftedness. As stated above within the dissertation this point is represented by a photograph of the separate tanks required to keep Siamese fighting fish from interacting with each other, as they are unable to co-exist together within a single tank.

4.2.2.2 Masking giftedness
Tolan (1998, p. 211) contends that most gifted children will “eventually give up their selves in favour of comfortable acceptance”. Gardner (2003) substantiates this viewpoint, confirming the tendency for gifted students to hide themselves. He
contends the gifted suffer the rejection of adults and peers silently, covering up their symptoms of stress to fit in (Gardner, 2003). They struggle to find their own identities and yet fit in with others. Therefore the gifted mask their “agony with smiles” (Gardner, 2003, p. 29) and present “multiple faces” (Gardner, 2003, p. 29) to counter their social isolation. Noble, Subotnik and Arnold (1999) also refer to this masking of giftedness, reporting that the decision becomes “how much do I wish to sacrifice or mask myself to succeed?” (p.6). Again Peterson’s (2001) findings confirm the distress felt by the gifted is not obvious to others as it is held mostly within. Peterson (2001) also refers to the gifted individual’s technique of distancing oneself from others, as the gifted are “afraid anyone would reject me if they knew who I was” (p. 34).

Such examples are not exceptional, Schultz (2002, p. 203) reports on a case study of two gifted yet underachieving adolescent students who chose to “fit in and not make waves”. The first participant, ‘Shawn’, existed in his class as an “outlier, beyond the social interactions of his group” (Schultz, 2002: 206). Although Shawn withdrew both overtly and covertly during peer discussions, he was very adept at reading people for information which allowed him to respond in a socially acceptable manner (Schultz, 2002). The other participant, ‘Kate’, expressed a wish for a safe place “to shine” (Schultz, 2002, p. 207), a place where she could pursue her interests without being compared to her friends, a place to “be who you are without all the hassles from everyone” (Shultz, 2002, p. 208).

Dole (2000) also found secondary students changed their behaviour to adjust to the environment. Presenting evidence from a study by Sowa et al (1994 cited in Dole, 2000) where children used behavioural avoidance to avoid stress, Dole (2000) reports an example where one child changed his argumentative style to avoid making others angry. Nor is such social accommodation confined to adolescence. Clark (2002) again presents the case of ‘Jane’ who learnt to misspell words in primary school in order to win the approval and sympathy of peers. Although Jane missed the special treat provided by the teacher to the best spellers, she decided it was ‘worth it’ in order to fit in.
The gifted individual’s extraordinary abilities engender “negative responses from others in the community ranging from mild ambivalence to downright hostility” (Feldman & Piirto, 1995, p. 285). Their behaviour, if not modified by social contact may remain exceptional to the norm, therefore ostracising them from society. Yet modifying to the cultural norm results in their ‘dumbing down’ and deliberately ‘underachieving’. Subotnik (1997) contends that talent is squandered, that many of our gifted and talented students are lost because their creativity is not nurtured, and they are forced to compromise their gifts in order to become socially acceptable. In addition, Gardner (2003) contends that the gifted are particularly vulnerable to depression and suicide as a direct result of their difficulties with social interaction. Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robles and Glaser (2002) further contend that negative emotions, particularly those triggered by isolation and rejection can cause a variety of threats to an individual’s health. Social isolation can be as potent a risk factor as smoking, blood pressure and obesity (Kiecolt-Glaser, et al. 2002). These findings raise issues of grave concern for the social interaction of the gifted. To maintain social acceptance is to risk losing one’s gift, yet to maintain one’s gift means risking the health and psychological factors associated with social isolation.

4.2.2.3 Underachievement

As shown in the case studies, the easiest way to mask your gift is to consistently underachieve. The issue of underachievement is well documented by Gross (1989), Kerr (1994) and Csikszentmihalyi, et al., (1993). “Unfortunately no universally agreed upon definition of underachievement currently exists” (Reis & McCoach, 2004, p. 182). Generally underachievement is measured by the difference in results between a student’s I.Q. score and their overall classroom scores, or measured by the difference between their scores on knowledge tests and their classwork; basically underachievement is a discrepancy between ability and achievement (Gross, 1989; Csikszentmihalyi, et al., 1993; Colangelo, Kerr, Christensen & Maxey, 2004; Reis & McCoach, 2004). A summary of the definitions are shown in Figure 10.
The similarity between the measures of underachievement as shown in Figure 10 tend to be based on an initial high score in either aptitude, achievement or I.Q. which is then compared to classroom performance. A significant discrepancy between the two sets of results indicates underachievement. In contrast, Gallagher (1991, cited in Reis & McCoach, 2004) apparently reversed these measures and tried to predict the expected I.Q. of each student based on their current classroom performance. The results indicated that there was a significant discrepancy between current academic performance and the students’ actual I.Q. scores. Although this method reduced any possible bias by investigating academic performance before assessing I.Q., the resulting definition of underachievement was the same – a marked discrepancy between academic performance and expected performance based on I.Q. score.

Figure 10 highlights the assumption that all gifted students should achieve academically. In particular Green, Fine and Tollefson (1988, cited in Reis & McCoach, 2004) refers to a student earning a C grade or below in at least one major academic subject area (Figure 10). This statement highlights the expectation that a gifted student would be able to achieve in all academic areas, and that they would be considered an underachiever if unable to do so.

This expectation that a gifted student should be a high achiever in all academic areas is one of the long term issues for gifted individuals. Whereas ‘Talent’ is considered to be evidenced in only one area, the gifted are expected to achieve in all. Yet, “no reason exists to believe that all gifted students should achieve well academically (Janos & Robinson, 1985) or that ability and achievement should be perfectly correlated (Thorndike, 1963)” (Reis & McCoach, 2004, p.185).

Richert (1991, cited in Reis & McCoach, 2004) broadened the criteria to include more than just the academic domain, including four areas necessary for the manifestation of giftedness: Ability, Creativity, Productivity Performance, and Motivation-Emotions-Values. Again the level of expected ability is measured against actual performance but how these areas could be measured was not specified.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DEFINITION OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Gowan</td>
<td>Giftedness as evidenced by I.Q. score of 130 or above. Underachievement is diagnosed when student falls in the middle third of scholastic achievement in grades, and severe underachievement occurs when the student falls in the lowest third in scholastic achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Thorndike</td>
<td>Underachievement refers to the fact that a group of pupils all of the same age, the same I.Q., the same type of home background, will still vary in the scores they receive in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Whitmore</td>
<td>High aptitude scores but low grades and achievement test scores, or high achievement text scores but low grades due to poor daily work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Krouse &amp; Krouse</td>
<td>Underachievers – those individuals who consistently over a number of years, perform at higher levels on instruments of academic aptitude or intelligence than they do in regular classroom activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Dowdall &amp; Colangelo</td>
<td>Discrepancy between potential and actual performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Butler-Por</td>
<td>Large discrepancy between school performance and potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Green, Fine &amp; Tollefson</td>
<td>Giftedness as evidenced by scores in top 2% on an intelligence test. Underachievement as evidenced by having at least one year discrepancy between expected and actual performance, or failing to complete work or submitting incomplete work at least 25% of the time as indicated by teacher records, or earning a C grade or below in at least one major academic subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Supplee</td>
<td>High academic ability as assessed through an I.Q. score or achievement tests scores. Low achievement as evidenced by achievement tests scores that were at least two stanines lower than the I.Q. score, or by school grades showing a marked discrepancy from expected achievement based on I.Q./achievement tests scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Redding</td>
<td>Underachievement – as the discrepancy between actual GPA and predicted GPA based on full-scale WISC-R I.Q. scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Gallagher</td>
<td>When the actual achievement scores fall some distance lower than what was predicted then the student can be labelled an underachiever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Richert</td>
<td>Underachievement among gifted students in any one of the four areas necessary for manifestations of giftedness: Ability, Creativity; Productivity Performance, Motivation-Emotions-Values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Emerick</td>
<td>Evidence of giftedness includes standardised achievement tests or tests of general aptitude, with evidence of underachievement including average or below average academic performance as assessed by test scores and grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Colangelo, et al.</td>
<td>Giftedness as evidenced by scores in the 95th percentile or above. Underachievement as evidenced by GPA of 2.25 or below in high school course work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Baum, Renzulli &amp; Hebert</td>
<td>High potential as evidenced by intelligence, achievement or aptitude tests. Underachievement as evidenced by discrepancy between performance and potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Lupart &amp; Pyryt</td>
<td>Individuals with a discrepancy beyond one standard error of estimate between expected I.Q. and achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Rimm</td>
<td>Any gifted student not working to their ability in school is underachieving.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Reis & McCoach, 2004)
Kerr (1991, cited in Colangelo, Kerr, Christensen & Maxey, 2004) proposed three hypotheses to explain the concept of underachievement. The first is simply that the results of the I.Q. score are incorrect, therefore when compared to the student’s other scores there is a consistent gap between expected ability and performance (Colangelo, et al. 2004). “The second hypothesis is that the student is a ‘closet learner’ who is motivated to learn at home but does not perform within the structure of the school” (Kerr, 1991, cited in Colangelo, et al. 2004, p. 122). The third hypothesis is that the student is simply bored by the repetitive and non-challenging material presented in class, but happy to display the extent of their ability on a challenging I.Q. or knowledge test (Kerr, 1991, cited in Colangelo, et al. 2004, p. 122). Colangelo, et al (2004) also put forward the notion that the bored student could be too angry or depressed to display their academic abilities due to many years of dull repetitive work which is more likely to lead to behavioural problems than achievement in the classroom.

Gross (1989) argued that the choice of gifted students to pursue excellence or search for intimacy was a cause of underachievement among gifted students. Later she discussed the gifted child as “out of phase, out of synch” (Gross, 1994, p.5) with others around them and argued that it was not the asynchrony of the student that was the problem but the reactions of others to their inherent differences. These reactions by peers underpin underachievement and interfere with successful group interactions as the gifted student tries to fit in with others around them.

Ford and Harris (1999) contend that individuals from minority cultures have to transform themselves into middle class citizens in order to succeed. But they explain underachievement as the only option for those students who find that “the cost of giving up one’s cultural identity to achieve qualified success, to achieve second-class citizenship, is too high a price to pay for some individuals” (Ford & Harris, 1999, p.13). Therefore the gifted from minority cultures find themselves dually othered, once by their cultural background and also othered by their giftedness, giving them even more reason to underachieve.
Delisle and Berger (1990) dispute the cause of underachievement as a choice between academic achievement and acceptance. They contend it is tied to self-concept development, as students already see themselves as failures therefore they will not try at all. This point links to the internalisation of negative perceptions stated by Childers (2002), Miech, et al. (2001), and Montague and Rinaldi (2001). That these negative perceptions are related to the deficit view of minority cultural groups, including those of lower socio-economic groups has been well documented (Delpit, 1995; Frasier, 2002 cited in Grantham, 2002; Ford et al, 1998; Hatton, 1999; Kanstantopoulous, et al., 2001; Rehner, et al., 1997; Sadovnik & Samel, 2001; Schneider, 2001; Wolfe & Spencer, 1996), as has the relationship between a deficit viewpoint and teacher expectation (Obiakor, 1999; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Ruge, 1999; Wearmouth, 1997; Weinsteen, 2002).

Further to the internalising of negative attributes, Friedman’s (1996) prior discussion of ensuring the privacy of student marks, and the connotations associated with the label of giftedness (Baum & Olenchak, 2002; Berger, 2000; Mouton, et al, 1998), contribute to underachievement. The media portrayals (Cox, 2000; Kearney, 1991) of giftedness and the suspicion of madness (Tannenbaum, 1983; Taylor, 1995; West, 1997) ensure identification and the subsequent labelling are undesirable. The assumption that the antisocial, bookish, nerd (Berger, 2000) should be obvious within the classroom population, easily recognisable and unable to hide their abilities is common.

Additionally, the debate on grouping students, particularly gifted students, is often grounded in the contention that such grouping is elitist (Delisle, 2001; Changeux & Ricour, 2000; Gallagher, 1995), rather than give any credence to the emotional distress such children might suffer during heterogenous grouping (Gross, 1989, 1994). However, Gross (1993) cites Fussell (1983) as attributing the egalitarian attitude that contributes to tall poppy syndrome as being based purely on envy, in particular class envy, as the middle-class refute any contention that others can reach or exceed their level.
Rogers (2001) again disputes the elitist stance on grouping and refers to it as a purely emotional issue. Gross (1997), and Fielder, Lange and Winebrenner (1992) also establish this point. Both studies cite evidence that grouping gifted students together enhances their self-esteem and emotional development. Begoray and Slovinsky (1997) concur stating that gifted children have “more in common with other gifted children than they have in common with other low income children” (p.46). A notion sustained by both Hansen (1992) and Kearney (1996) in reference to students kept in lower grouping levels being forced to tutor other students rather than expand their own knowledge, and the detrimental emotional effect this has on them.

However, schools do not function in isolation:

We are far from understanding why and how children from poorer backgrounds so often underachieve in school, far less what can be done to reduce or eliminate such disparities. There is no single or simple explanation. Some blame the children for being less intelligent or less ready to learn. Others criticize the parents for failing to take an interest in their children’s development and for not providing an environment conducive to development and learning. Schools are blamed for having low expectations and too easily accepting that poor children are more likely to do badly in school than others. Nearly everyone blames the government for not spending enough money or spending it in the wrong way. One thing is clear: schools and the education system do not function in isolation (Mittler, 2000, p.1 cited in Harris, et al., 2002).

Mittler’s (2000 cited in Harris, et al, 2002) point is valid. The discussion of cultural differences and derogatory commentary afford blame on teachers, parents and students. All should be working together toward a shared goal (Connell, 1994 cited in Smyth, 2000; Hebert, 2002). Yet, gifted children are not always welcome in classrooms, teachers are often hostile toward children with extraordinarily creative minds (Tannenbaum, 2002, cited in Kay, 2002).

The difference between the lower socio-economic, educational, religious or social class of students, and their parents, becomes more of an issue due to the low incidence of teachers representing these backgrounds. The fact that teaching force as homogeneously white, monolingual and middle class (Apple, 2001; Biklen, 1993; Britzman cited in Biklen & Pollard, 1993; Bradfield-Krieder, 2001; Clark & Medina, 2000; Koo & Harlin, 2001; Krieder, 2001) impacts on the teachers’ views of students, and their parents.
The impact of the cultural weighting of I.Q. tests (Fraser, 1995; Howe, 1997; O’Sullivan, 1994) and linguistic differences between students and teachers are not only apparent for Non English Speaking Background (N.E.S.B.) and English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) students, they are presented by students in lower socio-economic circumstances as well (Grobman, 2001; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Robinson, 2001; Tett & Crowther, 1998), inhibiting giftedness identification. These differences also contribute to the view of students and their parents as a culturally different “other” (Delpit, 1995, xiii) that lives in a different world (Howe, 1991) and increases the social distance perceived between parents and teachers (Hatton, 1999). Wearmouth (1997) refers to Rosenthal and Jacobsen’s (1968) earlier research on teacher expectation in her contention that “Pygmalion lives on” (p.122). She explains that the reasons teachers do not differentiate classroom instruction to meet student needs is because it is both costly and time-consuming. However, she also contends it is because differentiation to meet individual and group needs may encourage lower-achievers “to achieve more than they are expected” (p.122):

Any overachievement of ‘low’ achievers challenges the stratified and hierarchical model of pupils’ abilities, which itself is still the prevailing paradigm for many teachers and schools, reflecting not just the belief system of individual teachers, but also the institutional view of the school as a whole. Many institutions expect, maintain and approve the anticipated hierarchy of pupil achievement. If this was not the case, differentiation would be accorded a higher priority in all school, time and resources would be found, and it would become the norm (Wearmouth, 1997, p.122).

She further contends that teacher expectation is not limited to the student performing to the expectation of the teacher, unexpected pupil achievement causes teacher discomfort, as they struggle to keep the student in the expected range of ability (Wearmouth, 1997). In her report on the experience of a teacher employed to assist students with dyslexia, the teacher was ultimately penalised for teaching too well. The students improved beyond their expected level and complaints began to mount that this assistance should be provided to all students, not just those assigned. As the situation began to escalate, the teacher found herself assigned more and more work until she could no longer provide the level of differentiation previously provided. A
situation that pleased the school, as these students once again dropped below the average and returned to their expected niche (Wearmouth, 1997).

However, Wearmouth (1997) does supply some humour and some hope:

Fortunately, despite our best endeavours to keep the less-able down, some pupils manage to achieve anyway. There is an apocryphal story about a lad who knew himself to be intelligent, but had not shown much promise in the early years at school – to the extent that the Principal advised him not to opt for the academic stream of the high school he was about to enter. He, however, ignored the advice. In later years, just before he was to receive his PhD degree, he decided to write to the principal (p.125).

The student’s letter is supplied. It basically makes the point that the principal told this student it would be a “bloody wonder” (Wearmouth, 1997, p.125) if he made it past second year in high school, the student in question was about to receive a PhD in Astrophysics. This also highlights the difficulty with using childhood I.Q. scores to predict achievement later in a gifted individual’s lifetime.

The difficulty with most perceptions of giftedness is that they stem from the values of mainstream culture, specifically Anglo-Saxon Middle Class viewpoints which value academic achievement above most areas of accomplishment. These perceptions are then represented with a deficit view of the ‘other’ and the cultural perceptions of giftedness that may conflict with the mainstream viewpoint.

4.3 CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

Despite Clark’s (2002) call for more research into cultural perspectives of giftedness, more research is needed in this area. The majority of studies related to diverse populations of gifted individuals refer to the difficulty that minority populations have in accessing gifted education programs (Ford, et al, 1998; McKenzie, 2001) or their lack of identification as gifted and/or talented individuals (Ford, et al, 1998; McKenzie, 2001). Some research on populations in China, Finland and Israel (Freeman, 2002; Zhang & Hui, 2003) discuss populations of gifted students in these countries, however the majority once again refer to some form of I.Q. testing and/or academic achievement as the main identifier of giftedness. Despite an extensive
search of the available literature surprisingly little information was located in comparison to the vast array of information available on other gifted topics. It is quite possible there is research published in other languages that are as yet unavailable in a standard literature search as the majority of keywords used are English. In light of recent publications there is increasing interest in this area, however only a few provide true insight into the cultural concepts of giftedness.

Concepts of giftedness vary widely between different cultures but most research is viewed through a “western lens” (Phillipson, cited in Clem, 2007, p.3). Phillipson (cited in Clem, 2007) also contends that previous research on giftedness within cultures is flawed because it is usually based on cultural comparison. "It seemed to me to be a good idea to directly ask people from different cultures what they thought giftedness might be ... as it is understood in their own culture, without the need for comparison" (Phillipson, cited in Clem, 2007, p.3). The results of his study have not yet been published; however he contends they showed a wide variation in ways to define giftedness.

Phillipson (Cited in Clem, 2007, p.3) did state that testing students’ base intelligence was a common way to identify gifted students in many countries but also contended this was not the only way to define giftedness. "The Germans look away from measuring the individual, they are not so concerned about IQ, but are concerned about what sort of behaviours lead to giftedness" (Phillipson, cited in Clem, 2007, p.3).

This examination of behaviours extended to the interaction between behaviour and the environment, and what aspects of the environment encouraged or inhibited behaviours that led to giftedness (Phillipson, cited in Clem, 2007). Phillipson (Cited in Clem, 2007) also stated that the enduring influence of Confucian values meant Chinese societies such as Hong Kong’s saw giftedness differently from the way it was interpreted in the west, while some other cultures had little or no concept of individual giftedness but focused on the collective giftedness of groups.
Zhang and Hui (2003) provide a detailed explanation of the Confucian view of education and why it impacts on gifted education and concepts of giftedness. The Confucian view of intellectual giftedness, according to Chen, Seitz, and Cheng (1991, cited in Zhang & Hui, 2003), can be stated as follows:

The essence of Confucianism is to provide all the people with an education that includes both basic knowledge and moral precepts so that all individuals can develop their own capabilities to their utmost and become leaders in society (p.316).

Apparently this viewpoint has been interpreted as requiring inclusive education practices, therefore separating the gifted is not considered appropriate. In fact, Confucius never spoke of prodigies (Waley, 1989, cited in Zhang & Hui, 2003), and within Chinese culture there is no elite group whose status or privileges are defined in terms of intellectual superiority (Stevenson, 1998, cited in Zhang & Hui, 2003). In China, traditionally there were thought to be three forms of giftedness in children, namely tian cai, or in-born ability; ren cai, or acquired ability; and young cai, or average ability. The main purpose of education, according to Confucius was to ensure that children at ren cai level fulfilled their potential (Chan, 1997, cited in Phillipson & McCannn, 2007). Gifted education is not popular in China as socialisation is currently one of the major goals for schooling in mainland China; therefore Chinese educators prefer to keep ‘gifted students’ in the mainstream classrooms so they are not segregated from their peers; particularly as segregation may inhibit socialisation (Zhang & Hui, 2003).

Tirri (2004) found that both Finnish and Israeli teachers preferred to keep gifted children in the regular classroom, again to promote social skills. She contends that these teachers “were afraid of the isolation” (Tirri, 2004, p.69) and more concerned about the negative social side effects of special arrangements for gifted students than any risk of inhibiting the development of their gifts or talents. Freeman (2002) reports that recognition of giftedness in Scandinavia has long been unacceptable, but states that giftedness is well recognised and catered for in China, which contrasts with Zhang and Hui’s (2003) viewpoint.
In an attempt to define the Chinese people’s conceptions of giftedness Zhang and Hui (2003) conducted a study investigating the perceptions of giftedness and gifted education held by teachers in China. Their argument in conducting this research contends that although China has the largest population on earth, they also have underdeveloped gifted programs (Zhang & Hui, 2003). Because teachers are usually the ones making the decisions about enrolment in gifted programs their conceptions of giftedness are most in need of examination, and as yet no other such study has been conducted in mainland China (Zhang & Hui, 2003). Their findings contrasted with previous research conducted in Hong Kong where it was found that definitions of giftedness are applied differently to male and female students (Zhang & Sternberg, 1998). The outcomes of the previous study found that there is a higher expectation for excellence in boys than in girls, but this is contrary to the position held in the United States (Zhang & Sternberg, 1998).

Although the study of Chinese teachers found no such gender bias, they did find a triangular rather than pentagonal view of giftedness:

Results indicated that in making judgments about giftedness, participants took into consideration three of the five criteria specified in the pentagonal model: excellence, productivity, and value. The excellence and productivity criteria were also confirmed by results from the simple questionnaire. Rarity and demonstrability, the two other criteria specified in the pentagonal model, were not taken into consideration by the participants in their evaluation of giftedness. Data collected from the three cultures [U.S.A., Hong Kong & China] using the pentagonal model indicated that the mainland Chinese group was the only group of participants who did not think that rarity is an important criterion for being gifted (Zhang & Hui, 2003, p.79).

Most importantly within these findings, the ‘rarity’ aspect of the pentagonal model of giftedness (Zhang & Sternberg, 1998) was not perceived as necessary for being identified as gifted. This raises some issues in perception of giftedness within China. Although Zhang and Hui (2003) contend it is the Confucian view of education with no expectation of child prodigies that influences these conceptions of giftedness, perhaps giftedness is in fact common in China, therefore unlikely to be considered a rarity. Additionally, Chinese culture expects students to cooperate rather than compete with one another (Zhang & Hui, 2003) therefore it would be rare to find
exceptional individual achievement that would fit the ‘rarity’ and ‘demonstrability’
criteria.

Definitions of giftedness may vary across time, culture, and even persons within a
culture (Yang & Sternberg, 1997, cited in Zhang & Hui, 2003), as shown in the
variance of results between China, Hong Kong and the U.S.A. Sternberg (2007)
again contends that different cultures have different conceptions of what it means to
be gifted, and by ignoring the cultural context in which children grew up gifted
identification procedures are rendered inadequate.

4.3.1 STERNBERG’S STUDY OF CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN GIFTEDNESS

As part of his ‘Rainbow project’ (Sternberg and the Rainbow Project Collaborators,
2006, cited in Sternberg, 2007) Sternberg reviewed the available research on
variations in ability and conceptions of giftedness in a range of cultures. These
studies are summarised in Figure 11. Although Sternberg (2007) contends that the
basic mental structures and processes underlying intelligence are the same across
cultures, the difference is the extent to which these structures and processes are
relevant to adaptation within different cultural milieus. The idea underlying the
Rainbow Project (Sternberg and the Rainbow Project Collaborators, 2006, cited in
Sternberg, 2007) is that it should be possible to construct a test that takes into
account the range of abilities valued across different cultures. But Sternberg (2007)
agrees that such a test would not be culture-free or even culture-fair just more
culture-relevant than many traditional tests. Given the range of abilities valued and
demonstrated within cultures as shown in Figure 11 it is apparent that devising a
culturally relevant test for giftedness would be an impossible task. Sternberg (2007)
acknowledges that there is no one test that will adequately represent all of the diverse
cultures of the world, any more than there is any one language that will represent
these cultures:

The language of giftedness represents a set of cultural values. In one culture, children
may be labeled as gifted as a result of their scholastic skills; in another, as a result of
their hunting and/or gathering skills; and in yet another, as a result of their fishing
skills or homemaking skills. Even when people move from one country to another, or
one continent to another, they bring with them aspects of their culture. When Asians immigrated to the United States, many of them brought with them their reverence for education and analytical thinking. For the most part, their attitudes were a good match to the implicit theories of the educational establishment. Other groups have come to the U.S. with attitudes that do not closely match the conceptions of giftedness. But there is no one "right" definition of giftedness. Conceptions of giftedness differ between and even within cultures, and the lesson of a cultural approach is that we need to honor these differences and do our best to take them into account (Sternberg, 2007).

Despite this statement Sternberg (2007) contends the Rainbow Project shows it is possible to create a test that, at least to some extent, broadens conceptions of giftedness so as to take into account more, although certainly not all, cultural conceptions. As an example Sternberg (2007) provides an item from the tacit knowledge test of natural herbal medicines for Kenyan children (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997, cited in Sternberg). As shown in Figure 11 these children need to be able to medicate themselves and others through firstly recognising the existence of an illness, defining what that illness is and then devising a strategy to combat it. The test therefore measures the children’s practical intelligence for adaptation to the environment (Sternberg, 2007) rather than a westernised concept requiring their I.Q.

Sternberg (2007) also cites Herrnstein and Murray (1994); Jensen (1998); and Rushton and Jensen (2005), and disputes their argument that the difference in cultural conceptions does not really matter, that the I.Q. test provides objective evidence of giftedness that transcends cultures and hence is authoritative in a unique way. He reiterates that the original test was designed only to predict academic performance and that school performance is not equally valued in every culture or country (Sternberg, 2007). Again the Binet-Simon (1905, cited in Sternberg, 2007) concept of intelligence was an early twentieth-century French one, which is not relevant today.

As shown in Figure 11 there are a great variety of concepts of giftedness and achievement across cultural understandings. Many of the conceptions of intelligence shown in Figure 11 revolve largely around skills that facilitate and maintain harmonious community relationships (Dasen, 1984: Ruzgis & Grigorenko, 1994; Serpell, 1974; Super & Harkness, 1982).
### Figure 11. Sternberg’s findings on the Cultural Variations of Giftedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CULTURE</th>
<th>CONCEPT OF GIFTEDNESS/MEASURE OF ABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luria</td>
<td>1931 &amp; 1976</td>
<td>Asian peasants in the Soviet Union</td>
<td>Studies showed that these individuals might not perform well on cognitive tasks because of their refusal to accept the tasks as they were presented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Goodnow         | 1962       | Chinese children                             | • Those with English schooling performed as well as or better than Europeans for tasks using combination or permutations;  
• Whereas children with Chinese schooling, or from very low-income families, did somewhat worse than European children.                                                                                             |
| Bruner, Olver, & Greenfield | 1966       | Wolof tribe of Senegal                       | Increasingly greater Western-style schooling was associated with greater use of taxonomic classification.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Gladwin         | 1970       | Puluwat who inhabit the Caroline Islands in the South Pacific | • These individuals were able to master knowledge domains including wind and weather, ocean currents, and movements of the stars.  
• They integrate this knowledge with mental maps of the islands to become navigators who are highly respected in their world.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Cole, Gay, Click, & Sharp, | 1971       | Kpelle tribe in Africa                       | • Functional performance on sorting tasks corresponded to the demands of their everyday life (as in a robin flying).  
• Contrasts to what North Americans might think of as sophisticated thinking—for example, sorting taxonomically (as in a robin being a kind of bird)                                                                                     |
| Serpell         | 1974       | Chewa adults in Zambia                       | Emphasised social responsibilities, cooperativeness, and obedience as important to intelligence; intelligent children are expected to be respectful of adults.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Super           | 1976       | African infants                              | • These infants sit and walk earlier than their counterparts in the United States and Europe.  
• Also found that mothers in the African cultures he studied made a conscious effort to teach their babies to sit and walk as early as possible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Wagner          | 1978       | Morrocan & North American                    | Had Moroccan and North American individuals remember patterns of Oriental rugs and others remember pictures of everyday objects, such as a rooster and a fish:  
• There was no evidence of a difference in memory structure, but the evidence of a lack of difference depended precisely upon using tests that were appropriate to the cultural content of the individuals being studied.  
• Moroccans, who have a long history in the rug trade, seemed to remember things in a different way from participants who did not have experience in remembering rug patterns.                          |

(Source: Sternberg, 2007)
Figure 11. Sternberg’s findings on the Cultural Variations of Giftedness Cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Serpell 1979                 |      | Zambian       | Designed a study to distinguish between a generalized perceptual-deficit hypothesis and a more context-specific hypothesis for why children in certain cultures may show inferior perceptual abilities:  
  - English children did better on a drawing task;  
  - Whereas Zambian children did better on a wire-shaping task.  
  - Thus, children performed better using materials that were more familiar to them from their own environments. |
| Kearins 1981                 |      | Australian Aboriginal | Found that when asked to remember visuospatial displays:  
  - Anglo Australians used verbal (school-appropriate) strategies  
  - Whereas Aboriginals used visual (desert nomad-appropriate) strategies. |
| Super & Harkness 1982        |      | Kenyan parents | Emphasised responsible participation in family and social life as important aspects of intelligence |
| Dasen 1984                   |      | African       | • In Zimbabwe, the word for intelligence, *ngware*, actually means to be prudent and cautious, particularly in social relationships.  
  • Among the Baoule, service to the family and community, and politeness toward and respect for elders are seen as key to intelligence. |
| Carraher, Carraher, & Schliemann 1985 |      | Brazilian Street Children | The investigators found that the same children who are able to do the mathematics needed to run their street businesses are often less able or unable to do school mathematics.  
  • The more abstracted and removed from real-world contexts the problems are in their form of presentation, the worse the children typically do on the problems. |
| Lave 1988                    |      | Berkeley Housewives (Anglo-Saxon) | • Could successfully do the mathematics needed for comparison-shopping in the supermarket  
  • Yet were unable to do the same mathematics when they were placed in a classroom and given isomorphic problems presented in an abstract form. |
| Markus and Kitayama 1991     |      | Mayan children | The Mayan expectation is that collaboration is permissible, even when taking a test, even an I.Q. test, and that it is rather unnatural not to collaborate. |
| Okagaki & Sternberg 1993     |      | Asian & Latino Americans | Found that Asian Americans tend to emphasize cognitive competence in their conception of intelligence, whereas Latino Americans tend to emphasize socioemotional competence. |

(Source: Sternberg, 2007)
The emphasis on the social aspects of intelligence is not limited to African cultures. Sternberg (2007) cites Azuma and Kashiwagi (1987); Lutz (1985); Poole (1985); and White (1985) in support of his argument that notions of intelligence in many Asian cultures also emphasize the social aspect of intelligence more than does the conventional Western or IQ-based notion. Sternberg (2007) also suggests that other kinds of intelligence matter more; such as the socioemotional kind of intelligence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location/Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruzgis &amp; Grigorenko</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>In Africa, conceptions of intelligence revolve largely around skills that help facilitate and maintain harmonious and stable intergroup relations; intragroup relations are probably equally important and at times more important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sternberg & Grigorenko       | 1997 | Usenge, Kenya, near the town of Kisumu | • Children in the villages use their practical intelligence and tacit knowledge of natural herbal medicines an average of once a week in medicating themselves and others to fight various types of infections.  
• Children recognize the existence of an illness, define what it is, and devise a strategy to combat it. |
| Yang & Sternberg             | 1997 | Taiwanese Chinese               | Include interpersonal and intrapersonal (self-understanding) skills in their conception of intelligence. |
| Grigorenko, Geissler, et al. | 2001 | Kenyans                         | Found that there are four distinct terms constituting conceptions of intelligence among rural Kenyans:  
• Rieko (knowledge and skills),  
• Luoro (respect),  
• Winjo (comprehension of how to handle real-life problems), and  
• Paro (initiative)  
with only the first directly referring to knowledge-based skills (including but not limited to the academic). |
| Grigorenko, Meier, et al.     | 2004 | Yup’ik Eskimo children in southwestern Alaska | Teachers did not consider the children bright and they did not fare well in traditional schooling. But at the same time the children had developed superior skills:  
• They possessed knowledge about hunting, fishing, gathering, herbal treatments of illnesses, and other topics that their teachers did not possess.  
• They could take a dogsled from their village to another village in the dead of winter and find their way.  
• The children had adaptive skills relevant to their own environments that the teachers did not have. |

(Source: Sternberg, 2007)
exhibited by Latino American children (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993, cited in Sternberg, 2007), however he does not explain how a test could be devised for measuring socio-emotional competence as required by that culture (Figure 11).

As shown in Figure 11 Kearins (1981) and Wagner (1978) found differences in visualisation and visual memory recall amongst Australian Aboriginal and Moroccan children that are dependant on their cultural and contextual experience. Carraher, et al (1985) and Lave (1988) also demonstrate that the context is also important to ability. Both the Brazilian street children (Carraher, et al, 1985) and the Berkeley housewives (Lave, 1988) could perform the required mathematic tasks with ease in their everyday contextual settings, yet were unable to perform the same task when placed in a classroom situation. These results suggest that differences in context can have a powerful effect on performance (Sternberg, 2007). The need to adapt to one’s environment as a characteristic of intelligence is shown in the study of the Inuit children (Grigorenko, Meier, et al., 2004, figure 11). These children display high level skills in adapting to their environments, planning trips, recognising landmarks, and surviving the extreme conditions of their Alaskan environment that their teachers could not possibly achieve, yet they are not considered to be bright academically (Grigorenko, Meier, et al., 2004). Likewise Gladwin (1970, figure 11) found the Puluwat master navigators who incorporate weather, wind, ocean currents and star movements into their mental maps of the islands, yet this skill would not be valued in any other context.

Again the problem of individual achievement as a characteristic of giftedness conflicts with cultural expectation. As shown in Figure 11 the Mayan expectation that ‘collaboration on tests is permissible and natural’ conflicts with the western view that a test should be completed by an individual (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is another area that requires more research the different cultural constructions of the self in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).
4.3.2 RECENT STUDIES IN CULTURAL VARIATIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

Some recent studies have tried to examine perceptions of giftedness in specific cultures in more depth. Chan (2008) examined the self-perceived intelligences of Chinese gifted students in Hong Kong and found three dimensions were distinguished – global giftedness; socioemotional giftedness; and artistic giftedness:

- Global giftedness was defined clearly by the conventional (verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical) intelligences, emotional intelligence, and all three triarchic abilities of successful intelligence, suggesting that students high on conventional intelligence could also be high on emotional intelligence and could be on the high end of analytic, synthetic, and practical abilities (Chan, 2008).

- Socioemotional giftedness was largely defined by the personal intelligences, emotional intelligence, and practical abilities, and in addition by verbal-linguistic intelligence, which showed the important role of communication in this form of giftedness (Chan, 2008).

- Artistic giftedness was defined mainly by musical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligences, and to a lesser extent the synthetic abilities of successful intelligence, suggesting that creative abilities could be important in this form of giftedness (Chan, 2008).

Chan (2008) used these three major forms of giftedness to describe giftedness among Chinese gifted students but found that their teachers' ratings were at variance with the students' self-perceptions. The teachers referred to 'supersmart' students as high in ability but showing less concern for others, less mature and more likely to have behavioural misconduct problems than the students they perceived as socioemotionally gifted. Whereas these students saw themselves as globally gifted both emotionally and academically (Chan, 2008). The difference in perceptions was not clearly identified during the course of the study and requires further investigation, however Chan (2008) suggested that although the students might be overconfident and misperceive their strengths it was equally possible that the teachers held some stereotypical views of gifted students which lead to these ratings.

In a previous study Chan (2007) highlighted another viewpoint which may have bearing on these teachers’ perceptions. Chinese parents usually praise their children for obedience and their ability to conform to parental behavioural expectations (Chan, 2007). Therefore teachers within Chinese cultural expectations may value
obedience and good behaviour highly and this could colour their perceptions of gifted students. Chan (2007) further contends that the expectation of obedience, consequently hinders their children’s development of intelligence by restricting their opportunity to engage in problem solving behaviour (Chan, 2007).

Dunn, Milgram and Price (1993, cited in Stone, 2002) compared learning styles and giftedness across nine nations of the United States, Canada, Israel, Greece, Egypt, Guatemala, Brazil, Philippines and Korea. Their findings suggest that gifted students have highly individual learning styles and there were more differences within groups than between groups. They concluded that cultural background is an important individual difference that dramatically influences learning style. “High scores for overall self-motivation and a high preference for kinesthetic-oriented learning and low preference for visual-type learning were reported by adolescent youngsters in widely dispersed parts of the world” (Dunn, et al, 1993, cited in Stone, 2002, p.65).

Stone (2002) followed this research by conducting a study across ten countries: the U.S.A., England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Stone (2002) found the term ‘gifted’ was used by participants from the U.S.A., England, Germany, Spain and Taiwan. The term ‘Genius’ was also used in Germany, Spain and Taiwan, but the term ‘child prodigy’ was only used in Taiwan and Korea (Stone, 2002). Taiwan appears to have the most terms to describe the gifted as they also used the term ‘Brilliant’ (Stone, 2002). Amongst those investigated Japan was the only country that used a term that translates to ‘highly creative’ and this represents the high value of creativity amongst Japanese culture (Stone, 2002). In contrast France, Japan and Thailand did not use the terms I.Q. or intelligence and these countries do not advocate standardised testing of their students (Stone, 2002). Yet, all countries seemed to have a construct of an individual with high cognitive ability, even though it was related to their individual cultures (Stone, 2002).

Interestingly, the term ‘hard worker’ scored quite low across the countries studied, as few believed that hard work was a requirement of giftedness and many believed that
work is easy for the gifted (Stone, 2002). This contrasts with perceptions reported by Lee and Chen (1994, cited in Stone, 2002) who reported that “the secret of academic success lies in hard work, and Chinese and Japanese educators and psychologists cannot understand why Westerners place such importance in innate abilities” (Lee & Chen, 1994, cited in Stone, 2002, p.65).

In terms of characteristics that could be attributed to gifted individuals, Japan rated humour and imagination quite highly, while most other countries saw this as a cultural trait, therefore not confined to gifted individuals (Stone, 2002). Many countries rated leadership highly and successful students are perceived to have a high level of responsibility in all ten countries, but this is “not perceived to be a gifted trait” (Stone, 2002, p.69). Korea ranked the logical mathematical type of intelligence as first and foremost, whereas most other countries ranked linguistic intelligence, specifically good language or communication skills as first, and therefore most important to their cultural perception of giftedness (Stone, 2002). Manipulating numbers and words is important in Western cultures, therefore in these cultures such skills are measures of intelligence (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2007). In contrast physical grace is important in Balinese social life, so mastering physical movements is a mark of intelligence in that culture (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2007).

Mi-Soon (2004) contends there are also gender differences amongst Korean American students that are displayed through their acculturative experiences. Females were characterised by a slower behavior acculturation rate into the mainstream culture than males and this was significant in terms of psychosocial adaptation and academic achievement through their acculturative experiences. The more recent generations were more behaviorally acculturated into the mainstream culture. However, the adaptation process in cultural values was slow and depended on the generational status of Korean Americans (Mi-Soon, 2004). Korean Americans have adapted to the mainstream society by incorporating and changing selected cultural values therefore it becomes difficult to ascertain if these differences existed within the original beliefs of Korean culture.
4.3.3 INDIGENOUS CONCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

Indigenous conceptions of giftedness obtained from the Sub-Saharan African cultural context of Zimbabwe were studied by Ngara (2006). Apparently indigenous cultural groups in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa share similar notions of giftedness. ‘Bantu’ philosophical thinking emphasizes innateness of giftedness, culturally expressed as ‘given’ or ‘blessed’ from birth (Ngara, 2006). In Bantu culture the giver is the Spirit-God and the gift is mediated by one’s ancestors. Both ‘Shona’ and ‘Ndebele’ cultures endorse the belief of giftedness as inborn and connoting a spiritual blessing whereby the giver is the Spirit/God (Ngara & Porath, 2005, cited in Ngara, 2006).

In both cultures Ngara (2006) found that the definitions of giftedness that emerged are closely related: Shona culture views giftedness as "a unique and prized human attribute which is both inherited and spiritually blessed in an individual and demonstrated in extraordinary abilities and expertise across a variety of domains of valued human activities" (Ngara & Porath, 2004, p. 190, cited in Ngara, 2006). Similarly, Ndebele respondents reflected giftedness as "an unusually outstanding ability blessed in an individual from birth which manifests in extraordinary performances including creativity and inspirational power" (Ngara & Porath, 2004, p. 190, cited in Ngara, 2006). In both cultures, giftedness is regarded as an aptitude or a demonstrated outstanding ability conceived relative to the average person; it is perceived to have both a spiritual element and/or a biological basis; and involves expertise in various domains and high level motivation. These concepts of giftedness confirm the existence of a category of individuals with aptitudes for exceptional performance in various domains within indigenous societies (Ngara, 2006).

Ngara (2006) also discusses two distinct types of gifted leadership; Mzlikazi, which is war leadership; and Chaminuka, which is a spiritual and peace leadership. Gifted individuals in these cultures were identified through careful observation. Adults in their communities would identify their peers or juniors with potential in domains of expertise, particularly where they distinguished themselves during challenges or
problem situations that demanded exceptional abilities or skills (Ngara, 2006). The status of ‘gifted’ was ascribed to individuals dependent on qualities of community participation; the degree of positive impact on the community's well being and survival; and originality and endorsement of the community's core values (Ngara, 2006). Giftedness in these cultures is participatory and linked to spiritual foundations, where the gift is expressed for the good of the community. These concepts relate to previous discussion where the giftedness or talent is seen as a gift from god, and that gift is expected to be used for the betterment of society.

These cultures unanimously acknowledged ‘community ownership’ of giftedness and recognised giftedness across gender and ethnicity. Once recognised as gifted these individuals were accorded title relevant to their gift as a mark of respect. For example the Shona used the title ‘godobore’ for an expert diviner, or prophetic person and ‘mazvikokota’ for one with high expertise (Ngara, 2006). The Ndebele used the title ‘intshantshu’ for a person of high expertise, and ‘ingcitshi’ for a champion or expert (Ngara, 2006). The major contrast with Anglo-Western societies is that these indigenous cultures do not acknowledge patent and copyright rules on individual creativity. The community focus and inclusive views of giftedness in these cultures mark a major point of departure from a paradigm with individual focused and pro-competitive, exclusive concepts of giftedness as perceived by Anglo-Western cultures (Ngara, 2006).

In fact these indigenous African cultures discourage boasting about one's gifts and expect individuals to be humble. The Ndebele say, ‘Ukuzitshaya isifuba ngesipho sakho singenyulwa’ meaning if you boast about your gift, you will lose it (Ngara, 2006). Therefore, self-nomination among indigenous Zimbabwean students is unlikely as it would be interpreted as ‘Shona-kuzviridzira mumhanzi’ or ‘blowing your own horn’ (Ngara, 2006). In this context, Shona culture espouses the view that the true hallmark of giftedness is achieving success against odds and adversity (Ngara & Porath, 2004, cited in Ngara, 2006). Giftedness in indigenous cultures is typified in the lowly, humble, introverted, and often despised individual contrasting
sharply with the assertive middle-class white student embodied in Anglo-Western society (Ngara, 2006).

According to the indigenous beliefs of Zimbabwe, there is a spirit behind anything that an individual does exceptionally. Therefore an exceptionally gifted scholar is believed to have ‘rechikoro-Shona’ meaning ‘a spirit for school’ (Ngara, 2006). Ngara (2006) also links the cultural concept of ‘spirit for’ to Dabrowski’s Theory of Overexcitabilities (Piechowski, 2002, cited in Ngara, 2006) contending that these Overexcitabilities are components of psychic life, the ‘heart and fire’ of giftedness that ‘ring loud and clear’ in gifted children and are expressed in the gifted individual’s emotional intensity and passion (Ngara, 2006).

Linking to Ngara’s (2006) findings a recent paper discussed indigenous concepts of giftedness which included spiritual and naturalistic components; and the importance of affective, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in Navajo, Aboriginal and Maori cultures (Bevan-Brown, Shepherd, Hawkesworth & Herewini, 2008). These concepts are not found in Western concepts of giftedness (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008). It is also noted that in Navajo culture there are strong concepts of communal ownership and a ‘service requirement’, which again appears to relate to the concepts previously discussed that a gift must be used for the benefit of the community (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008). The idea of a ‘service requirement’ is also found in concepts of Maori giftedness, specifically that you must use your gift to help others (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008). However Maori giftedness also includes broad and wide-ranging areas of giftedness which include both ‘qualities’ and ‘abilities’.

Bevan-Brown et al. (2008) contend there is no such thing as Maori giftedness in the sense it is recognized by Western cultures, rather there are gifted individuals in all groups and it is possible to have both individual and group giftedness. Group giftedness is recognized where the group achieve exceptionality through ‘sparking off each other’ (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008). Individual qualities in terms of being gifted in a specific area such as writing, relating stories or basic skills such as hospitality, are explained, however specific qualities found in gifted individuals are
harder to explain (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008). One quality that is considered characteristic of gifted Maori individuals in referred to as ‘Mana’ - Mana is explained as a ‘prestige that others recognise’ (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008). Usually ‘Mana’ is recognized as a natural leadership quality where the person displaying this attribute possesses some characteristic that means others listen when they speak, or follow when they lead (Bevan-Brown, et al., 2008).

McKenzie (2001) also discusses the term ‘Mana’ but refers to “earning Mana in service to others” (p.2) rather than it being something innate. She also discusses the deficit theory that influences many teachers in New Zealand in their view of Maori students because they truly believe there is something lacking in their home environment (Mckenzie, 2001). This deficit viewpoint is made easier for teachers because of several aspects of Maori culture. Firstly many parents fear losing their children to ‘Pakeha’ education, that is education to mainstream cultural expectations. Another reason is expectations of Maori culture that prohibit any form of exhibiting giftedness. In particular McKenzie refers to two concepts ‘whatkaiti’ and ‘whakahihi’:

Whakaiti means being humble, not standing out from the crowd, and is a belief held so strongly with many Maori students that they will disguise their abilities rather than be treated above their peer group. The second term, whakahihi, is the opposite – being boastful and bragging. This is completely unacceptable to Maori, and a child displaying this would be quickly squashed (McKenzie, 2001, p.4).

Therefore McKenzie (2001) contends any form of peer nomination by Maori children would be unrealistic as it would be seen and inappropriate to nominate another for special attention. Another reason is the concept of ‘whakama’ which is “a feeling of shame, embarrassment and/or alienation felt by the [Maori] child in an unfamiliar situation” (p.4). McKenzie (2001) contends that the emotions aroused due to ‘whakama’ can completely immobilize a Maori student in extreme cases.

“To ignore indigenous concepts of giftedness is to disregard artifacts that are of value in that culture, with possibly tragic consequences” (Phillipson, 2007, p. 2) yet Aboriginal perceptions of giftedness have largely been ignored within Australian research. Gibson and Vialle (2007) summarised the few studies into the Australian
Aboriginal view of giftedness and highlight the difficulty in locating a single view of the phenomenon. Because there is no single Aboriginal culture or language, and even within an individual Aboriginal community there can be variation of language depending on whether the speakers are male or female, how old they are and to whom they are speaking (Gibson & Vialle, 2007), it is difficult to obtain a clear viewpoint of gifted behaviour or expectation. This difficulty in identifying a single view of Aboriginal giftedness contrasts with some other indigenous cultures where a shared viewpoint is permissible because so much of the culture is shared.

Moreover Gibson and Vialle (2007) again discuss the deficit viewpoint that has consistently coloured any perception of the Australian Aboriginal people within Western based research. Further difficulties in identifying gifted Aboriginal children are also linked to the concept of ‘shame’ already highlighted in some African (Ngara, 2006) and Maori (McKenzie, 2001) cultures. Gibson and Vialle (2007) cite Baarda (1990) in explaining this concept:

Almost all teachers of Aboriginal children come up against the problem of children not wanting to stand up or do anything by themselves in front of others. They feel real shame when required to do such things. Also they are often unhappy if it is pointed out that they have scored higher or performed better than their friends and relations (Baarda, 1990, p.169, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007, p. 207).

As with many Indigenous cultures there are expectations that prevent individuals from striving for personal accomplishment and glory (Gibson & Vialle, 2007).

Of the studies cited in relation to ascertaining an Aboriginal viewpoint of giftedness there are some commonalities despite the variations in language and cultural concepts between the Aboriginal groups studied. Kearins (1988, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007) found characteristics of ‘Independence and helpfulness’ were highly prized, as were ‘bush skills’ and ‘sporting ability’. Cognitive characteristics of observation, curiosity, concentration, memory, imagination, talking and self-expression were grouped with ‘being sensible’ and ‘staying out of trouble’ in Kearins (1988, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007) findings. But ‘school-related skills’ scored quite low on the list of Aboriginal gifted characteristics as did specific skills such as drawing, painting, singing, guitar playing, wood carving and tool use (Kearins, 1988,
Kearins (1982, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007) found that superior visual-spatial abilities were common among Aboriginal children which may indicate that abilities in these areas are not viewed as uncommon or rare, therefore not considered a characteristic of giftedness.

Gibson (1998, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007) attempted to ascertain whether Frasier’s (1992, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007) ten traits, aptitudes and behaviours would be useful to identify gifted Aboriginal students in Queensland and found many of the traits were consistent with Aboriginal perceptions of ‘cleverness’. Traits of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal ability; Motivation; Problem Solving Ability; Reasoning; Memory; Communication; Imagination/Creativity; Insight; and Inquiry scored highly as traits recognised in ‘clever’ Aboriginal children (Gibson, 1997, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007), whereas humour was the least described attribute. Again this may be because humour is recognised as a common cultural trait amongst Australian Aboriginal people.

One significant point that Gibson and Vialle (2007) raise is the notion that the most gifted Aboriginal individual is one that is “two ways strong” (Fesl, 1993, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007, p.221). This would be an individual who is able to straddle both the contemporary world and their Aboriginality (Gibson & Vialle, 2007). Moreover they “suspect that many Aboriginal children fail to realize their gifted potential because they are unable to find that harmony within their identity” (Gibson & Vialle, 2007, p.221). This is a sobering thought.

4.3.4 RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES OF GIFTEDNESS

As stated there is little available literature on the perceptions of giftedness within the beliefs of cultures or religions other than those of mainstream Western cultures. ‘Religious wisdom’ was ranked highly by U.S.A. and Thai participants yet ranked much lower by other countries (Stone, 2002), which makes it difficult to ascertain if ‘religious wisdom’ is considered a gifted trait. In Muslim Malaysia where success in education in stated within government policy as “a belief in God and high moral
standards” (Adimin, 2002, cited in Freeman, 2005, p.93) the link between religiousity and giftedness is clearer. Indeed Freeman (2005) contends that in many such countries “unquestioning submissiveness to the Koran and priestly edicts is seen as the true gift” (p.93). This is in itself a misnomer as Islam has Imams rather than ‘priests’, nevertheless there is a link between religious beliefs and aspects of giftedness in these countries.

Piyadassi (1994) presents a Buddhist viewpoint on child prodigies which incorporates an interesting perspective of giftedness. Citing the examples of twins, even Siamese twins, having different temperaments and abilities Piyadassi (1994) contends that there is a third factor, one beyond heredity and environment that accounts for advanced abilities. Piyadassi (1994) refers to a ‘carry over’ of past skills and attitudes from prior lives and states that “Geniuses or child prodigies, whose extraordinary accomplishments cannot be accounted for, in terms of heredity or environment, would only be special cases of such a ‘carry over’ of skills from one life to another” (Piyadassi, 1994, p. 25).

Where child prodigies display amazing talents in music, mathematics, and writing, etc Piyadassi (1994) contends the aptitude shown for acquitting particular skills “strongly suggests remembering rather than learning” (p.29) and asks “How else do you explain Mozart composing music at the age of five?” (Piyadassi, 1994, p. 41). The experiences of Sir William Hamilton were also used as an example: “He was speaking Hebrew when he was three…By the time he was thirteen William Hamilton could speak thirteen languages, among them Persian, Arabic and Hindustani” (Piyadassi, 1994, p. 42).

Piyadassi (1994) further contends that there is more to life than simply a biological combination of parental sperm and ovum. Such a combination cannot account for a formation of an embryo which is a mixture of mind and matter: “A psychic factor must combine with the two physical factors, to produce the psycho-physical organism that an embryo is” (Piyadassi, 1994, p. 25).

You could argue, I suppose, that these infant prodigies merely inherited their genius. But the strange thing is that most of them did not have parents or families with an
Piyadassi’s (1994) argument above is persuasive in the sense that it would provide a logical explanation for abilities, if one believed in reincarnation. Yet reincarnation is one of the world’s most prevailing beliefs (Piyadassi, 1994). Statistics from Britain, where a belief in reincarnation is contrary to most religious teaching, shows 27 percent of adults and many senior school students have an inherent belief in reincarnation (Piyadassi, 1994). To prove this point Piyadassi cites an English Poet:

I hold that when a person dies,  
His soul returns again to earth  
Arrayed in some new flesh disguise;  
Another mother gives him birth  
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain,  
The old soul takes the road again.

(John Masefield, England’s Poet Laureate cited in Piyadassi, 1994, p.3)

Whilst Piyadassi’s (1994) discussion is interesting it should also be noted that Piyadassi does not define which particular type of Buddhism believes this type of relationship between reincarnation and giftedness, so it may not be true of all Buddhist belief. Nevertheless many indigenous people, particularly Australian Aboriginals believe strongly in reincarnation (Craven, 1999). Although this has not been mentioned as an aspect of giftedness within literature on indigenous cultures it may be that some sort of reincarnation concept is part of perceptions of giftedness in other cultures as well.

These perceptions highlight that "Giftedness does not emerge in a cultural vacuum" (Ngara & Porath, 2004, p. 195). As Sternberg (2007) contends, in assessing giftedness, we must take cultural origins and contexts into account. Children viewed in one culture as gifted may be ordinary in another and vice versa. Each culture has its own set of values and therefore their own conceptions of giftedness. Individuals are gifted if they have the abilities required to reach their own goals within their sociocultural context (Sternberg, 2007). Testing children for giftedness outside their cultural context will fail to identify children who, by virtue of their cultural context,
are gifted, and may identify as gifted those children who are not so outstanding, considering their background (Sternberg, 2007).

Cultural contexts of intelligence and giftedness are often conveniently ignored to prove ill-conceived assumptions of intellectual inferiority among students from diverse communities based on wanton applications of Western cultural models and testing tools (Ford & Grantham, 2003, cited in Ngara, 2006). Cross-cultural research in gifted education is significantly limited because “implicit theories of giftedness reside in the minds of theorists, and deal with people’s conceptions of a phenomenon rather than dealing directly with the phenomenon itself” (Stone, 2002, p. 64).

As part of the research investigation for this study some aspects of the different cultural concepts of giftedness encountered are presented in the findings, however much more research is needed in this area, particularly how these concepts relate to concepts of spiritual intelligence as discussed later in this chapter.

4.4 GIFTED ADULT STUDIES

The majority of gifted studies and the discussion of gifted characteristics, myths, deficit viewpoints and underachievement are specifically weighted toward gifted children. This is a recent phenomenon, occurring only in the last century – because there were no gifted children acknowledged before the 19th Century, “simply because the construct of the gifted child had not yet been dreamed up” (Borland, 2005, p.3). Gifted children began to exist in reality in the second decade of the 20th Century when the creation of such a construct became useful to educational research (Borland, 2005). Although gifted adults have been noted throughout history in individuals such as Aristotle, Plato, Leonardo Da Vinci, Galton, Newton, Galileo, etc – few were attributed to be gifted as children, although some gained a reputation for precocity in hindsight.

4.4.1. I.Q. SCORES IN ADULTHOOD
In recent years many websites have listed the I.Q. scores of famous people (Famous I.Q.s, 2008; I.Q. of famous people, 2007) however few of these scores are based on empirical evidence. Norlinger (2001) quotes I.Q. levels assessed by Catherine Morris Cox in 1964 for famous people who were unable to be tested. Her statistics were based on the “level of brightness and intelligence shown before age 17” (Cox, 1964 cited in Norlinger, 2001) by famous people such as Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein and Adolf Hitler. Norlinger (2001) makes a point of stating that these I.Q.s scores are estimates; there is no way to verify the scores as the people in question were never actually tested.

Figure 12 shows a list of estimates of the I.Q. scores of a range of famous people, and many of these scores are quoted by the media as actual fact rather than the estimates they are. A few scores in Figure 12 are actual I.Q. scores that have been verified by testing. Those of Marilyn Savant, Bill Gates, Kim Oong Yong and Andy Warhol are actual scores.

For children an intelligence quotient (I.Q.) was originally calculated using the ratio of a child's “mental age” (as measured by a standardised test) and their chronological age multiplied by 100. This means that, if your mental age and actual age are the same your I.Q. is 1 and your I.Q. rating is 100. But the standardised I.Q. test was originally devised to test the development of children only. Therefore a 10 year old who scored as high as the average 13 year old would have an I.Q. of 130. Clearly, this formula only works for children.

As shown in Figure 12 Marilyn Savant’s childhood I.Q. score was 228, however assertions that her IQ has dropped from 228 as a child to 186 as an adult are incorrect as the two numbers represent different measures of I.Q. Marilyn Savant’s I.Q. score of 186 is considered the highest known female adult score, which casts some suspicion on the estimated score of Madame Curie.
On a standardised test, all adults would have the same mental age so a comparison becomes less meaningful. To extend the test to include adults, the rating was replaced by a projection of the measured rank on a normal distribution curve with a centre value (average I.Q.) of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. So an Adult Intelligence Quotient is based on the premise that 100 is the average pass rate. For any specific age, an I.Q. rating between 90 and 110 is considered average and over 120 superior. Only approximately two percent of the population will have an I.Q. above 148.

A score which puts you in the top two per cent of the population would qualify you for membership of Mensa; a score in the top one percent of the population would qualify you for membership of the Prometheus Society in the U.S.A. According to the Guinness Book of Records the person who currently has the highest I.Q. is a
South Korean by the name of Kim Oong Yong (Figure 12) holding a Guinness Record of an IQ of 210 (Guinness Book of World Records, 2008).

Marilyn vos Savant was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for five years under "Highest IQ" for both childhood and adult scores (Guinness World Records, 2008). The list provided in Figure 12 would be useful as a guide only, and I remain sceptical about the validity of these estimates because I find it difficult to believe enough evidence of these people’s childhood behaviour was able to be located in order to give an accurate assessment, and it seems certain that their adult achievements would influence any research into childhood indicators. Winner (1996) contends any retrospective method of investigating the childhood of creative adults will identify some of cognitive and personality traits that predicted their adult creativity but is flawed as it cannot explain those who begin as gifted children and do not become creative adults. She further contends the only commonality between those who are classified as gifted in adulthood is that each shares some sort of significant stress factor:

> It appears that some sort of stress in childhood may be conducive to creativity, though whether stress stimulates creativity, or is simply likely to characterise those who are also creative, we cannot say for sure (Winner, 1996, p.283).

Winner (1996) also reiterates that I.Q. tests are not useful to predict success or achievement in adulthood. In contrast some research has been completed comparing known adult I.Q. scores with their expected career and/or earning capacity. As shown in Figure 13 various categories are attributed to I.Q. scores and an individual’s expected level of achievement in education and career areas. This is shown as a practical significance of an I.Q. score.

Norlinger (2001) provides no empirical evidence for his categories but is one of the first to be displayed in an Internet search for I.Q. so is likely to influence more of public expectations than some well researched publications.
Table 13. Practical Significance of I.Q.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IQ Range</th>
<th>Typical Educability</th>
<th>Employment Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 30</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Unemployable. Institutionalized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 50</td>
<td>1st-Grade to 3rd-Grade</td>
<td>Simple, non-critical household chores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 60</td>
<td>3rd-Grade to 6th-grade</td>
<td>Very simple tasks, close supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 74</td>
<td>6th-Grade to 8th-Grade</td>
<td>&quot;Slow, simple, supervised.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 to 89</td>
<td>8th-Grade to 12th-Grade</td>
<td>Assembler, food service, nurse's aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89 to 100</td>
<td>8th-Grade to 1-2 years of College</td>
<td>Clerk, teller, sales assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 to 111</td>
<td>12th-Grade to College Degree</td>
<td>Police officer, machinist, sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 to 120</td>
<td>College to Master's Level</td>
<td>Manager, teacher, accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 to 125</td>
<td>College to Non-Technical Ph.D.</td>
<td>Manager, professor, accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 to 132</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Attorney, editor, executive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132 to 137</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>Eminent professor, editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137 to 150</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>Leading math, physics professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 to 160</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>Lincoln, Copernicus, Jefferson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 to 174</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>Descartes, Einstein, Spinoza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174 to 200</td>
<td>No limitations</td>
<td>Shakespeare, Goethe, Newton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from http://www.geocities.com/rnseitz/Definition_of_IQ.html)

Obviously many other factors besides an I.Q. score influence earnings. Some of these factors are environmental. Murray (2002) controlled expected environmental influences such as the socioeconomic status of an individual’s parents and the amount and quality of schooling they received by studying I.Q. scores and incomes of sibling pairs. He selected 733 pairs of siblings from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and found that siblings with different I.Q. scores had widely varying incomes (Murray 2002). Because siblings share many influences on income, such as parental socioeconomic status and similar access to educational opportunity the results would be expected to be similar between siblings. Murray’s (2002) results are shown in Figure 14.

As Figure 14 shows Murray found that I.Q. does significantly and directly effect earnings, although better terminology than ‘dull’ could have been used to describe the siblings with lower I.Q. scores. Murray (2002) also found that most experts
acknowledge a positive correlation between I.Q. and income, though again some dispute the reliability of I.Q. tests.

Figure 14. Sibling earnings according to I.Q. Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IQ group</th>
<th>Utopian Sample (733 pairs)</th>
<th>I.Q.</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very bright siblings</td>
<td>(120+)</td>
<td></td>
<td>$70,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright siblings</td>
<td>110–119</td>
<td></td>
<td>$60,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference group</td>
<td>90–109</td>
<td></td>
<td>$52,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dull siblings</td>
<td>80–89</td>
<td></td>
<td>$39,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dull siblings</td>
<td>&lt;80</td>
<td></td>
<td>$23,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Murray, 2002).

Eysenck (1998) in particular disputes the findings of most studies into the correlation between I.Q. and earning capacity. He contends that most studies measure earnings at age 30 when the working class have reached their peak earning capacity but those completing higher education have only just begun to enter the workforce and will need another 10-15 years to reach their peak earning potential. Eysenck (1998) therefore suggests capacity for earning income should be measured over a lifetime rather than at a fixed point in life.

Zax and Reese (2002) hold similar views and completed a more comprehensive study which simultaneously estimated the contributions of I.Q., characteristics of family, high school friends and peers, their families, and high schools to the participants’ earnings at ages 35 and 53. They contend previous evidence regarding the relationship between intellectual capacity and earnings is not entirely consistent with their findings (Zax & Reese, 2002). All factors investigated significantly affected earnings at both ages 35 and 53. Therefore the effects of I.Q. are much smaller than asserted in other studies. Zax and Reese (2002) found aspirations appear to be very important and that socialization and role models are also quite important in achieving greater earning capacity.

Zax and Reese (2002) also dispute findings by Herrstein and Murray (1994, p. 96, cited in Zax & Reese, 2002) stating the difficulty of altering measured IQ implies
that low-wage workers would benefit "only modestly" from additional education. Their conclusion rests on the implicit assumption that additional education affects earnings largely through its effect on measured IQ. Four years of education may indeed be necessary to close a gap of one standard deviation in IQ scores (Neal and Johnson, 1996, cited in Zax & Reese, 2002). However, the earnings differences that are associated with that gap at ages 35 and 53 can be erased with less than one and less than two years of additional education, respectively, and even less schooling may be sufficient, if distinguished by better academic performance (Zax & Reese, 2002). Feasible increases in academic performance and education can compensate for the effects of many cognitive and contextual deficits (Zax & Reese, 2002). Therefore education level rather than IQ, ultimately affects earnings.

I.Q. tests only judge academic achievement. Howe (1997) again makes this point with his observation on school attendance raising the I.Q. test result and a lowering of I.Q. score being related to non-attendance or earlier leaving age. Students may in fact have an increase in different types of knowledge: farm skills, sporting techniques, business acumen, or the various types of knowledge discussed as cultural expressions of giftedness but these are not measurable by an I.Q. test. People place far too much emphasis on the outcomes of I.Q. tests and the significance of an I.Q. score in a child could be very different to the significance of an I.Q. score in an adult.

4.4.2 Terman’s Longitudinal Study

As this study specifically investigates the life experiences of gifted adults, studies of gifted adults are more likely to inform the research. The most significant longitudinal study conducted of gifted individuals can be attributed to Terman. Terman (1916) investigated whether high I.Q. children had intellectual success or failure as adults, and this study has continued until the present day.

Terman's "Termites" as they are known were specifically chosen to test the ‘early ripe-early rot’ myth (Leslie, 2000). Terman found, among other things, that the gifted were taller, healthier, physically better developed, superior in leadership and social
adaptability, dispelling the often held contrary opinion of physical weaklings who were basically socially inept (Terman, 1916).

Terman's original points of view regarding gifted youth include:

- They are the top 1 percent in intelligence,
- They should be identified as early as possible in childhood,
- They should be accelerated through school
- They should have a differentiated curriculum and instruction,
- They should have specially trained teachers,
- They should be viewed as a national resource for the betterment of society, and
- They should be allowed to develop in whatever directions their talents and interests dictate (Terman, 1916).

By 1928, Terman had 1,528 subjects between the ages of 3 and 28. As a group, they were overwhelmingly white, urban and middle class: there were only two African-Americans, six Japanese-Americans and one American Indian. Nearly all lived in California. Terman noted it would be interesting to know what differences exist between subjects of different racial descent, but did not have a large enough ethnic subgroup to investigate this, although ten percent of the group were Jewish (Leslie, 2000). The gender imbalance of 856 boys to 672 girls puzzled Terman as he tried to determine if the boys were actually smarter or teachers were likely to recommend them (Terman & Madsen, 1930) however he was unable to conclusively determine an answer to that question.

The majority of I.Q.s recorded for Terman’s participants were over 140, however some were included in the study from the 135-139 range because they were a sibling of those already selected. Figure 15 displays facts about Terman’s gifted in 1955 when most of the participants were still living and able to provide the best comparison of the remaining adult group of the gifted.

As shown in Figure 15 the women in the Terman group, who reached adulthood in the 1920s and ‘30s, foreshadowed later trends. They had fewer children than others of their generation and bore them later in life. More of them went to college and graduate school, more had careers and more remained unmarried. Despite this considerable unemployment existed amongst the gifted women, only 10 percent had
entered the higher professions or university teaching, and by 1950 most women were married and not working, preferring to raise children. Fewer women continued for graduate study, even less earned advanced degrees or were employed in professional or managerial careers in 1955, and very few earned over $5,000 per year in 1940. particularly in terms of the expectations of women. Yet in this time period few women would have been expected to work or pursue academic careers and this is reflected in the statistics for women in Figure 15. Many of the men had successful careers but none gained ‘eminence’. (Kerr, 1994). Some of these trends could be attributed to the time period, however similar trends are found amongst more current studies of gifted women (Figure 17).

These statistics are also affected by the loss of some of the participants, there were 61 deaths by 1940, the majority of these were male but the higher rate of accidental death and suicide amongst males is in line with a societal average and not considered a factor related to giftedness (Leslie, 2000). In other ways, the Terman kids were just run-of-the-mill 20th-century Americans. Some died young from accidents, diseases or suicide. A few were arrested; one went to prison for forgery. About 40 percent of the men served in World War II. Five men died in combat, while two were killed in war-industry accidents. As a group, Terman’s kids got divorced, committed suicide and became alcoholics at about the national rate. They were no more, and no less, stable than the general population (Leslie, 2000; Winner, 1996).

According to Hastorf, the current custodian of Terman’s study, none of the Terman students ever won a Nobel or Pulitzer prize (Leslie, 2000). They proved remarkable in some ways and ordinary in others. One distinction was their avid pursuit of higher education. Two-thirds of the Terman men and women earned bachelor's degrees, which was ten times the national rate for their time and all the more impressive because most did so during the Great Depression. However, they may have prolonged their studies because of the economic collapse because expectable career options were not available. There were 97 PhDs, 57 MDs and 92 lawyers (Leslie, 2000). They ended up with more education than the younger cohort of Termites but not with a higher occupational status due to the economy of the time (Leslie, 2000).
The Terman group included some prominent figures, like physiologist Ancel Keys, who discovered the link between cholesterol and heart disease; physicist Norris Bradbury, former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory; Life journalist Shelley Smith Mydans, and Hollywood big shots Edward Dmytryk and Jess Oppenheimer. These names were never officially published; the privacy of the participants was protected. However over the years some names have been released, either by those who have attained some sort of prominence and several Termites whose involvement was announced in their obituaries (Leslie, 2000). We also know that two children who were tested but did not make it into the Termite group, William Shockley and Luis Alvarez, went on to win the Nobel Prize in Physics (Leslie, 2000; Winner, 1996). Most of the surviving Termites are now in their 80s and 90s, and the project will continue until the last one dies (Leslie, 2000).

The Terman kids were selected for high I.Q.; The highest I.Q. recorded among the ‘termites’ was 200 (a girl) the lowest was 135 (34 boys and 31 girls). Yet the longitudinal results tell us little about the meaning of I.Q., except for one study conducted by Terman’s associate, Melita Oden (cited in Leslie, 2000). In 1968, she compared the 100 most successful and 100 least successful men in the group, defining success as holding jobs that required their intellectual gifts. The successes,
predictably, included professors, scientists, doctors and lawyers. The non-successes included electronics technicians, police, carpenters and pool cleaners, plus a smattering of failed lawyers, doctors and academics. But the successes and non-successes barely differed in average IQ. The big differences turned out to be in confidence, persistence and early parental encouragement (Leslie, 2000), once again showing that a high I.Q. was not a long term predictor of success by any measure.

4.4.3 MORE RECENT GIFTED ADULT STUDIES

Over the last two decades there has been an increase in the area of research on gifted adults rather than children, but this is still a new trend and less literature is available in comparison to the vast array of literature for gifted children. Many of the findings are consistent with the characteristics and experiences of gifted children, however some of these areas differ in gifted adults. Figure 16 displays a range of findings from research conducted into the experiences of gifted adults. Whilst few cover the breadth of Terman’s longitudinal time period, many are longitudinal and do cover significant periods of a gifted adult’s lifespan. Again these studies concentrate on mainstream participants, specifically those of white Christian middle class origin; however some variation has been attributed to gender as shown by the research on gifted women in Figure 17.

As shown in Figure 16 there are commonalities between the research on gifted children and adults: The feelings of isolation and difficulty interacting with others (Denko, 1997; Freeman, 2001; Kerr & Cohn, 2001; Piirto, 1999; Streznewski, 1999), feeling ‘different’ (Arnold, 1995; Denko, 1997; Freeman, 2001; Piirto, 1999; Streznewski, 1999) and a tendency to hid or mask their gifts (Freeman, 1991 & 2001; Jacobsen, 1999; Kerr & Cohn, 2001; Piirto, 1999; Streznewski, 1999) was common across these studies. Denko (1995) specifically quoted a participant stating that they did not fit in anywhere and were in neither “fish nor fowl” (p.26).

Denko’s (1995) study of a Mensa group in the U.S.A. also highlighted some of the difficulty in researching amongst populations of gifted adults, particularly in terms of
understanding their discussions: “In rare cases, respondents assumed I could see the connection between a question and a response, when, in fact I could not bridge the hiatus” (Denko, 1995, p.13). This comment by Denko (1995) introduces a notion not discussed by other studies, the difficulty of interviewing those who are highly gifted. Moreover the study raised some intriguing points in terms of a highly gifted adult population discussing their experimentation with marijuana and amphetamines, and finding that many of these highly gifted individuals were chronic smokers (Denko, 1995). Despite the knowledge that it was bad for their health in the long term many were unable to break the habit and explained their addiction as caused by one of two reasons. Firstly, participants explained it was due to the need to constantly have something to do with their hands, as part of their own hyperactivity (Denko, 1997). Secondly some explained their use of smoking to impair their sense of smell as otherwise they were too sensitive to other odours around them (Denko, 1997).

Denko’s (1997) research (figure 16) is consistent with the contentions of both Piirto (1999) and Jacobsen (1999) in referring to hypersensitivities in gifted adults. Whilst Piirto (1999) specifically related these areas to Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities Jacobsen (1999) refers to them as ‘Too-too’ liabilities:

- Too scattered – Skipping from one interest to another
- Too crusading – Deep concern for others; champion of ultimate truths; intolerance of injustice
- Too glib – Rapid fire thought and speech
- Too intense – High energy and single-minded zealous effort
- Too sensitive and dramatic – Extra-sensitivity and excitability
- Too demanding – Perfectionism
- Too driven – Relentless pursuit of goals; impassioned concentration
- Too different – Radical or unconventional ideas
- Too complex – Passion for intellectual scrutiny; abstract, cause effect relationships, and paradox
- Too intuitive – Contemplative, open to spiritual and otherworldly experiences (Jacobsen, 1999, pp. 127-128)

Although Jacobsen (1999) has written these ‘too too liabilities’ in a different format they compare favourably to Dabrowski’s five ‘overexcitabilities’ (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) that could be found amongst gifted children in terms of psychomotor, sensual, emotional, intellectual, and imaginational intensities as shown in Figure 6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1991 | Freeman | **Longitudinal** - involved 210 children aged 5 to 14 across Britain  
• top 1% of the I.Q. range “said they felt different”;  
• Only 8 reported great difficulty with personal relationships;  
• Over two-thirds of the sample group prayed privately;  
• Many gifted individuals had encountered difficulties within their relationships with others due to their high moral standards.  
• Others could not live with these high standards, and were conflicted by what “they could so clearly see, and others could not” (p.63). |
| 1995 | Arnold | Studied 81 high school valedictorians for 14 years after graduation.  
• Few are designated as gifted but all are considered high achievers.  
• Low SES area, high crime rates, low educational expectations.  
• Many cultural expectations conflict with their success |
| 1997 | Denko | Investigated MENSA group:  
• Found difficulty with following metacognition displayed by participants  
• Isolated even within MENSA group  
• Neither ‘Fish nor Fowl’  
• ‘Noblesse Oblige’ where gifted felt their gift should benefit others  
• Many experimented with marijuana and amphetamines, and many smoked cigarettes.  
• Many wanted to change the world for the better – wanted peace, kindness to all, etc.  
• Morality and values part of the discussion |
| 1999 | Jacobsen | Explores the psychology and personality of the gifted adult rather than concentrate on cognitive capabilities.  
Defines giftedness as including these components:  
• Initially having and using natural abilities without benefit of formal training.  
• Rapid learning  
• Creative and productive thinking  
• High academic achievement  
• Superior proficiency in one or more domains (e.g. mathematics, arts, leadership)  
• Includes too-too liabilities – such as too intense, too driven, too demanding, too different, too intuitive, too complex, etc.  
• ‘Imposter’ syndrome |
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| 1999 | Streznewski | Concentrates entirely on gifted adults in her study:  
- No evidence to support the inclusion of participants from minority cultural groups;  
- Did not use I.Q. tests to identify these gifted adults, she based her assessment on qualities such as mental speed, sophistication of thought processes, sensitivity, drive, and a sense of humour - personal characteristics based on her own experience with gifted children in her classroom over the span of her teaching career.  
- Overall Streznewski’s results seem to correlate with other gifted studies finding that the gifted individual had some sense of themselves as ‘different’ at an early age, were often isolated and some found relationships and social interaction difficult. |
| 1999 | Piirto | Although including some of her own findings from studies the majority of Piirto’s text extensively reviews literature on all aspects of gifted children and adults:  
- High I.Q. adults were probably academically talented children although ‘late bloomers’ do exist.  
- Major impacts of later achievement are home environment and personality rather than I.Q.  
- Those who chose social skills were unlikely to maintain intellectual skills as adults.  
- Loneliness and isolation were characteristics of those more likely to evidence intellectual skills as adults  
- Of those in Terman’s group and Hunter group (Figure 16) none showed evidence of becoming either a ‘revolutionary thinker’ or great leadership potential.  
- Majority of gifted adults showed multipotentiality  
- Specifically mentioned traits such as Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities and Lovecky’s hypersensitivity and entelechy as factors inhibiting gifted adults from realizing their full potential and putting them at risk of interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict.  
- Cites Dabrowski, Piechowski and Lovecky in discussing moral and spiritual growth as a clear goal for gifted adults. |
| 2001 | Kerr & Cohn | 'smart boys' - a follow up to a gifted 6th grade class 40 years later. Identified issues specific to gifted men:  
- isolation common  
- Need to live up to expectations  
- Ambivalence about being gifted  
- Concern about masculinity  
- Pursuit of contentment  
- Lack of concern for eminence  
- Uncertainty about vocation (multipotentiality)  
- Early marriage/multiple marriages  
- Being a good person, living a good life  
- The need for a mentor |
Denko’s (1997) participants’ reference to their own need for tactile and psychomotor constants, as relieved by cigarette handling, also related to these overexcitabilities.

As shown in Figure 16 unlike other gifted adult studies Streznewski (1999) did not use I.Q. tests to identify gifted adults, she based her assessment on qualities such as mental speed, sophistication of thought processes, sensitivity, drive, a sense of humour, and personal characteristics based on her own experience with gifted children in her classroom over the span of her teaching career. The first 40 participants were identified by Streznewski herself, and the remaining 60 participants were recommended by professionals who knew about the project or referrals to other gifted adults by interviewees. No criteria for these referrals from others were given in the details of the study. Streznewski (1999) concentrated entirely on gifted adults and contends the participants were diversified by sex, family background, education, occupation, geographic location, social class and race, however there is no evidence

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| 2001 | Freeman | Follow up to previous 1991 study – 81% of original longitudinal survey group were located for comparison to the initial findings:  
- 1991 finding that the gifted are less socially maladjusted, isolated or more sensitive emotionally than the accepted gifted stereotype is contradicted in her more recent findings which highlight the moral differences, isolation and hypersensitivity of many gifted individuals.  
- Freeman contends that it was the labelling of these individuals as gifted, and the resulting expectations that contributed to their development into individuals displaying the expected gifted characteristics. |
| 2001 | Corwin | Studied 12 high school seniors qualified for a gifted program due to high tests scores and IQ tests.  
- Most failed their final year  
- All worked but none could afford tutors  
- All were black and in lower socioeconomic circumstance  
- Violence – e.g. Bullets through school and home windows  
- Some made it to college |

(Sources – Arnold, 1995; Corwin, 2001; Denko, 1997; Freeman, 1991 & 2001; Jacobsen, 1999; Kerr & Cohn, 2001; Piirto, 1999; Streznewski, 1999)
to support the inclusion of participants from minority cultural groups and this is consistent with most studies of gifted adults where participants are again from mainstream Anglo Saxon Christian middle class backgrounds. Overall Streznewski’s (1999) results seem to correlate with other gifted studies finding that the gifted individual had some sense of themselves as ‘different’ at an early age, were often isolated and some found relationships and social interaction difficult.

Interestingly Streznewski’s (1999) contention ‘there is something about the eyes’ of gifted individuals relates to Bevan-Brown et al (2008) explanation of ‘Mana’ – a prestige or leadership quality that others recognize. Although Streznewski (1999) found this concept difficult to explain it is confirmation of an intangible ‘something’ that often makes a gifted individual stand out from their peers in a substantial yet unexplainable way. Sefer (2007) also mentions a “sparkle in the eye” (p.311) of gifted children but extends this concept to cite the philosopher Trubetckii and his discussion of the insightful internal eye and an “internal sense of things and eyes as the mirror of the soul” (Stanislavski, 1982, cited in Sefer, 2007, p.335). The way this is explained is that the eyes show more in gifted individuals because more exists within them.

Streznewski (1999) found little difference between the experiences of gifted adults and those presented in the literature on gifted children whereas Freeman (1991) found marked difference in the perceptions of gifted adults and children within her longitudinal study. Freeman (1991) initially disputed previous findings of gifted children being more socially maladjusted, isolated or more sensitive emotionally. The major difference found between the children seen as gifted and those of equal ability but not classified as gifted was in the children’s social behaviour (Freeman, 1979). Gifted children were more often described as ‘difficult’ and were found to live in more unusual circumstances. Although she agreed most gifted participants in the top 1 percent of the group “felt different” (Freeman, 1991, p. 52) only eight reported felt any great difficulty with personal relationships, and many of these had become “academic ostriches” (Freeman, 1991, p. 52) burying themselves in their studies rather than interacting with the world.
Yet, the findings of the later study (Freeman, 2001) contradicts many of the contentions made in previous studies. In particular, Freeman’s (1991) finding that the gifted are less socially maladjusted, isolated or more sensitive emotionally than the accepted gifted stereotype is contradicted in her more recent findings which highlight the moral differences, isolation and hypersensitivity of many gifted individuals. Freeman (2001) contends that these gifted adults are not in fact different from the rest of the population. Instead, she argues that it was the labelling of these individuals as gifted, and the resulting expectations, that contributed to their development into individuals displaying the expected gifted characteristics rather than these characteristics being typical of gifted individuals.

Jacobsen (1999) disputes this type of finding and discusses the gifted as those with “strong personalities which are perceived as excessive, too different from the norm, and consequently wrong” (Jacobsen, 1999, p.8). She contends the real enemy of the gifted is trying to fit in:

Gifted children do have the inclination to adapt to the group, but at what price? If one works hard at fitting in with others, especially when one feels very different from others, self-alienation can result. In their desperation to belong, many ‘well-adjusted’ gifted youth and adults have given up or lost touch with vital parts of themselves (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 138).

She also states that no one has offered a “suitable road map for how gifted adults may live out the promise of their high potential, fit in and have successful relationships” (Jacobsen, 1999, p.138). And raises the age old question asked by the gifted, “Why can’t I be like everybody else?” (Jacobsen, 1999, p.10). Her comments on masking giftedness in adulthood reflect much of the discussion previously raised with gifted children – except she found the gifted adult becomes much more adept at hiding their giftedness and often some of their character traits. Jacobsen (1999) also refers to ‘fitting in’ as ‘selling out’ but notes that the gifted find “to fully express the true self is at best a calculated risk” (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 138). Again raising the point of deliberate concealment as a survival mechanism (Gross, 1994).

Gross (1994) contends the problem is not the gifted individual’s asynchrony but in the reaction of others. Gross (1998) discusses the attributes that the gifted must hide
from the world, one of which is an insatiable need to learn. She refers to “the ‘Me’ behind the mask” (Gross, 1998, p.170) and quotes a student named Elizabeth expressing this idea, “I learn the way I was born learning, and I have tried, repeatedly, painfully and unsuccessfully, to train myself out of it…” (Gross, 1998, p. 170). The words may be different but the sentiment familiar to another gifted individual from 300 years previously:

Since I first gained the use of reason my inclination toward learning has been so violent and strong that neither the scoldings of other people, nor my own reflections, have been able to stop me from following this natural impulse that God gave me. He alone must know why; and He knows too that I have begged Him to take away the light of my understanding…. (Juana Ines De La Cruz - Reply to the Bishop of Puebla (1691) who attacked her scholarly work as inappropriate for her sex).

The same insatiable drive to learn is presented as a problem, not only to the individual but to others in society. Once again referred to those who are too driven, too intense and too complex (Jacobsen, 1999) or those in Dabrowski’s Intellectual overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977).

Clark’s (2002) discussion of ‘growing up gifted’ is constantly updated within each new edition. However, most of the information is obtained from the research literature, incorporating the findings of other studies. Although some anecdotal evidence is used, either as direct quotes from a gifted student, parent or teacher, or in the form of case studies, but there is little evidence of their collection as part of an empirical study. Moreover, the examples presented vary little from those used in previous editions (Clark, 1992; 1997; 1988) reducing the currency of the information provided directly from participants. Because of this and Clark’s (2002) concentration on gifted children her research has not been included on Figure 16.

Despite this criticism, the latest version (Clark, 2002) includes some discussion on the moral development of gifted individuals, although it is presented in terms of ensuring the moral development of the gifted child is not neglected, rather than discussion of the differences in moral development. However this trend coincides with commentary from other authors (Figure 16) as the moral concerns found in gifted adults are mentioned by Denko (1997), Freeman (1991; 2001), Jacobsen
(1999) and Piirto (1999) indicating this is an important area of research. In order to provide the depth of discussion required for these important dimensions of giftedness both moral and spiritual value systems will be discussed later in this chapter.

As shown in Figure 16 Corwin (2001) and Arnold (1995) both completed studies on senior students in lower socioeconomic circumstance in areas of high crime and low educational expectations. Corwin’s (2001) participants were African Americans whereas Arnold’s (1995) included both African American and Mexican students, and both studies followed the students into adulthood. Arnold’s (1995) study included high achievers as not all participants had been tested for I.Q. or designated as gifted. In both studies it was found that cultural expectations conflicted with participant success, particularly after the students had finished their standard schooling. College was thought unusual for many of the students, even the valedictorians (Arnold, 1995) within these residential and cultural areas of the U.S.A.

The findings in both studies (Arnold, 1995; Corwin, 2001) were consistent with the previous discussion of teacher expectation and deficit viewpoints. Although many of these students qualified for gifted programs the overall expectation that they would achieve college degrees was lacking. Some of their teachers were supportive, but few had supportive parents and families, and support in higher areas of educational administration was difficult to obtain. The cultural differences in expectation mentioned in the previous section would have impacted on parental and familial support as well. Corwin’s (2001) study specifically investigated at a gifted program, yet even with a specific program aimed at assisting these students few of the students were able to pass their final exams due to the pressures of full time work and personal and family issues. Corwin’s (2001) findings concur with Ford and Trotman’s (2001) findings that few students of colour are experiencing success in schools.

Studies of cultural differences in gifted students have previously been documented but very few studies deal with cultural differences in gifted adults, particularly those from cultures other than the mainstream Anglo Saxon Christian middle class. Clark
(2002) does include some discussion of cultural diverse gifted learners, specifically referring to the variance in gifted identification/presentation across cultures, and suggests more research is needed to identify giftedness in among cultural groups.

However a few studies have been completed on populations of gifted women in recent decades (Figure 17). The most significant of these is Kerr’s (1994) study of gifted women and it is cited by many authors and her findings have been used as a basis for comparison by both Wilson (1994) and Reis (1998). In terms of this study Wilson’s (1994) findings are most crucial as, thus far, she is the only published author of a study on an Australian population of gifted adults, although she concentrated entirely on women.

4.4.3.1 Gifted Women

Tremendous amounts of talent are being lost just because that talent wears a skirt
(Shirley Chisholm, cited in Reis, 1998)

Subotnik, Kassan, Summers and Wasser (1993) preceded Kerr’s study (Figure 17) and compared the female graduates from Hunter’s College to Terman’s findings. They found virtually all the graduates had successful careers and that many had Masters or Doctorate degrees (Subotnik, et al, 1993) which contrasted with the findings from other studies of gifted women. Kerr (1994) contends that certification is not important to many gifted women and invariably gifted women are frustrated by the slow pacing of the subjects at universities and colleges. Many endure the endless repetition of material, already assigned as a reading, being continually regurgitated in a lecture. They reach their peak of interest early in their courses and have no option but to endure the rest of the semester in order to meet subject requirements (Kerr, 1994).

Kerr (1994) refers to this as the “boredom-challenge-frustration continuum” (Kerr, 1994, p.35). Usually a gifted individual achieves high results in areas of interest but they are usually high regardless of subject. This is consistent with Kerr’s (1994) premise of “multipotentiality” (p.15) which is also mentioned by Kerr and Cohn
(2001) in Figure 16 as a common trait in gifted men as well. Multipotentiality refers to the fact that career switching is common amongst the gifted adult population, and although boredom is sometimes a factor, usually it is lifestyle changes or financial need that dictates career choice. Invariably the gifted individual does well in a range of fields as they adapt their potential to another area.

Kerr (1994) contends that gifted women are more able to resourcefully adapt to their environment in order to survive psychologically and, having reached this compromise, are therefore psychologically hardier and less likely to complain than other women. This is part of “psychological adjustment” (Kerr, 1994, p.169) which often means choices are justified rather than seen as opportunities lost. Quite often wanting to display attributes of perfect motherhood (Ellis & Willinsky, 1991) in the “satisfied homemaker” (Kerr, 1994, p.24) category are a sign of this psychological adaptation.

Her research on the commonalities of eminent women (Kerr, 1994), reveal some shared experiences: periods of time alone, voracious reading, absence or death of a parent and the taking of responsibility for one’s self. The feeling of being different in either positive or negative ways (Kerr, 1994) is another common trait and curiously it does not seem to be solved by being educated with other gifted girls. This point correlates with the previous discussion of the ‘gifted as other’ (Gruppetta, 2004d) and the examples from case studies where the gifted individual is still isolated from their peers.

Kerr (1994) further contends the myth of “early ripe, early rot” (Kerr, 1994, p. 94) is a gender phenomenon, relating to societal expectation of being a “good girl” (Kerr, 1994, p.20) and to do with the “Horner effect” (Kerr, 1994, p.161) or “Fear of success syndrome” (Kerr, 1994, P.161) where women perform under their ability when competing with males. Wilson (1994) refers to this idea as a “strong sense of responsibility to others and the ability to suppress ‘self’” (p.15) as an aspect of giftedness in women. Whereas Ellis and Willinsky (1991) thought it was a symptom
of empathy, of the caring aspect of women, because men seem to be so much more competitive and take losing to women so badly.

This aspect that ensures the “Traditional-career woman” (Kerr, 1994, p.25) will allow her husband’s career precedence to her own and contributes to the “Imposter syndrome” (Kerr, 1994, p. 164). This phenomenon is characteristic of self-suppression where the woman gives their boss or teacher only the answers they want to hear and the women themselves consistently disbelieve their own intelligence. An interesting aspect and one counteracted in some cases by the effects of the study itself. Kerr (1994) comments that the follow up study would be difficult as the subjects are contaminated now they know they are being studied, and the majority of the subjects either changed career or embarked on a new course of study immediately after reading the findings of the original study. Was this effect due to the reminder that they were gifted or due to Kerr’s (1994) contention that the gifted have a responsibility to develop their talent? Yet, Kerr’s (1994) opinion of “the rarer the talent, the greater the responsibility of both the individual and society to develop that talent” (p.205) places even more pressure on the gifted individual.

The question asked by one of the women in the study group “Why aren’t we the leaders of tomorrow?” (Kerr, 1994, p. 9) and referred to as a concept of being trained as an astronaut and then forced to work as a telephone operator by Walker and Mehr (1992), seems to suggest a prevailing sense of unfulfillment in the women Kerr (1994) investigated. Ellis and Willinsky (1991) agree with their comments on lost opportunities, as does Reis (1998) with her title “work left undone” and her discussion of the older women regretting lost chances to achieve. Kerr (1994) attributes many lost opportunities to the category of “overwhelmed woman” (p.43) where women juggle family responsibilities with their work and study, and notes many have simply been unable to maintain the perfectionist standards of their youth, let alone pursue careers.
Figure 17. Studies of Gifted Women

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| 1993 | Subotnik, Kassan, Summers & Wasser | Longitudinal study of gifted children from Hunter’s College – compared to Terman’s findings:  
  - Virtually all female graduates between 1948-1960 had careers, many with Master’s or Doctorate degrees |
| 1994 | Kerr | Smart girls – a study of women who had been in a gifted 6th grade class. Identified a number of areas significant to gifted women:  
  - The myth of ‘early ripe, early rot’  
  - ‘Multipotentiality’  
  - The ‘boredom-challenge-frustration continuum’  
  - The contrasting ‘good girl’/ ‘Horner effect’ or ‘Fear of success syndrome’  
  - The ‘Traditional-career woman’  
  - ‘Imposter syndrome’ |
| 1994 | Wilson | This Australian study investigated 26 women from a gifted class in a government secondary school in Sydney, N.S.W.  
  - 18 of the 26 went to Teachers’ College and two other attended University.  
  - Denial of giftedness  
  - Psychological burden of giftedness  
  - Underachievement due to the ‘Horner Effect” and ‘Imposter Phenomenon’  
  - Perfectionism  
  - Difficulty finding the right partner/spouse  
  - Few became eminent  
  - Many gifted women mothered their mothers  
  - Religion important in their teenage years but became irrelevant when older  
  - Teaching was the most common choice of occupation |
| 1998 | Reis | Draws on her own experiences and reviews literature on gifted women in discussing ‘work left undone’  
  - Relationships most central to women  
  - Creative productivity is necessary for fulfillment  
  - Gender stereotypes and prejudices are persuasive in society  
  - Many older women with feelings of regret  
  - Have the primary responsibility as family nurturer and caretaker  
  - Perfectionism  
  - Double bind of being labeled talented  
  - Lost potential in those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds  
  - Adapting to their environments  
  - Specific personality traits of determination, motivation, creativity, patience and energy.  
  - Needed to use their talents for personal satisfaction and to benefit others |

(Sources – Kerr, 1994; Wilson, 1994; Reis, 1998; Subnotik, et al., 1993).
Wilson’s (1994) Australian study found many similarities to Kerr’s (1994) findings, specifically in terms of the denial of giftedness and that there appeared to be a psychological burden to being labelled as gifted. The difficulties with imposter syndrome, perfectionism, and loneliness/isolation were also common traits (Wilson, 1994). However, Wilson (1994) noted that many gifted women ‘mothered their mothers’ and were forced into responsibility at an early age. This was often because the mother of the gifted girl was perceived to be deficit in some way and the child therefore had to care for the caretaker rather than being cared for as expected within childhood. She also noted that many gifted women had difficulty finding the right partner or spouse (Wilson, 1994), which may have added to their feeling of loneliness and isolation. Reis (1998) concurs and states that relationships are most central to women; therefore family responsibilities become the most important.

Considerable research supports the tendency of gifted females to deny their special talents and select traditional female roles (Eccles, 1985, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999). Most of the women in Kerr’s group had chosen the same careers as the women in the Terman group (Cline & Schwartz, 1999). “This group denied their giftedness and deemed it irrelevant in their lives” (Cline & Swartz, 1999, p.142). Most were married with children and saw their major obligation as raising their children and supporting the careers chosen by their husbands (Cline & Schwartz, 1999). Fleming and Hollinger (1990, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999) found that the majority of gifted females were pursuing traditional feminine areas such as education, nursing, the social sciences, and the arts. Piirto (19991, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999) “also laments the absence of women in the areas of visual arts, mathematics and science” (p.143).

Cline and Schwartz (1999) refer to special Female Phenomena that affects the growth and development of all females but are especially relevant for the gifted:

- Queen Bee Syndrome – the modern day superwomen who must perform multiples roles perfectly (Staines, Tavis, & Jayaratne, 1974, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999, p.144)
• Imposter Syndrome – where success is attributed to luck and they are fearful of being found out (Clance, 1985; Machlowitz, 1982, Warschaw, 1985, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999, p.145)
• Cinderella Complex – describing females who await a Prince Charming to come along and take care of everything (Dowling, 1981, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999, p.145)
• Perfection Complex – where gifted females establish unrealistic goals for themselves as they try to be the best at everything (Reis, 1987, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999, p.145)
• Fear of success syndrome – Gifted females become fearful of being rejected by peers or appearing undesirable to the opposite sex (Horner, 1972, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999, p.145)

In addition to these specific female phenomena Cline and Schwartz (1999) also discuss the chronic underachievement of gifted females as a pervasive characteristic, and refer to the external barriers that affect achievement. Family attitudes, cultural and environmental influences greatly impact on the expectations and achievement of gifted females, particularly those pressured to marry young, clean house and care for family members (Reis, 1985, cited in Cline & Schwartz, 1999, p.144).

The lost potential of those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Reis, 1998, Figure 17) is supported by the previous discussion of deficit viewpoints and cultural perceptions of giftedness at variance to Western expectations. Yet West (1996) also refers to the need to become bicultural as a coping strategy for gifted women. The need to leave behind the land that they are bonded to, and that has become a part of them (West, 1996), is actually referred to as a discussion of the difference between rural and urban gifted women rather than those of any particular culture, however the sentiment is the same – in order to succeed something there must be some adaptation to another cultural expectation.

Basu (1996), Napier (1996) and Diaz (1996) discuss the need for cross cultural adaptation in their studies of Indian, Native American and Puerto Rican gifted females. Each presented a variety of ways that a gifted woman must adapt to both use her gifts and also be accepted within both their own cultures and that of the Western world. Basu (1996) contends that in India social inequality between men and women continues to be imbedded in the culture. Many of the women she interviewed were practising Hindus and most were married. Although she found that
college education benefitted these women by developing their career opportunities and independence, she also found that single women fared better because they did not have the same expectations and responsibilities as married women (Basu, 1996).

In contrast Napier (1996) found that Native American women saw leadership as a great honour and “not to be taken lightly” (p.133). A leader is seen as one who is chosen and must have a heart free from selfishness and conceit (Napier, 1996). A leader is also one who has experienced life and gained wisdom (Napier, 1996). Despite this a commonality among these women is that they feel there is no place in their own tribe for them now. Many have difficulty finding a position close to their cultural home and are often criticised for not working directly with their own people (Napier, 1996). These women have made the bridge to acceptance within Western cultural forums and yet struggle to find acceptance within their own cultures.

Diaz (1996) confirms these difficulties presenting case studies highlighting the difficulty of negotiating between parental expectations and learning opportunities. As part of her adjustment to mainstream culture one girl had an intimate relationship with her boyfriend, however her parents expected her to remain a virgin until she married. Consequently she is now shunned by her parental culture (Diaz, 1996). The other young gifted Puerto Rican female challenged her parents culturally embedded practices but ultimately attempted suicide because the conflict between cultural expectations of her two worlds was too much of a challenge for her (Diaz, 1996). Aronson (2001) discusses this notion as the flip side of success, a sense of separation or alienation from families or friends, or a sense of belonging to two different worlds, again raising the need to become bicultural as part of a resilience to contrasting cultural expectations.

Resilience is mentioned but not specified in many of these studies; nevertheless resilience is an important factor for gifted women. Cuffaro (2002) identified several factors as elements of resiliency such as: autonomy; motivation; internal locus of control; dreaming; problem solving ability; optimism, social competence; intra and interpersonal awareness; sense of self-worth; and taking refuge in hobbies/talents.
Those who are gifted are capable of feeling complex emotions at a young age need to develop a profound understanding of emotions both interpersonally and intrapersonally in order to build resilience to life’s challenges (Cuffaro, 2002).

Many of the women in her study were found to be resilient because they were flexible, able to absorb information, including criticism and adapt when needed. Many used hobbies, particularly reading, as escapism to allow themselves an outlet when stressed (Cuffaro, 2002). Some were able to dissociate from problems but for most this was not a viable option, therefore a hobby was used as a distraction, often for caring too much about others (Cuffaro, 2002).

Aronson (2001) contends Asian cultures also perceive resilience as a positive force, although did not provide any empirical evidence from studies. Some women used faith/spirituality as a protective factor and many believed challenges they were facing served a higher purpose (Cuffaro, 2002). Aronson (2001) again highlights the supporting role of faith, particularly as a basis to establishing resilience in adults. This contrasts with Wilson’s (1994) finding that most gifted women in her study found religion important in their teenage years but it became irrelevant when they were older. Piirto (2003) concurs, noting that gifted adolescents “were close to the veil”, meaning that many sought religion during adolescence, yet few pursued a religious life in adulthood.

The majority of gifted women needed to use their talents for personal satisfaction and to benefit others (Reis, 1998) rather than to achieve personal success, which confirms Kerr’s (1994) contention that most gifted women are loners “without much need for recognition” (p. 23). It appears most gifted women achieve success as a by product of their service to others than by any true intention to achieve fame or eminence. Very few women are then comfortable with their success and often this is manifested as ‘imposter syndrome’ (Kerr, 1994).
4.4.3.2 Imposter Syndrome

The Imposter Phenomenon was first identified by Dr. Pau in 1985 (Wells, 2006). Many high achievers feel an internal sense of phoniness, perceiving that they are not capable or bright despite external measures that belie this perception (Wells, 2006).

The imposter syndrome is based on intense secret feelings of fraudulence in the face of success and achievement. If you suffer from Imposter Phenomenon, you believe that you don’t deserve your success; you’re a phony who has somehow ‘gotten away with it’. You aren’t the person you appear to be to the rest of the world. (Harvey & Katz, 1985, p.2).

The Imposter Syndrome is not confined to gifted women; it affects many women and almost as many men. An astonishing 93 percent of women and 70 percent of men feel like this, and 69 percent of people believe that at some time they had experienced the feeling of being an imposter (Harvey & Katz, 1985).

Wells (2006) explores various scenarios of the imposter but extends it to beyond just areas of achievement; she refers to the adopted woman who feels an imposter in her own home; the man hiding his homosexuality; the priest who has lost his faith; and the abused child, each hiding their own personal truths from the world. She also presented her own sense of the imposter:

She knew that she was an imposter, because she saw on their faces a certain ‘false modesty’. She understood why. Straight A’s on every piece of work she submitted. They didn’t understand the trepidation, for she knew that it deserved an F. It was not her best work….What was wrong with the others’ papers? Why could the marker not see what utter drivel her pontificating really was? She experienced an almost overwhelming need to throw this whole academic pursuit into the abyss, never again to be pursued. At this place of academe, they would be able to pick the phonies, the interlopers at ten paces. This seemed not to be the case and remained a constant source of mental torture…(Wells, 2006, p.2)

In this sense the manifestation of Imposter syndrome is linked to perfectionism and the need to ensure perfection. The child Wells was is unable to understand why her perception of perfection is not matched by those around her. Where she sees flaws in her work others see brilliance.
Wells (2006) discussion of the imposter incorporates a range of perspectives and extends beyond the original syndrome. There are many ways to be an imposter. Jacobsen (1999) contends the gifted are imposters because they mask their abilities when it is not safe “but we are not imposters in terms of faking our ability and intellectual power” (p.201). This contrasts drastically with the original perception of Imposter Syndrome where a person continually feels like an imposter who is not capable of doing their job (Wilson, 1994).

Jacobsen (1999) contends that imposter syndrome within gifted adults arises when it is necessary to mask the gifted creative enthusiastic selves, when ideas are channelled according to the unspoken rules of ‘not too far’, ‘not too different’, ‘not too intense’, and ‘not too fast’. She cites one of her participants as stating there was a guilt to being gifted: “I realised I’ve felt guilty for most of my life for being smart and creative, like it wasn’t fair for me to have the talents I was given” (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 191). Jacobsen (1999) further contends that true imposterism is the perpetuation of the false self, the one who covertly agrees to conceal the true self in an assumed identity. “Ironically, in one vital sense we are imposters if we continue to swap the call to actualize our potential for a gilded invitation to a neatly prescribed existence” (Jacobsen, 1999, p.201).

Wells (2006) contends the imposter generally feels a need to look good to others; is an introvert; came from a conflictual home which was barren emotionally; and experiences both fear of failure and fear of success. The double edged sword was that success would shatter the familiar, and failure was familiar, and to be liked and appreciated by others meant standing out and being different, again removing the familiar from the world (Wells, 2006). This discussion relates more to the gifted individual hiding their gift than those terrified of being found out for being inadequate, yet many of the gifted feel inadequate because they are different to the norm. The need to fit in, to belong, and the desire to be left alone were at odds with each other (Wells, 2006). “Knowledge is not a free gift. It comes at a high price. The price is pain. The pain of always being different. The pain of remaining outside…”
(Wells, 2005, p.2). Again this refers to the previously discussed issues of the gifted individual in trying to fit in, and masking their true selves in order to do so.

Wells (2006) finalises her dialogue on Imposter syndrome with these questions:

In which world was she the Imposter?...Was she an imposter because she walked in worlds that did not honour and value each other, that sneered at or ignored one another? The task of walking in different worlds was fraught with tensions and yet she had chosen to do so...She would always know the feeling of not fitting in, being different, by birth she was indeed an imposter (Wells, 2006, p. 2).

Even as she asks these questions Wells (2006) moves beyond the traditional forms of Imposter syndrome to encompass all who transect worlds and must try to fit in.

**4.5 VALUES**

One of the things that can cause dissention amongst those trying to fit into broader society is the difference in value systems between cultural and religious groups and the expectations of mainstream Anglo Saxon Christian society such as Australia. As previously mentioned moral, religious and spiritual values can be integral to some gifted individuals, therefore some discussion of the underlying principles of moral and religious values is necessary to understand the implications of these elements of conflict or achievement amongst gifted individuals.

**4.5.1 VALUE EDUCATION**

With the number of world, national and local events in the news that could be classified as tragic, thoughtless or inhumane, people are questioning whether educators are doing enough to help young people form values and morals needed to be contributing members of society (Reetz & Jacobs, 1999:208).

The current trend in Australian education is to emphasise the teaching of values in schools. At present the debate centres on the issue of whose values we are teaching rather than identifying the capability of students to assimilate value systems as they relate to their developmental stages (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2007). A comparative analysis of the learning theories of Piaget (Berk, 1999; 2006, McInerney. & McInerney, 1998; 2006), Erikson (1968; 1950), Kohlberg (1981; 1984), Fowler (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001; Shafranske, 1996), and Oser (Oser & Scarlett, 1991;
Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001) reveals that most students are only capable of absorbing certain value concepts at particular stages of development. Further research into this area would be useful to inform educationalists designing a value based curriculum in schools.

Although values have been a part of curriculum areas for some time, and some are actually written into the New South Wales Syllabuses (Board of Studies, 1998, 1999), there have been calls from politicians and communities for schools to become more active in moral and value education (Marsh, 2001). In response to community demand the Australian Government recently funded a study in Values Education. As part of the study, 69 schools each received Australian Government grants of up to $7,000 for innovative, values education projects. As a result of the study the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, 2003) published ‘The Values Education Study Report’ (DEST, 2003:163) which identified 10 common values that should be taught in Australian schools. These are: Tolerance and understanding; Respect; Responsibility; Social Justice; Excellence; Care; Inclusion and Trust; Honesty; Freedom; and Being ethical.

It is acknowledged that these points should be considered ‘discussion starters’ in Australian schools as individual school communities differ across Australia (DEST, 2003). They have also published another document, “Values Education in Action: Case Studies from 12 Values Education Schools” (DEST, 2004) to highlight the range of activities that can contribute to values education. Yet, values are a private, individual matter and cannot be part of a curriculum. If schools promote any particular value they are indoctrinating students (Noddings, 2002).

Rokeach (1973, cited in Gilbert, 1996) defines a value as an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct (being courageous, honest, loving, obedient, etc) or a state of existence (peace, equality, freedom, pleasure, happiness) is personally and socially desirable. Values are generally regarded as more enduring, general and abstract than say, attitudes, which apply to particular objects or events and are seen as more changeable (Gilbert, 1996). Value judgments are statements that rate things
in term of their worth, implying or derived from underlying values (Gilbert, 1996). A value is an idea that people feel is worthwhile. Values form the basis of people’s beliefs, attitudes and their behaviours (Lovat, et al. 2000). Values are criteria which we use in making judgments about certain things (Marsh, 2001). For example: Aesthetic values relate to beauty, art and music, whereas Moral values relate to actions towards others, such as compassion, equity and reliability, and/or religious beliefs. Values and attitudes relate to affect – the feeling component of human behaviour- but they are not wholly separate from our thinking. Values are more stable guides to our behaviour and decisions than are attitudes “which are predispositions to reacting in a particular way to some stimulus” (Marsh, 2001, p.135).

Even so, values can be considered subjective to individual cultures. Although “Australia is a nation of cultural and racial diversity” (Lovat, Follers, Parnell, Hill, & Allard, 2000, p. 25), the dominant culture in Australia, like most Western Societies, is that of the Anglo Saxon middle class (Partington, 2004; Lovat et al, 2000), therefore those are the values and expectations that are taught. When children first enter the Australian education system they bring with them five years of learning mediated by their parents, the media and other socialising agents (Partington, 2004). Although there are broad similarities among children from similar backgrounds, on entry no two children are the same, and some are very different in what they have already learnt (Partington, 2004).

In schools the informal education that occurs is referred to as the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Partington, 2004). Although the product of social and historical forces, like the overt designed curriculum, it is inaccessible and difficult to subject to public scrutiny (Partington, 2004). The hidden curriculum is explained as “the tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes one simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools (Apple, 1979, cited in Partington, 2004).
Some teachers using values clarification education seek, with difficulty, to remain neutral in classrooms discussions by offering comparable respect to student expressions of opposed values. In doing so, teachers fail to discriminate between the ethical substance of the various value stages. Value neutrality becomes “an oxymoronic phrase” (Hamberger, 1997, cited in Marsh, 2001:140). Teachers inevitably transmit morals therefore they should do a responsible job (Noddings, 2002).

Since teachers cannot avoid imparting values in one way or another in the normal course of activities, moral education in some sense is unavoidable. Thus, the basic question is not whether, but how, it should be carried out (Carbone, 1991, cited in Marsh, 2001, p.136).

If teachers do not explicitly express the values that they find important for their students, the impression is that all values are of equal worth. Therefore, because of the ‘neutral position of the teacher, students obtain no indications about what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’ (Sockett, 1992 cited in Veugelers, 2000).

Historically schools have been assigned a central role in the education of citizens, yet schools have not been effective in this role due to patterns of discrimination against minority students (Cogan, 2001). Students from socially and culturally different backgrounds can be disadvantaged by the hidden curriculum. Students can become alienated and excluded from participation in the mainstream of schooling by the language of schooling; by the way teachers interact with them, the values promoted by schools and the expectations for behaviour (Partington, 2004). Therefore the teaching of values produces bias and conflict rather than meet the aim of producing objective knowledge (Gilbert, 1996).

Noddings (2002) contends that character education, in the ways of the early 20th century can no longer be used due to the multicultural values present in current society. Also the emphasis on critical thinking about value systems offended many parents, who perhaps did not wish their children to analyse the values just follow them (Noddings, 2002). Malin (1990) agrees and provides an example of the autonomy of Aboriginal children not being acceptable in most classrooms, where
these children are expected to be obedient without question, yet within their own culture they are encouraged to think and problem solve.

4.5.2 MORAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Kohlberg’s Moral stages are probably the most well known to educators. Kohlberg’s stages one and two are present right through to adolescence, with some moving into stages three or possibly four by young adulthood (McInerney & McInerney, 1998; 2006, Berk, 1999; 2006). However, the work of Piaget, Erickson, Oser and Fowler also provide theories to inform educators, as shown in Figure 18.

The ages/stages used for Figure 18 are guidelines only, they reflect the earliest possible age the theorists suggest the stages can be reached, as the sources used for the table conflict in exact interpretation of the age each stage can be attained. However, some generalities can be found across theories of development:

4.5.2.1 Ages/Stages: 0-6

The theorists differ in explanation and terminology, however, it is agreed that throughout this exploratory stage children imitate the actions of others (Piaget, 1971; 1965); are concerned with the possibility of ‘shame’ and doubt about their capacity to do things – followed by ‘guilt’ if children feel they are being silly or engaging in a ‘wrong’ activity (Erikson, 1968; 1950, Barry & King, 1998; Berk, 1999; 2006, McInerney & McInerney, 1998; 2006); they obey authority and consider actions in terms of punishment or reward (Kohlberg, 1981; 1984); and faith is drawn from early interaction with parents and are an expression of the support they have received (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001).

Selman (1980) contends that at this age children recognize that their self and another can have different thoughts and feelings, but they frequently confuse the two because they only have a limited idea of what other people could be thinking and feeling. Dabrowski (cited in Piirto, 1999) agrees with Piaget in terms of egocentrism, lack of self-responsibility, empathy and self-examination being representative of early stages
of development, however Dabrowski does not confine his level 1 to an actual age group. Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration applies more to adults than children, and discusses adults in level 1 as “attaining power in society by ruthless means” (cited in Piirto, 1999, p.351). Yet when Dabrowski’s levels of attainment are compared with other theories of value and spiritual development it is possible to see the similarities between phases of development through both childhood and adulthood.

4.5.2.2 Ages/Stages: 6-12

As Figure 18 shows in this stage children use logic to solve ‘hands on’ or concrete problems and think or work through a sequence from beginning to end (Piaget, 1971;1965); they have the ability to develop competence at useful skills and tasks but risk inferiority when meeting negative experiences which undermine their feelings of competence (Erikson,1968; 1950; Berk, 1999; McInerney & McInerney, 1998). They understand the need to be fair and share but their individual needs are paramount, therefore will bribe, cheat or steal if not caught and no-one gets hurt in the process (Kohlberg, 1981; 1984; Berk, 1999; McInerney & McInerney, 1998). In terms of their religious beliefs God has ultimate power, the individual has little effect on events (Oser & Scarlett, 1991; Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001), and children begin to perceive ideas in literal terms and their beliefs are often derived from their parents or authority figures (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). Children begin to understand that different perspectives may result and are more able to ‘step into another person’s shoes’ (Selman, 1980 cited in Berk, 2006, p. 466) and reflect on that person’s thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Again Dabrowski (Piirto, 1999) does not attribute an age to his second stage where individuals are influenced primarily by their social group and/or mainstream values.
Figure 18. Moral and religious value stages by theorists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>PIAGET</th>
<th>ERIKSON</th>
<th>KOHLBERG</th>
<th>OSER</th>
<th>FOWLER</th>
<th>SELMAN</th>
<th>DABROWSKI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>Sensorimotor</td>
<td>Trust vs. Mistrust &amp; Autonomy vs. Shame/self doubt</td>
<td>Stage 1: Punishment and obedience</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Primal Faith &amp; Intuitive Projective Faith</td>
<td>Social Informational</td>
<td>Primary Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>Concrete operational</td>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>Stage 2: Individualism, instrumentality and exchange</td>
<td>Stage 1 – The ultimate being does it</td>
<td>Mythic/Literal Faith</td>
<td>Self-reflective</td>
<td>Unilevel Disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>Formal operational</td>
<td>Identity vs. Role confusion</td>
<td>Stage 3: Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and conformity</td>
<td>Stage 2 – The ultimate being does it if...</td>
<td>Synthetic conventional Faith</td>
<td>Third-party</td>
<td>Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>Formal Operational</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
<td>Stage 4: Social system and conscience – system defined rules and roles</td>
<td>Stage 3 – The ultimate being and humankind do...</td>
<td>Individuative-Reflective Faith</td>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>Organised Multilevel Disintegration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4.5.2.3 Ages/Stages: 12-15

Children in this age group (Figure 18) use logic to think about abstract ideas and terms (Piaget, 1971; 1965). Erikson (1968; 1950) contends this is the stage where adolescents form their own identities, morals values, religious and cultural ideas and no longer choose only their parents beliefs. But identity/role confusion occurs when an individual is unable to refine their own beliefs or are in clear conflict with significant others and unable to resolve this conflict (Erikson, 1968;1950; Berk, 1999; McInerney & MacInerney, 1998). They are morally aware of shared feelings, agreements and expectations taking primacy over individual interests but behaviour conforms strictly to the fixed conventions of the society in which one lives (Kohlberg, 1981; 1984).

God is still all being, all powerful who punishes or rewards, however can now be influenced by prayers, good deeds and adherence to the rules (Oser & Scarlett, 1991; Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). Yet, children can only now begin to think hypothetically given their cognitive development. They can evaluate two people’s perspectives simultaneously, as both a disinterested spectator and in terms of comparisons to societal values (Selman, 1980 cited in Berk, 2006). This process occurs in conjunction with the young teenager’s identity and becomes a unique set of beliefs, values and commitments (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). Dabrowski (Piirto, 1999) refers to a multilevelness arising in this stage where a person tries to bring their own behaviour to a higher standard. There is a “dissatisfaction with what one is” (Piirton, 1999, p. 351) and this struggle with a perception of self that conflicts with a “personality ideal” (Piirto, 1999, p.351) can cause existential despair, depression and anxiety (Piirto, 1999). According to Dabrowski (cited in Piirto, 1999) it is not unusual for some gifted teenagers to become concerned with the conflict between how things are and how they should be.

4.5.2.4 Ages/Stages: 15-18

During this period young adults develop the ability to share with others and care about other people selflessly (Figure 18). If intimacy with others is not established with friends or partner, a sense of isolation and lack of intimacy develops (Erikson, 1968;
1950; McInerney & McInerney, 1998). Morally they adhere to system defined rules and roles, showing respect for authority. However, they can resist peer pressure to uphold laws for the stability of the community (Kohlberg, 1981; 1984). In terms of religion, it is now assumed that God is separate from the world and has a specific realm of action. An individual’s will is crucial to details of individual and social matters (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001), and in late adolescence, previously held beliefs and values are now questioned, and become consciously chosen and critically supported commitments (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). Young adults also understand that third-party perspectives can be influenced by systems within larger societal values (Selman, 1980, cited in Berk, 2006). In Dabrowki’s Theory of Positive Disintegration an individual in this fourth stage should be well on the road to self-actualisation and show high levels of responsibility and leadership (Piirto, 1999).

4.5.2.5 The higher stages

In the higher stages (not shown in Figure 18) there is greater variation of the age in which each stage is reached as much depends on personal experience. For example Erikson’s ‘Generativity versus. self-absorption’ where individuals become more involved with things beyond their immediate families, and concern for the future of the world and successive generations result (McInerney & MacInerney, 1998; 2006), is described as occurring in childbearing years, yet most have completed this by middle ages (Lemme, 2002). Again, Erikson’s Senior adulthood stage of ‘Integrity vs. despair’, where integrity characterises the life journey as an adventure, and is measured by individual contentment, may not be specific to seniors. Despair is characterised by lost opportunity and direction (McInerney & MacInerney, 1998; 2006), yet this stage could be reached by middle age rather than the senior years in some individuals. Given the estimates of advanced moral development presented by Lovecky (1997) this stage could be reached by gifted teenagers, well beyond the expected level of moral development.

In terms of religious and moral development each has an adult phase and a higher stage which is considered more difficult to attain. Oser’s ‘Humankind does through an Ultimate beings doing’ is only attained at Adulthood. God is seen as the base of the
world and of every individual’s existence. Individuals see themselves with a direct mediated relationship with God (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). But the highest stage where ‘The Ultimate being inhabits each moment’ which is realized through humane action, as cited through examples of the actions of Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mahatma Ghandi, is considered rarely attainable (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001; Bouchet, 2004). Equally Fowler’s ‘Conjunctive Faith’ where adults are able to embrace and integrate opposites and polarities into their lives, therefore appreciating their own traditions and beliefs and those of others (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001) is considered an aspect of maturity. But the final stage of ‘Universalizing Faith’ is also considered difficult to realise. The self is decentralised and grounded with oneness with God. The focus is overcoming division and oppression, and identifying with the concerns of others, again citing Ghandi as an example (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001).

Likewise the higher moral stages as outlined by Kohlberg (1981;1984) depend on maturity. In stage five an individual is aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts. Laws are seen as human inventions and modifiable rather than sacrosanct, they can be challenged as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ through court systems. Whereas in Stage six individuals consider circumstances and the situation, the orientation is to moral choice, although law is important, moral conflict is resolved in terms of broader moral principles, it may be moral at times to disobey laws, and decisions are based on one’s own conscience rather than external factors (Kohlberg, 1981;1984; Berk, 1999 McInerney. & McInerney, 1998). In Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration the highest emotional level is attained when the struggle for self mastery has been won and life is lived in service to others (Piirto, 1999). Again this fits with the ideals of the other theories yet Dabrowski asks more and contends that an individual reaching this stage lives “according to the highest, most universal principles of loving – compassionate regard for the worth of every individual” (Piirto, 1999, p. 351).
4.5.2.6 Implications of Value Theories

These theories have been criticised as moral reasoning and its teaching and/or assessment involves explanation, hence the need for language in order to discuss the ideas and concepts forming the opinion. It is not the choice that decides one’s moral category, it is the explanation of ‘why’ one chose that solution, therefore students with inadequate language skills are judged at lower levels (McInerney & McInerney, 1998; 2006). Kohlberg (1981; 1984) also emphasized it was the ‘way an individual reasons about the dilemma’ not the ‘content of response’ that determines moral maturity. For example Piaget’s ‘heteronymous morality’ (5-9 years), where it is seen as morally worse to break a dozen eggs by helping a parent with groceries than to break one by hurling it at the cat, rather than ‘Autonomous morality’ (10 years and over) where morality is determined by the intentions of the actor (to help or harm) and by the meaning of the action in context of the greater good (Peterson, 2004).

Both Piaget and Kohlberg’s theories have been criticised in comparison to non-Western cultures (Berk, 1999; 2006; McInerney & McInerney, 1998; 2006). Gilligan (1982) also criticised Kohlberg’s theory as too masculine, and contended that females are more interested in ‘care perspective’ than ‘justice perspective’ and as such women may be represented at lower moral stages than men due to the traditional measurement. Additionally, research indicates that moral reasoning advances in late adolescence and early adulthood occur only as long as the person remains in school (Speicher, 1994 cited in Berk, 1999), indicating the need for open discussion of moral issues in order to advance moral reasoning.

Turiel (1983) and Nucci (1987) criticize Piagetian and Kohlbergian approaches because they confuse conventional rules with moral imperatives (McInerney & McInerney, 2006). Moral transgressions are viewed as wrong, irrespective of the presence of governing rules, and are considered more serious than violations of convention which only violate an existing rule or standard (Turiel, 1983 & Nucci, 1987, cited in McInerney & McInerney, 2006). And acts performed for moral reasons are considered much more positively than those performed because of convention (Turiel, 1983 &
Nucci, 1987, cited in McInerney & McInerney, 2006). Additionally, an individual’s beliefs and assumptions concerning the relevant aspects of reality will influence their interpretation of an event. For example:

The belief that a foetus is a person makes abortion comparable with murder. On the other hand, if a foetus is not considered human life, then abortion is seen as a personal choice that does not involve a moral transgression (Wainryb & Turiel, 1993, cited in McInerney & McInerney, 2006, p. 517).

As this example shows it is possible to have very different opinions of the same event. It is for these reasons that people can have so many different moral perspectives on the same act or event (Wainryb & Turiel, 1993, cited in McInerney & McInerney, 2006, p. 517). However Pagnin and Andreani (2000) argue that moral decisions are situational, and the hypothetical decision made on the basis of a question of morality is not the same as the decision made when really faced with a moral dilemma. For instance, they cite evidence that the hypothetical decision on whether a woman should have an abortion, is contradicted by the actual decision when faced with an unwanted pregnancy or diagnosis of disability in the foetus (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000). Therefore their argument is toward moral development being judged by the actual actions of participants in real life situations throughout their lifetimes, rather than presenting hypothetical situations for discussion and evaluation. Newell (2003) concurs, morality should be judged by ‘deed not word’, it does not matter what an individual says they will do – it is their action that shows their true value system.

These viewpoints contrast sharply with the teaching of moral values. The teaching strategy for moral growth is often based on presenting a moral dilemma (Marsh, 2001). For example, in the Heinz Dilemma, should destitute parents steal costly, life-saving medicine for their critically ill child after conventional ways of obtaining the medicine have failed? Students are encouraged to probe this moral problem and associated issues, and asked to justify the choice they would make. For example: a universal consequence test: ‘Can we accept the consequences if everyone in such a situation were to act according to the value being tested?’ This idea is then related to the moral dilemma previously raised: ‘if everyone stole the medication they needed could society continue to function?’ (Marsh, 2001).
The issue then becomes in whose society? “One of the problems with this approach is that it is hard to create appropriate dilemmas. Taken out of cultural context, the dilemma stories can become morally dubious and have little educational value” (Marsh, 2001, p.139). This is where ‘what’ values we teach and ‘whose’ values we are teaching become intricately connected (Gruppetta, 2005). Children up until the age of at least twelve years old reflect the values of their parents or authority figures, for instance their teachers. If the values systems of the parents and the teachers do not coincide they are actually working against one another (Gruppetta, 2005). And what of the gifted child who may be working beyond the expected moral/spiritual level? (Lovecky, 1997) Their experiences of this type of moral dilemma may result in an estrangement from peers who are unable to understand their viewpoint.

Gibbs (2003) regards ‘postconventional’ moral reasoning as a highly reflective metacognitive process where people grapple with existential issues, such as “why go on living? Why be moral?” (Gibbs, 2003, cited in Berk, 2006, p.500). He challenges the assumption that higher stages can only be reached by those studying philosophy, and contends those individuals facing soul-searching life crises, or spiritual awakenings can generate ethical insights into the meaning of existence, thereby undergoing a moral transformation (Gibbs, 2003). Gibbs (2003) argues that ‘postconventional morality’ should not be the standard by which other levels are judged immature. The higher stages are not based on social conformity, and therefore ‘conventional’, they require profound moral construction and an understanding of ideal reciprocity as the basis for relationships between people (Gibbs, 2003, cited in Berk, 2006).

It must also be noted that these value development theories are all interrelated. Bee and Bjorklund (2000) explain that Kohlberg’s work is rooted in Piaget’s, Fowler’s theory is an extension of Kohlberg’s, as Oser’s is an extension of Fowler’s and Erikson’s, and so on. They are also related to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (McInerney & McInerney, 1998; 2006). All these theorists agree that early adulthood/late adolescence involve a shift from external to internal guides, whilst adapting to the roles, responsibilities and relationships society impose upon them, yet none consider the maturity of a gifted child who may be capable of moral individuality at a younger age (Gruppetta, 2005).
Additionally, Kohlberg’s highest stage of morality, Fowler’s higher stage of spirituality, and Dabrowski’s highest level of emotional development are considered rarely reached, that is few individuals are able to attain them. However, in light of the gifted individuals tendency to mask themselves and hide their gifted characteristics (Gardner, 2003; Peterson, 2001; Subotnik & Arnold, 1999; Tolan, 1998) there is a real possibility that the gifted also hide their level of emotional, moral and spiritual ability, by keeping their own counsel and not sharing their true viewpoints. Moreover Dabrowski contends that those individuals with strong emotional, intellectual and imaginational overexcitabilities seem to have the greatest potential for attaining the higher levels of moral development (Dabrowski, 1972).

Lovecky’s (1997) work with gifted children suggests both moral and spiritual actualisation can occur much earlier than suggested by any of these theorists. It is therefore likely that gifted adults can attain the higher stages suggested by the theorists and investigating their moral and spiritual values in depth would provide invaluable insight to the fields of both gifted and value education.

### 4.6 THE ‘NEW’ INTELLIGENCES

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed (Albert Einstein).

The ‘new’ intelligences refer to those not yet included in Gardner’s multiple intelligences. As previously mentioned Gardner’s (1999) position in regard to spiritual and moral intelligence is complex. Because it is difficult to define the content of spiritual intelligence, Gardner preferred the term ‘existential intelligence’ as it removes the connotations of spirituality and permits exploration of multifarious guises of an intelligence that explores the nature of existence (Smith, 2008). Therefore existential intelligence explores both religious and spiritual matters, and is concerned with ‘ultimate issues’ (Gardner, 1999, cited in Smith, 2008). Discussion of spiritual, existential and moral intelligence is pertinent to defining ‘Existential intelligence’, as all relate to a concern with ‘ultimate issues’ (Smith, 2008). But, although Gardner (1999) argued that it
scored well on the criteria, empirical evidence is scarce so Gardner has yet to include it as a ninth intelligence. He has expressed his opinion thusly: “I find the phenomenon perplexing enough and the distance from the other intelligences vast enough to dictate prudence - at least for now” (Gardner, 1999, cited in Smith, 2008).

This decision by Gardner has not restricted other authors from exploring the possibilities permitted by moral, emotional, empathic, and spiritual intelligences. The difficulty lies in defining each intelligence as a separate entity from the others as all have elements of both intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences (Gardner, 1999), and appear to have areas that overlap each other. Goleman (1995) refutes a “narrow view of intelligence” (p. xi), that is genetic and unchangeable in his work on ‘Emotional Intelligence’ and contends that this singular viewpoint is the theme of much of the research presented on intelligence. However, “since the word ‘intelligence’ has strong emotional and cultural impact, it is worth considering how and where it may be used” (Arnold, 2005, p. 26).

Within psychology one of the rationales for indentifying a ‘new’ intelligence is to document its partial or complete independence from known intelligences. Mayer and Salovey (1995, cited in Arnold, 2005) contend that most intelligences are moderately related to each other, therefore this allows for a moderate amount of difference amongst intelligences in the same persons. Arnold (2005) contends that the real value of identifying a complex, multi layered intelligence such as ‘empathic intelligence’ will encourage those who possess some aspect of these intelligences to understand and differentiate their functioning. Arnold (2005) uses the example of intelligence being initially thought to be similar to having a good memory, therefore rote learning was over emphasized in classrooms, whereas more recently intelligence is thought to be a manifestation of complex functioning.

Kincheloe (1999) argues that one of the ways to rethink intelligence is to expand the boundaries of what is called sophisticated thinking:

When such boundaries are expanded, those who had been excluded from the community of the non-intelligent seem to cluster around categories based on race (the nonwhites),
When we open up the possibilities of a variety of intelligences, as they may apply to each individual, such as Gardner’s (1999) work on multiple intelligences, it is easier to define each area of the ‘new’ intelligences as a separate entity. The complex phenomenon of creating distinctive meanings from interpersonal and intrapersonal engagements is cued by mind-sets open to phenomenological experience and the emotional risk-taking involved (Arnold, 2005, p.29). The facets of moral, emotional, empathic and spiritual intelligences have their underpinnings in intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, yet each present a different aspect of strength, or intelligence. “The ancients referred to wisdom as the ‘thinking heart’. The thinking heart means that intelligence is not just limited to the brain” (Miller, 2006, p.153).

4.6.1 MORAL INTELLIGENCE

Morality is not something you can opt out of; it is incumbent upon all autonomous agents. Only those who cannot understand or obey its commands – members of other species, very young children, the insane, and more controversially, those suffering from impulse controls and disorders and addictions – are excused from its demands and then only because they cannot be expected to conform to it, not because it is not true for them (Levy, 2004, p.43).

There is a tangled web of morality that winds through conceptions of giftedness (Freeman, 2005). The assumed relationship between morality and giftedness, specifically that the higher the I.Q. the more moral the scorer (Galton, 1869 cited in Freeman, 2005), weaves through much of the Western literature although little empirical evidence is available to support this view. Yet Silverman (1994) contends that “in the substitution of a mosaic of talents for children, we have lost the entire moral dimension of giftedness” (cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 349). Silverman (Silverman, 1994, cited in Piirto, 1999) argues that high moral values require a complex organism with a facility for abstract reasoning. The gifted individual is more able to achieve this level because “high intelligence is synonymous with abstract reasoning, ability and complexity of thought” (Silverman, 1994, cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 349). Silverman (1994, cited in
Piirto, 1999) also equates asynchrony with moral understanding: “Asynchrony, intensity and moral sensitivity are inherent in the experience of giftedness” (p. 349), whether or not the gifted individual demonstrates specific talents in that domain.

In contrast others contend the gifted are more morally fragile. Gross (2004) attributes the difficulties in social development faced by gifted children at least partially to marked differences in moral development between the highly gifted and age peers. Lovecky (1997) again refers to highly moral children as more fragile and in need of care and understanding. Both Gross (2004), Lovecky (1997) and Silverman (1994) assume the gifted child to be more morally developed compared with their age peers, and more likely to feel moral decision personally. Therefore, for gifted children moral decisions and the resulting consequences are especially important.

To confirm this premise Gross (1998) relates a story about a 9 year old boy called ‘Leon’ who writes to his Principal and collects signatures from other school students to try and solve a problem with a bully. It should also be noted the ‘bully’ was not intimidating Leon, however, he was causing problems for his teacher which meant Leon’s learning was effected (Gross, 1998). The petition was met with public humiliation for Leon, the Principal in fact “Shot the messenger” (Gross, 1998, p.72) and Leon asked the question “How can society work when people who are trusted with power abuse it?” (Gross, 1998, p.72). A hard lesson to learn at 9 years of age, Leon may never again try to change a situation, unless he makes a conscious decision to face the consequences because he is unable to bear the situation without protest.

Tolan (1998) concurs and uses a fable written by Alan Arkin, “The Lemming Condition”, as a metaphor for the isolation of the gifted asynchronous child whose level of moral development is out of sync not only with age peers but with human culture itself. In this fable one lemming, Bubber, asks why? And thus begins his very un-lemming-like personal journey which results in his refusal to follow the others. Tolan (1998) uses this metaphor to describe the highly moral gifted child and contends these children ask the big questions early, challenging adults to defend the way the world
works but find that adults for the most part fail to answer the questions or even take them seriously.

As these highly moral gifted children struggle to make sense of the world on their own, they can doubt the integrity and intelligence of adults, and challenge the world as it is (Tolan 1998). They must then engage in an effort to define self either as part of or as separate from the world in which they live, from which they feel isolated and alienated, and yet with which they also have a powerful sense of connection (Tolan 1998). Tolan (1998) contends the psychic conflict may lead some of these children to give up on life, on humanity or on self. In contrast children who are able to make the choice in favour of their own, unique vision, can lead to spiritual growth for the child and moral evolution for humanity (Tolan 1998).

Gifted children are considered to have higher morals, and are considered to be more morally fragile in the sense they will react to perceived ‘unfairness’, particularly in educational situations, but this is difficult to assess (Freeman, 2001). The questions asked of moral situations are weighted to the answers society expects to hear. Specifically “you know the answer you are supposed to pick, and if you want the mark you play the game; your taste is irrelevant” (Freeman, 2001, p. 62) supporting the notion that the gifted would mask their level of moral ability by selecting the expected response. Freeman (2001) also reported many gifted individuals had encountered difficulties within their relationships with others due to their high moral standards. Although the majority of the participants set high standards for themselves and tried to reach these ideals honestly and wholeheartedly, they found it brought them relationship problems. Many found others could not live with these high standards, and were conflicted by what “they could so clearly see, and others could not” (Freeman, 2001, p. 63).

Denko (1997) discussed these issues with the participants from Mensa and found that most felt doubtful that I.Q. had any great bearing on morality. Specifically one participant said that “Morality is a matter of humanity, not intellect. The German oven
lighters were of all levels of intellect and intelligence. Same for murderers and rapists” (Denko, 1997, p.97). This participant felt the highly intelligent are either ‘highly moral or amoral’ and any discussion of gifted individuals must include those that commit crimes and are “smart enough to get away with it” (Denko, 1997, p.95). One female physician felt a ‘noblesse oblige’ whereby “her giftedness ought to benefit others” (Denko 1997, p. 29) concurring with Reis’ (1998) finding that the majority of gifted women needed to use their gift to benefit others.

For women, morality centres not on rights and rules but on interpersonal relationships and the ethics of compassion and care, which makes abstract solutions to hypothetical situations difficult (Gilligan, 1982, cited in Crain, 1985). As Gilligan (1982) sees it transitions between the moral stages for women are fuelled by changes in the sense of self rather than changes in cognitive development. However she focuses on an abortion debate rather than the traditional Heinz dilemma.

Wong (2000) contends the correct answer to the Heinz Dilemma is that Heinz should steal the drug to save his wife because preserving human life is a higher moral obligation than preserving property. Interestingly, this is considered the correct response at Stage 5 of Kohlberg’s levels, Kohlberg (1981) himself assumes there is a higher level at Stage 6 of moral development but does discuss a correct response for that level of development. This concept relates to Freeman’s (2001) statement that the gifted would give the expected response, and the expected response is only at Kohlberg’s Stage 5, again hiding any higher moral conceptualisations.

It is expected that at Kohlberg’s stage 6 of moral development that an individual’s conscience would be their guide. But Wong (2000) also says that our conscience cannot be an infallible guide to behaviour because it works according to the principles we have adopted. To prove the point he cites this example:

A vivid illustration of our conscience not being an infallible guide is the story of the Sawi people of New Guinea. In the early 1960s they were cannibals and their heroes were not those who took the greatest number of heads, but those most deceitful in befriending their victims before taking their heads. Friendship before betrayal would not prick their conscience because treachery was an ideal. When missionaries told them the story of
Christ’s life they saw Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus, as the real hero (Richardson, cited in Wong, 2000).

In all areas cultural expectations colour the perceptions of those raised within that culture. In some societies “morality is itself a form of giftedness” (Freeman, 2005, p.83) “and high moral standards” (Adimin, 2002, cited in Freeman, 2005, p.93) is measured as a form of success in some countries, such as the previously cited example of Muslim Malaysia. Despite this use of moral standards as a measurement of success in Muslim Malaysia, again it raises the question – whose morals are they? The specific moral code is not detailed, and the morality expected of Muslims in Malaysia may not be concurrent with those expected in other countries or cultures. Culture also influences the type of gifted behaviours that are nurtured and fostered, reinforcing the identification and development of abilities (Haernandez de Han, 2000) therefore if morality is not valued within a culture it may not be developed.

Cole (2000) discusses morality and moral leadership as more situational. Although he includes discussion of Ghandi and other recognized moral leaders he presents the story of a simple bus driver who chose to make a difference. “Al Jones leadership had emerged through an accident and by instinct” (Coles, 2000, p.206). When the determination of a meeting of parents concerned with ensuring their children had access to better schooling began to crumble through lack of a way to ensure these children attended a better school he simply stood up and said “Let’s Go” (Coles, 2000, p.207). As a result he became the bus driver for a group of African American children in Boston in the late 1960s who drove them to and from previously all white schools.

In taking on this task he provided moral leadership for every child that he drove because they all knew he had to find time to drive them right across the city, and then return to pick them up, and “then he worked into the night to make up for the time he lost on the job” (Coles, 2000, p.206). Explaining his choices to the children he said “It is important to be busy…but if you don’t find time to change the world, then you’re busy keeping it the way it is” (Cole, 2000, p.213). His role evolved to riding a city bus with the children to ensure they got there safely and eventually to driving another bus, again with African
American children to a white school in South Boston, but this time into the heart of protests and riots. In his own words he explains that he knew the risk he was taking:

Why, why take the risk? I always answered myself in my heart with one word: because. I was using shorthand, I was telling myself I knew the score, knew what was at stake, and so I couldn’t turn my back on myself – on my own knowledge, you could say. If you can trick yourself, maybe you avoid some troubles, but hey, you’re giving up on what you know is right, and I’ll say this: I’d rather go thought a neighbourhood mob cussing away at me for being a ‘dirty nigger’ than sitting in my own chair or lying on my bed, and realising I chickened out and let those haters rule my mind. That’s the victory they want, and that’s the victory I won’t give them. The ministers, they told me I’ve been a good man, and I’ve been ‘a leader’ – well, I don’t know. It’s not for me to call myself fancy, uppity words. I know my faults,. But now I can sleep, and if I’d backed down, back then, over this integration thing, I think I’d be wasted by now, for lack of sleep. So when I asked myself why, why I got into all this, and spoke up, and kept showing up to drive the bus in the first place, and later to go to South Boston with the young people –the answer was to get my sleep, and so I could look at myself in the mirror and not want to run away in shame. (Coles, 2000, p.211)

This man would not be classified as gifted by any accepted definition, he had little schooling and worked as a building caretaker, yet he was clearly gifted in moral intelligence and displaying moral leadership, becoming a moral exemplar for his community.

Cole (1986) also relates the stories of some of the children involved in the fight to integrate schooling and refers to the child as moral protagonist or antagonist. He cites the story of Ruby a black child who walked past hostile mobs at age six to enter a once all white school in New Orleans:

I knew I was just Ruby….just Ruby trying to go to school…But I guess I also knew I was the Ruby who had to do it – go into that school and stay there, no matter what those people said, standing outside….And then that white lady wrote and told me she was going to stop shouting at me, because she’d decided I wasn’t bad, even if integration was bad, then my momma said I’d become ‘her Ruby’…and I was glad; and I was glad I got all the nice letters from people who said I was standing up for them, and they were thinking of me, and they were with me, and I was their Ruby too (Coles, 1986, p.9)

As these cases show moral decisions are situational (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000), the hypothetical decision made on the basis of a question of morality is not the same as the decision made when really faced with a moral dilemma. Pagnin and Andreani (2000) call for a new approach to the study of moral development among the gifted. They discuss previous methods of assessing morality as usually cognitive and relying mainly on the language skills of the individual. The notion that the reasoning behind the action
is a measure of morality is not disputed. However, as with their previously cited abortion example, their argument is toward moral development being judged by the actual actions of participants in real life situations throughout their lifetimes, rather than presenting hypothetical situations for discussion and evaluation (Pagnin & Andreani, 2000).

Piirto (1999) indicates this is an important area of research, citing Dabrowski, Piechowski and Lovecky in discussing moral and spiritual growth as a clear goal for gifted adults. Within her own study Piirto (2003) found that the values of gifted adolescents were not as fragile as presented in other studies. Piirto’s (2003) value study was conducted after the events of September 11th 2001, and yet she found these adolescents were less concerned about national security or the threat of terrorism than most adults. Although she attributed some of their positive attitude to spiritual support from their religious beliefs, overall she found these adolescents quite hopeful about the future of the world (Piirto, 2003). Likewise Coles (1986) found that although some of the children in his study were concerned about the possibility of bombing and a nuclear winter, other children in his study “refused to be alarmed” (p.16) by the threat of nuclear war and insisted they had moral reasons for their attitudes. Many hoped the people in power would be forgiving rather than start a nuclear war.

According to Piechowski (1997) a necessary skill for moral leadership is forgiveness, although this is often difficult, particularly for those with high moral standards of their own. Piechowski (1997) said even moral exemplars who, inspired by compassion, demonstrate genuine love for their fellow human beings and strong religious faith, and have dedicated their lives to helping others, say that they have to make an effort to be forgiving. “Once one is able to forgive, one can be a transcender” (Rubin, 1996 cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 353). Examples of such transcenders are considered to be Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King Jr, as each demonstrate high levels of moral intelligence and moral leadership.

In exploring the possibility of a ‘moral’ intelligence, Gardner (1999) questions whether it is possible to delineate the ‘moral domain’. Central to the concepts of morality are concerns with those rules, behaviours and attitudes that govern the sanctity of life,
human as well as other living creatures and the world they inhabit (Smith, 2008). If defining a moral realm for intelligence connotes the adoption of a specific moral code then Gardner suggests it is difficult to find a consensual definition for moral intelligence (Smith, 2008):

As I construe it, the central component in the moral realm or domain is a sense of personal agency and personal stake, a realization that one has an irreducible role with respect to other people and that one's behaviour towards others must reflect the results of contextualized analysis and the exercise of one's will.... The fulfillment of key roles certainly requires a range of human intelligences – including personal, linguistic, logical and perhaps existential – but it is fundamentally a statement about the kind of person that has developed to be. It is not, in itself, an intelligence. 'Morality' is then properly a statement about personality, individuality, will, character - and, in the happiest cases, about the highest realization of human nature (Gardner, 1999).

Smith (2008) contends the final, and obvious, candidate for inclusion in Howard Gardner's list is moral intelligence. But as with the quote above Gardner (1999) argues that researchers and writers have not as yet 'captured the essence of the moral domain as an instance of human intelligence' (Gardner, 1999, cited in Smith, 2008, p. 76).

4.6.2 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

“I care for nobody, no not I...If no one cares for me”

Emotional intelligence is defined as “the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, cited in Arnold, 2005, p.26). Stone (2002) describes several emotional factors in the personality of the gifted individual, distinguishing eight descriptors that often refer to the affective domain of the gifted psyche: sensitivity; perfectionism; morality; resourcefulness; intensity; preference to be with adults and older children; leadership ability; and advanced sense of humour (Parke, 1989, cited in Stone, 2002, p.63). Yet Mayer and Salovey (1997, cited in Arnold, 2005) argue that Emotional Intelligence should refer to heightened emotional and mental abilities, as opposed to simple emotional awareness and or responsiveness.
Goleman’s (1995) definitive work on Emotional Intelligence theory incorporated all individuals, not just students, or gifted and talented individuals. His contention that one’s Emotional Intelligence was a greater predictor of success in life than one’s academic intelligence has been rapidly gaining ground. He describes “the present generation of children to be more troubled than the last: more lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive” (Goleman, 1995, p.xiii). The children he refers to are mainly those of Western society. His contentions that other cultures are more emotionally balanced and supportive of one another are confirmed by Ford and Harris’ (1999) study of multicultural giftedness. However, it is possible that the troubled children he refers to are also those of minority groups struggling to maintain their identity in a Western middle-class world.

Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ), describes a concept that involves the ability, capacity, skill or a self-perceived ability, to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups. The model introduced by Goleman (1995) focuses on Emotional Intelligence as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance. Goleman's model outlines four main constructs:

1. Self-awareness — the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions (Goleman, 1995).

2. Self-management — involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances (Goleman, 1995).

3. Social awareness — the ability to sense, understand, and react to others’ emotions while comprehending social networks (Goleman, 1995).

4. Relationship management — the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict (Goleman, 1995).

Within these concepts there is a clear relationship to Gardner’s intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences. Gardner’s (1993) explanation that he “was talking about emotion” (Goleman, 1995, P.41) regarding intrapersonal intelligence and how, in his opinion, intrapersonal intelligence is essential to develop interpersonal intelligence,
confirms this relationship. Gardner’s (1993) multiple intelligences theory evolved into
cognitive science but originally contained elements of affective science.

Goleman (1995) includes a set of emotional competencies within each construct of
Emotional Intelligence. Emotional competencies are not innate talents, but rather learned
capabilities that must be worked on and developed to achieve outstanding performance.
Goleman (1995) contends that individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence
that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. But he includes
discussion of those with “dyssemia – a learning disability in the realm of non-verbal
messages” (Goleman, 1995, p.121), and documents an experiment between a person
“highly expressive of emotion and one who was deadpan” (Goleman, 1995, p.115) to
highlight the necessity of being able to read emotion when communicating with others.

Some people seem able to use heightened perceptions, instincts, or intuition, referred to
as “somatic markers” (Goleman, 1995, p.53) to read people, and these individuals
appear to be the most successful in society. This idea is expanded with the premise “the
key to a high group I.Q. is social harmony” (Goleman, 1995, p.160), meaning
compatibility is more important than I.Q. in terms of success. Those who can get along
well with others and integrate as a team will be most successful in life. Quite often this
is through a series of “informal networks” (Goleman, 1995, p.162) where information is
gathered and shared colloquially rather than in formal settings.

But Goleman’s (1995) reference to “social chameleons” (p.119) who gain popularity at
the cost of true self-satisfaction is consistent with the theme of masking of giftedness put
forward by Gross (1989). Whereas his point regarding the human tendency to “mask
your real feelings when they will hurt someone you love” (Goleman, 1995, p.114) is
more consistent with guarding the feelings of others. However, it is consistent with Ford
and Harris’ (1999) discussion of “giving up one’s cultural identity to achieve qualified
success, to achieve second-class citizenship” (p.13), and that it is too high a price to pay
for some individuals. The emotional cost of transforming the self into someone else in
order to succeed appears a common theme throughout the literature.
Emotional giftedness brings on what Dabrowski (1991) calls positive maladjustment: “It is possible because it means being true to oneself and to the universal ideals of compassion, caring and to the idea that each individual deserves consideration” (cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 350). The emotionally gifted adult is very empathetic, compassionate and humane but along with this is an irate or outraged sense of justice which can be in opposition to others’ self-interest, prejudice and ruthlessness, therefore the two terms emotional giftedness and positive maladjustment overlap and often conflict (Dabrowski, 1997, cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 350). In this sense the gifted may be more attuned emotionally but not necessarily emotionally intelligent as they still can be at war with themselves.

Goleman’s (1995) finding that anger, depression, worry and stress are best treated with distraction, something else to occupy the mind could also be indicative of current society. Today we have more leisure time and more worry time too, and many “people worry about many things that have a low probability of actually occurring” (Goleman, 1995, p.67). Despite this Reis’ found that gifted women with a degree of stress in their early lives actually achieve more. This falls into in the category of “those who do well despite the stress – or perhaps because of it” (Goleman, 1995, p.84). For some individuals stress is beneficial, at least in the sense that it drives them to greater heights.

In order to address some of these issues Goleman (1995) refers to “educating the emotions” (p.262) and teaching children resilience and patience. Yet how effective is this idea if the parents and teachers are not emotionally intelligence themselves:

Not only are teachers involved in the supervision of the child’s normal development but increasingly parents, especially mothers, are expected to provide circumstances and conditions which are optimal for the child’s learning and cognitive development. In effect, the home has become another domain for the governance and the surveillance of childhood, augmenting that of the classroom (Meredyth & Tyler, 1993; Reiger, 1986; Walkerdine, 1989, all cited in Symes and Preston, 1997, p.46).

The issues of the teachers’ emotional intelligence are rarely considered in relation to the concept of emotional intelligence and education. Regardless of the teachers’ emotional difficulties they are expected to impart the moral values of Western society to their
students (Symes & Preston, 1997). Once an implicit expectation, it is increasingly becoming more explicit as per the directive toward explicit value education. Goleman (1995) also refers to “educating the emotions” (p.262) and teaching children resilience and patience, this too becomes an expectation of teachers. O’Donoghue, et al, (1994) argue that the teacher’s role is being expanded not lessened. “They [teachers] are being called on more and more as carers in the current societal context” (p.45). Their comment that this is an “unhealthy situation” (O’Donoghue, et al., 1994, p.45) is perhaps justified and possibly an insolvable dilemma in our present society.

Throughout the literature there are studies of the links between emotional and academic intelligences in gifted and talented students. Grybek (1997) investigates the difficulty of finding patient mentors for gifted students, whereas Lee (2002) investigates the effects of peers on academic and creative talent. Chan (2000) looks at leadership training in Hong Kong. Bland, Sowa and Callahan (1994), and Ford (1994) investigated resilience in gifted youth. Sowa, McIntire, May and Bland (1994) investigate social and emotional adjustment, as do Norman, et al. (1999), and Cross (2001). Oakland, Joyce, Horton and Glutting (2000) discuss the temperament-based learning styles of gifted and talented students. Whereas Brunt (1996) argues for caring thinking to affectively enhance gifted learning through the use of Bloom’s taxonomy. Yet, as with the studies of morality amongst the gifted, none of these studies provide empirical data to prove the gifted are anymore emotionally intelligent than any other individual.

Piirto (1999) refers to Dabrowski’s highest level of emotional development, that of Secondary Integration as transcending into integration of ones values into one’s living and being. Life is in service to humanity and there is a “magnetic field in the soul” (Dag Hammarskhold, cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 351). As with moral intelligence the progress to this level of emotional development is expected of the gifted individual but little evidence supports its actualization.
4.6.3 EMPATHIC INTELLIGENCE

Empathic intelligence moves beyond Emotional Intelligence in one clear way. As humans we are constructed to respond with emotion to emotion; we usually feel the message of that emotion but that does not mean we actually feel the emotion that is signaled to us (Ekman, cited in Arnold, 2005). To understand these emotions portrayed by others, such as anger, fear or surprise, takes considerable skill and a degree of emotional intelligence. However, true empathy can heighten emotional responses and Ekman (cited, in Arnold, 2005) identifies three types of empathy: ‘Cognitive empathy’ is when we are aware of and can identify another’s feelings; ‘Emotional empathy’ is when we can physically feel the others emotion; and ‘Compassionate Empathy’ when we are driven to assist another person emotionally and help them cope with their own emotional situation.

Goodman (2000) refers to the latter kind of empathy as ‘altruism’ (Cited in McAllister & Irvine, 2002), whereas Noddings (1984, cited in McAllister & Irvine, 2002) refer to this as ‘feeling with’ where one does not feel the act for or act on behalf of an individual, rather one is simply with the individual in a nonjudgmental fashion (p.2). McAllister and Irvine (2002) contend that this type of empathic disposition is most often manifested within teachers’ caring relationships with students and the most effective teachers of diverse students are those who are most empathic. The results of their study also showed that the most empathic teachers were also those who were most able to support and respect cultural differences and the least like to reflect racist attitudes.

“In common parlance ‘empathy’ means being able to imagine, often and intuitively and instinctively, how the other feels” (Arnold, 2005, p. 32). Piirto (1999) contends that having a “profound regard for others and experiencing significant and real empathy are characteristic of some gifted adults” (p. 348). Empathic intelligence is not the same as emotional intelligence because empathic intelligence relies on the creation of a dynamic between both cognitive and emotional intelligence. Secondly empathic intelligence has an ethical intention – “it is the application of cognitive and emotional intelligences to a
creative or beneficial outcome, even if the motive is not entirely altruistic” (Arnold, 2005, p. 25).

The brain and mind research of Damasio (2000), Le Doux (1992), Williams (2001) and others as cited in Arnold (2005) assists us to understand more about the relationships between the cognitive and emotional parts of our brains and that these relationships are infinitely more complex than is generally realized (Arnold, 2005).

A profound belief in the existential need for humans to access both their rational and their felt or emotional responses to the world of experience underpins the framework of empathic intelligence. The depth of ‘colour’ created by this interplay of thought and feeling derives from the dynamism between the. Each needs the other (Arnold, 2005, p. 16).

Arnold (2005) has attempted to define empathic intelligence as a separate entity, separate from emotional intelligence or perhaps as a subset of emotional intelligence. Empathic intelligence is defined as a sustained system of psychic, cognitive, affective, social and ethical functioning, derived from an ability to:

- Differentiate self-states (both thoughts and feelings) from others’ states through self-awareness, reflection and applied imagination;
- Engage in reflective and analogical processing to understand dynamics;
- Mobilize a dynamic between thinking and feeling in self and others to enhance learning;
- Demonstrate enthusiasm, expertise and an ability to engage others;
- Work creatively, guided by observation, attunement and adaptive capacity;
- Demonstrate intelligent caring;
- Use mirroring and affirmation effectively’ and;
- Commit to the well-being and development of self and others.

(Arnold, 2005, p. 19)

Empathic intelligence is fundamentally generative, dynamic and analytical. It is underpinned by affectivity, imagination and logic, and is both hopeful and realistic. Where imagination is fundamental to contemplating the thoughts and feelings of others, there is also a need for an analytical capacity to underpin that judgment (Arnold, 2005). “It is inspired by intuition – that ability to notice what logic might tell you to ignore – and supported by reflective practice” (Arnold, 2005, p.20).

Lovecky (1994) refers to intuition and perception in gifted individuals as a way to see beyond the superficiality of a situation to the person beneath (cited in Piirto, 1999). Lovecky (1997) calls this ‘seeing’ and said that “people who are gifted at ‘seeing’ often
seem to have a touch of magic about them…. [but] The perceptive gifted adult may hide what he or she has ‘seen’ in order to prevent rejection by others”. (pp.350-352). Sensitive and peace-seeking, peace-loving adults may also not understand that “others do not feel as deeply or intensely” (Lovecky, cited in Piirto, 1999, p.350) and therefore they may judge others who do not care so deeply to be superficial. The vulnerability of such adults may lead them to isolate themselves, and to avoid relationship with others (Lovecky, cited in Piirto, 1999).

In contrast some gifted adults reach actualisation of their empathy. Piirto (1999) refers to Lovecky’s (1986) definition of entelechy as a particular type of motivation, inner strength, and vital force which allows the actualisation of one’s beliefs. Gifted Adults who achieve this self-actualisation are often “Highly attractive to others who feel drawn to openness, warmth and closeness” (Lovecky, 1986, cited in Piirto, 1999, p.325). However, such adults may also be vulnerable to overextension, giving too much to others and not nurturing themselves. They may also avoid closeness in interpersonal relationships in order to avoid requests from others that they are unable to deny (Piirto, 1999).

Empathic intelligence is an ability to understand your own thoughts and feelings and then, by analogy, apply your self understanding to the service of others, mindful that their thinking and feeling may not match your own. It is a sophisticated ability involving attunement, decentring, conjecture and introspection: “an act of thoughtful, heartfelt imagination” (Arnold, 2005, p.23). It also incorporates some reciprocity within the dynamics of a relationship. It is easier to be engaged in a caring and attuned relationship with another when responses are reciprocated (Arnold, 2005). For the deeply empathic such reciprocity may not be possible.

4.6.4 SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

“I simply believe that some part of the human Self or Soul is not subject to the laws of space and time” (Carl Jung, cited in Miller, 2006, p.139).
If giftedness is an elusive concept, then Spiritual Intelligence is far more so. Noble, (2001) refers to it as an enigma and warns that language may be useless to describe the concept because “new concepts and new knowledge are not infrequently ahead of the word” (Zilboorg, 1941, cited in Noble, 2001, p.9). Zohar and Marshall (2000) concur, stating that our culture is “spiritually dumb in the literal sense – we have no adequate language to express the richness of the human soul” (p.35). Words can allude to deeper concepts than those we can actually articulate (Zohar & Marshall). Noble (2003) refers to an ancient Hindu metaphor that captures the essence of Spiritual Intelligence:

Imagine that the conscious or waking self is like water in a glass in the middle of the ocean. The ocean symbolizes the ‘Universe’ or what some call ‘God’, ‘Creator’, or ‘all that is’. The glass represents the psychological lens through which we perceive both inner and outer worlds. The goal of spiritual intelligence is to expand the borders of the glass while simultaneously increasing its translucence and permeability (Noble, 2000, p.3).

Miller (2006) describes it more simply – as the singing of the soul: “That the soul sings was understood by the ancient psychology of the soul of the world – the singing of soul was known as the music of the spheres” (Sardello, 1992, cited in Miller, 2006 p.154). Miller (2006) contends we can see the singing soul in people like Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama’s laughter and Mandela’s warm smile are expression of the singing soul. Batra (2008) contends that laughter itself is something spiritual and belongs to a higher stage of intelligence:

Laughter has the capacity to transform our lives from being boring to being full of bliss and ecstasy...Laughter enables us to journey into the inner world. It cleanses a person from within and thus makes him/her devoid of any soul polluting ego (Batra, 2008).

Batra’s (2008) point of view is interesting considering that one of the most consistent character traits of the gifted is a sense of humour. If laughter is a link to spiritual intelligence then the gifted individual may display evidence of a ‘singing soul’ (Miller, 2006) on a daily basis.

As with the other new intelligences, the literature on Spiritual Intelligence is not restricted to gifted research areas, and much of it links to religion. Wigglesworth (2008) defines spirituality as “the innate human need to connect with something larger than ourselves.” But, if this is the core definition of spirituality, a person would first need the
belief there was something larger than the self, need some sort of faith or belief in a larger consciousness, higher power or some sort of divine or mystical purpose in order to connect to it.

In modern life the ancient reliance on religion for comfort and explanation is lessening as we look to scientific answers and miracles. As our life expectancies keep increasing we have less need to wonder what happens once we die. What need is there for an afterlife if there is no death? Carter (1993) refers to ‘the onus of proof’ (p.7) passing from the atheist to the believer, that strict religious observance and faith is seen as an addiction or a symptom of mental instability.

One cannot prove faith, it is not tangible, and there is little concrete evidence for it. Faith is an abstract notion, a feeling, intellectual study cannot prove its concepts, cannot conceive of its importance in one’s life. Faith can be defined as a belief in the absence of knowledge (Smith, 2001). Faith typically transcends what can be proven scientifically and is fundamentally based on volition, often associated with a transpersonal relationship with God, a higher power, and/or elements of nature, etc. Faith, by its very nature, requires belief outside of known fact. It 'works' in lieu of, or even in addition to, rational reason, logic and science (Smith, 2001).

The advancement of medical science is taking society beyond thought of religious moral rule (Smith, 2001). Atheists account for 23 percent of the Australian population (Carey, 1996) and there is no real solution to the religious debate. None of us will ever really know the answers in our lifetimes, until we die and either meet our maker/s or fade into oblivion there can be no answers to the dilemma. One of the clearest discussions of this dilemma is presented in a movie called ‘Vertical Limit” (King, Campbell & Hays, 2000) where the characters discuss these ideas when one of the characters stops to pray during their dangerous ascent up the mountain laden with volatile explosives. The other character questions his need to pray:

We're on a bit of a deadline, mate. Can we just leave this till later?
He's all right, isn't he, this Allah bloke?
He won't strike you dead if you miss one prayer, will he?
All right, one prayer, under the circumstances. What harm can it do?
Do Muslims believe in Hell? Do you?
So if that thing there blows... [referring to nitro pack]
...and I don't believe in Allah – I’m going to Hell?
Is that what you reckon?
You're all the bloody same, aren't you?
Born-agains say I don't believe in Jesus, so I'll go to hell.
Jews say I do believe in Jesus, I'll go to Hell.
Catholics say I don't believe in the pope, I'll go to Hell.
So any way you look at it, I'm in the shit.
Well, go on, then. What did he say? We gonna die up here or what?
Reply: All men die, my friend.
But Allah says it is what we do before we die that counts.

(Excerpt from the movie ‘Vertical Limit’, King, et al, 2000)

In this example one character places faith in his religion, the other character is still asking existential questions.

Carter (1993) makes a valid point for respecting the religious beliefs of others rather than just tolerating them and it is a basic human right to follow one’s beliefs or lack of them without infringement of others opinion (Burrows, 1997). But spirituality is not necessarily defined by one’s belief in a religion, or even a higher power. Culpit (2008, cited in Hegerty, 2008) contends the two must be separated: “Spirituality is something all people have; religion is the way we attempt to make sense of that spirituality…” (Culpit, 2008, cited in Hergerty, 2008, p. 18). Hudson (2007) found that being ‘spiritual but not religious’ is an increasing phenomenon within Australian society. She notes there are debates about spirituality without links to religion, but contends that spirituality can be applied in an everyday sense within a person’s own sense of spirituality (Hudson, 2007).

This finding concurs with Gardner’s previously discussed resistance to include a moral or spiritual intelligence within his multiple intelligences model. Gardner (1999) contended that although the case for the inclusion of a naturalist intelligence appeared straightforward, his position with regard to ‘spiritual intelligence’ is far more complex. He felt there were problems, around the ‘content’ of spiritual intelligence, and unsubstantiated claims with regard to truth and value (Gardner, 1999, p.59, cited in Smith, 2008). As a result Gardner (1999) thought it best to put aside the term ‘spiritual’,
with its manifest and problematic connotations, particularly as it was often linked only to Christian belief systems.

Gardner (1999) preferred to refer instead of an intelligence that explores the nature of existence in its multifarious guises. Therefore, an explicit concern with spiritual or religious matters would be one variety of an ‘existential’ intelligence (Smith, 2008). Despite this intensive discussion on what the intelligence should be named and what it should include Gardner (1999) declined to add ‘existential’ intelligence or any similar type of intelligence to his list. Other researchers have no such reservation and there is an extensive literature on Spiritual intelligence emerging in various disciplines (Sisk & Torrance, 2001, Suhor, 1999, Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Noble raises some of the questions that intrigue researchers:

Can spiritual intelligence, like other forms of intelligence, be developed over time with practice and intent? How does spiritual intelligence express itself in different populations? Would a spiritually intelligent person be recognisable in any culture or era? Can one be profoundly gifted or profoundly delayed in spiritual terms?...These are questions that some of us in the field of giftedness have begun to study in earnest. They are not easy questions to answer nor are they new. Indeed spiritual seekers throughout the ages have asked them, in one form or another, of all who would listen…but in this era more seem to be listening than ever before (Noble, 2001, p.120)

In confirmation of the eternal search for spiritual answers Wigglesworth (2006) mentions “Socrates gave the advice ‘know thyself’ approximately 2400 years ago”; and that Buddha approximately 2,500 years ago, made the study of the mind and profound self-knowledge such an elevated practice that it became a major world religion (Wiggleworth, 2006). Other researchers are more forthcoming than Noble, attempting answers rather than questions, and using various ways to define spiritual intelligence. Piechowski (1992) said that the “highest degree of actualisation in highly sensitive adults was spiritual growth, as Peace Pilgrim experienced it” (cited in Piirto, 1999, p. 352). Yet this once again refers to Christian connotations of spirituality.

Sisk and Torrance (2001) agree most discussion of spiritual intelligence tends to be very Christian orientated, which is one of the reasons Gardner preferred existentialism as it removed the religious weighting, and he resisted moral intelligence for the same reason. Ronel (2008) provides an example of this religious focus: “Based on a theistic
approach, spiritual intelligence is perceived as an ability to understand the world and oneself through God-centredness and to adapt one’s life accordingly” (Ronel, 2008, p.1). Therefore it implies one can only be spiritually intelligent through an initial belief in ‘God’. Such an assumption removes the possibility of achieving spiritual intelligence from any who do not believe in a single God, or do not believe in God at all.

Rayburn (2004) disputes this: “Spirituality is not limited to theists but includes atheists, agnostics, and denominationally unaffiliated individuals” (p.356). Although Rayburn (2004) acknowledges that spirituality and morality have been associated with religiousness, particularly in terms of formal beliefs systems and creeds involving religious beliefs, spiritual growth and transcendence (Rayburn, 2001, cited in Rayburn, 2004), spirituality has also been seen as caring for others, seeking goodness and truth, forgiveness, cooperation, peace and transcendence.

In contrast Carette and King (2004) argue against removing spirituality from the realm of religious, particularly Christian, beliefs. They are also concerned that spirituality and business have become entangled and the true essence of belief may be lost in the pursuit of profit. Their contention that spirituality is marketed through a range of areas from feng shui through to holistic medicine, from Christian mystics to New Age gurus, from aromatherapy candles to yoga weekends, is used as clear evidence that spirituality and business have become increasingly intertwined. Ultimately their concern is that “spirituality now acts as a register outside religion to evaluate the effectiveness of an attitude, question or belief” (Carette & King, 2004, p.51).

Wigglesworth (2008) reinforces the link between business and spirituality throughout her publications as she turns her expertise in this area to a corporate use supplying research on spiritual intelligence to human resource managers and their staff to enhance the workplace. As Wigglesworth (2008) explains it:

As our basic physical, emotional, and mental needs are met, we hunger to bring ‘the rest of ourselves’ to work. For most people ‘the rest of ourselves’ can be translated to ‘Spirit.’ And bringing Spirit to work is good business. It allows companies to retain the best, brightest, and most internally motivated employees (Wigglesworth, 2008).
Zohar and Marshall (1997) have also used their concepts of spiritual intelligence to enhance workplace relations. The word ‘spiritual’ in the Zohar/Marshal concept comes from the Latin word ‘spiritus’ meaning ‘that which gives life or vitality to a system’ (Zohar & Marshall, 2001) rather than any religious definition. Zohar and Marshall (2001) dispute a necessary connection between spiritual intelligence and organised religion. They contend a person can be high in Spiritual intelligence and yet have no religious faith or belief of any kind. They also state that a person can be very religious but quite low in Spiritual Intelligence:

A very religious person may be spiritually dumb; a hard-and-fast atheist may be spiritually intelligent...It is certainly not a difference between religions, for there are spiritually dumb and spiritually intelligent versions of every religion on the planet. The difference lies in my attitude, in the quality of my questioning and my searching, in the depth and breadth of my beliefs, in the deep source of my beliefs (Zohar & Marshall, 2001, p.292).

As the trend toward establishing spirituality as an intelligence grew amongst researchers Piechowski (2000) found it “deliciously ironic that Gardner concluded that there is not sufficient grounds for establishing spiritual intelligences as a distinct member of multiple intelligences, while Emmons using Gardner’s own criteria, came to the firm conclusion that there is” (p.83). Emmons (2003) defined spiritual intelligence as ‘the adaptive use of spiritual information to facilitate everyday problem solving and goal attainment’. He originally proposed five components of spiritual intelligence:

1. The capacity to transcend the physical and material.
2. The ability to experience heightened states of consciousness.
3. The ability to sanctify everyday experience.
4. The ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems.
5. The capacity to be virtuous.
(Emmons, 2003)

The fifth capacity, to be virtuous, was later removed by Emmons due to its focus on human behaviour rather than ability, thereby not meeting Gardner’s previously established scientific criteria for intelligence. Emmons (2003) contends that “spirituality is revealed through ultimate concerns that center on the sacred. When people orient their lives around the attainment of spiritual ends, they tend to experience their lives as worthwhile, unified, and meaningful” (p.157). Gardner (2000) does not dispute this statement, but answers Emmons work thusly:
Whether spirituality should be considered an intelligence depends upon definitions and
criteria. Emmons (2003) tends to lump together different aspects of spirituality and also
various facets of psychology. In my response, I demonstrate the advantages of teasing these
concepts apart. Those aspects of spirituality that have to do with phenomenological
experience or with desired values or behaviours are best deemed external to the intellectual
sphere. A residue concerning the capacity to deal with existential issues may qualify as an
intelligence. Emmons's overall enterprise is plausible and he raises many intriguing issues
(e.g., sacredness, problem solving, the unifying potential of religion) that merit further
investigation...It seems more responsible to carve out that area of spirituality closest 'in
spirit' to the other intelligences and then, in the sympathetic manner applied to naturalist
intelligence, ascertain how this candidate intelligence fares (Gardner, 2000, p.27).

Nonetheless definitions of spiritual intelligence, and their character traits have been
presented by other authors who have taken the notion beyond Gardner’s realm.

4.6.4.1 Defining Spiritual Intelligence

The most evident token and apparent sign of true wisdom is a constant and unconstrained
rejoicing (Montaigne, cited in Miller, 2006, p. 154)

Zohar and Marshall (1997) contend Spiritual intelligence is the intelligence that makes
us whole, that gives us our integrity. It is the soul's intelligence, the intelligence of the
deep self. It is the intelligence with which we ask fundamental questions and with which
we reframe our answers (Zohar & Marshall, 1997).

Zohar and Marshall (2001) have introduced twelve qualities of Spiritual Intelligence.
These qualities are:

1. Self-Awareness: Knowing who you really are, and what you believe in and value,
and what deeply motivates you, and that you are connected with the whole
universe.

2. Being Vision and Values Led – or idealism - Acting from principles and deep
beliefs, and living accordingly

3. Positive Use of Adversity: Learning and growing from mistakes, setbacks, and
suffering. And using pain, tragedy and suffering to learn

4. Holism: Seeing larger patterns, relationships, and connections between things;
having a sense of belonging to the whole

5. Celebration of Diversity: Valuing other people for their differences, not despite
them

6. Field Independence: Standing against the crowd and having one's own convictions,
having the courage not to adapt, to be independent.
7. Tendency to Ask Fundamental "Why?" Questions: Needing to understand things and get to the bottom of them. Questions are infinite. In Quantum Physics questions create reality.

8. Ability to Reframe: Standing back from a situation or problem and seeing the bigger picture; seeing problems in a wider context of meaning

9. Spontaneity: Living in and being responsive to the moment

10. Compassion: Having the quality of "feeling-with" and deep empathy

11. Humility: Having the sense of being a player in a larger drama, of one's true place in the world

12. Sense of Vocation: Feeling called upon to serve, to give something back
(Adapted from Zohar & Marshall, 2000)

Some of the qualities presented as elements of Spiritual Intelligence are also present in the advanced stages of morality, such as the need to serve. Zohar and Marshall’s (2001) contention that the ‘positive use of adversity’ relates to spiritual intelligence is consistent with studies of resilience. Spiritual intelligence has a relationship to resilience. “Resilience is the ability to respond to extreme stress with extraordinary competence (Nobel, 2000, p.5) Aronson (2001) also highlights the supporting role of faith, particularly as a basis to establishing resilience in adults. Hudson (2007) again asserts that grief, trauma, and emotional experiences can be a driving force to embark on an exploration of the spiritual. While spiritual growth is not emphasised in talent development it seems to be a goal that all gifted adults seek but as with moral exemplars the key seems to be forgiveness (Piirto, 1999), a trait also included by Rayburn (2004).

Wigglesworth (2008) also provides a list of spiritual intelligence skills as shown in Figure19.
Both lists provided (Zohar & Marshal, 2001; Wigglesworth, 2008) show compassion and empathy as an integral part of spiritual intelligence. Wigglesworth (2008) believes that spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence are related to each other, and states that we need some basics of emotional intelligence in order to begin any spiritual growth. As spiritual growth occurs there would be a reinforcement of emotional intelligence skills, particularly in regard to empathy and emotional self-awareness (Wigglesworth, 2008). However, it is possible to have empathy without being spiritual, indeed one could have empathy without being moral, therefore it seems that spiritual intelligence is all encompassing.

Whilst each of the other new intelligences presented can appear as a separate entity with little overlap, spiritual intelligence seems to encompass all (Sisk & Torrance, 2001). It is
worth noting that the exemplars used for both moral intelligence and empathic intelligence are again cited as exemplars in terms of spiritual intelligence. Mother Theresa, Gandhi and Nelson Mandela are all cited as examples attaining the highest levels of spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2004; Wigglesworth, 2008).

Wigglesworth (2008) has provided stages of spiritual intelligence that are comparable to those previously provided by Fowler and Oser and these are shown in Figure 20. As with Kohlberg’s and Oser’s stages each of these skills has been described in five levels of skill proficiency. However, there is an implied level zero where the person has yet to develop that skill. Level 5 is not the final stage as with Oser and Fowler, as there is always room to grow and a person is never considered to be ‘finished’ (Wigglesworth, 2008).

In terms of religious beliefs both Oser and Fowler (Figure 20) contend that God is assumed to be separate from the world in late adolescence and values and beliefs are questioned (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). By adulthood individuals see themselves in a relationship with God or higher power but closer to the highest stages (Stage 4, figure 20, p.214) there is transcendence. For some this means spiritual intelligence as a reflection of their faith, for others it means they are able to hear a Higher Self or spirit as Wigglesworth (2008) describes it.

But the highest stage where ‘The Ultimate being inhabits each moment’ which is realized through humane action, as cited through examples of the actions of Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mahatma Gandhi, is considered rarely attainable by Oser and Fowler (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001; Bouchet, 2004), whereas Wigglesworth (2008) considers this stage achievable as a point where the individual becomes one with a higher self or spirit.

As previously stated Fowler’s final stage of ‘Universalizing Faith’ is also considered difficult to realise. The self is decentralised and grounded with oneness with God. The focus is overcoming division and oppression, and identifying with the concerns of others, again citing Ghandi as an example (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001).
Figure 20. Stages of religious and spiritual development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OSER</th>
<th>Fowler</th>
<th>Wigglesworth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Primal Faith &amp; Intuitive Projective Faith</td>
<td>Stage 1 - Can communicate understanding of the nature of Ego self- including its origin and the purpose it serves in spiritual development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 – The ultimate being does it</td>
<td>Mythic/Literal Faith</td>
<td>Stage 2 - Demonstrates ability to observe personal Ego in operation and comment on what seems to trigger Ego eruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 – The ultimate being does it if…</td>
<td>Synthetic conventional Faith</td>
<td>Stage 3 - Demonstrates awareness of and ability to periodically &quot;listen to&quot; Spirit or Higher Self as a separate voice from Ego self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 – The ultimate being and humankind do…or ‘Humankind does through an Ultimate beings doing’</td>
<td>Individuative- Reflective Faith</td>
<td>Stage 4 - Hears the voice of Spirit or Higher Self clearly and understands the &quot;multiple voices&quot; that Ego self can have. Gives authority to voice of Higher Self in important decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4 - the highest stage where ‘The Ultimate being inhabits each moment’ which is realized through humane action, as cited through examples of the actions of Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Eleanor Roosevelt and Mahatma Ghandi, is considered rarely attainable</td>
<td>Conjunctive Faith - where adults are able to embrace and integrate opposites and polarities into their lives, therefore appreciating their own traditions and beliefs and those of others is considered an aspect of maturity.</td>
<td>Stage 5 – The highest stage where Spirit or Higher Self voice is clear and consistent. Ego self is present and is a joyful advisor to Higher Self. There is no longer a struggle between the two voices. Rather there is a sense of only “one voice” …the Higher Self (Authentic Self, Spirit) voice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Oser & Scarlett, 1991; Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001; Wigglesworth, 2008)

Positive Disintegration, the highest emotional level, is attained when the struggle for self mastery has been won and life is lived in service to others (Piirto, 1999). Again this fits with the ideals of the other theories yet Dabrowski asks more and contends that an individual reaching this stage lives “according to the highest, most universal principles of loving – compassionate regard for the worth of every individual” (Piirto, 1999, p. 351). Wigglesworth (2008) contends that in this highest stage there is only one voice, a higher, more authentic self emerges and is actualised, and compassion is part of that actualisation.
Noble’s (2002) description of the female ‘hero’ portrays this actualisation. “To live heroically a woman must belong to herself alone; she must be the centre of her own life. She must pursue a wholeness or integrity that is fluid, inclusive and interconnected and that does not preclude relationships” (Noble, 2002, p.193). This description includes many of the attributes described by Zohar and Marshall (2004) as part of spiritual intelligence. The holism; self-actualisation; and in particular the courage required for Field Independence are part of the challenge of living heroically.

Hudson’s (2007) findings concur and discuss the feminist notion that every woman is at the centre of her own experience, therefore any interpretation and understanding of their spirituality must start within their personal experience. Giesenberg (2007) also found a centred experience of spirituality amongst younger children. She found that amongst Australian pre-school children there is an increased awareness of their surroundings and an ability to express abstract concepts such as love, beauty, wonder and compassion. These children live in their spirituality holistically but do not express a relationship with a transcendent being (Giesenberg, 2007).

The holistic view emphasised by Zohar and Marshall (2004), and Wigglesworth (2008) coincides with Miller’s (2006) viewpoint where wholeness refers to recognizing the interconnected nature of experience and the multidimensionality of human beings:

The vision of human wholeness is an ancient one. It can be found in the worldview of indigenous peoples, in Greek culture, in Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism, and in the American transcendentalists. Each Element in our body is interconnected and our bodies are connected to all that surrounds us (Miller, 2006, p. 156).

There is a harmony in all living things and when we look back we can decipher an order: a life is “a pattern so intricate that it suggested the narrative of a well written story” (Schopenhauer, cited in Miller, 2006, p.157). This natural pattern is “there all the while, whether we choose to ignore or embrace it” (Boldt, cited in Miller, 2006, p. 157). The ability to perceive life, or the world in which we live, holistically is again an element of Spiritual Intelligence mentioned by both Zohar and Marshall (2001) and Wigglesworth (2008).
Wigglesworth (2008) refers to the holistic larger view as having two components: the vertical and the horizontal. The Vertical component includes the divine, timeless and placeless something, the sacred, and the concepts of a higher power or ultimate consciousness in whatever language it is defined. The horizontal component is expressed through service to our fellow humans and the planet at large.

This focus on humanity as part of spirituality could be a matter of contention in regard to cultural definitions of spiritual intelligence. Zohar and Marshall (2000) contend that computers possess I.Q., and Emotional Intelligence exists in higher mammals, but Spiritual Intelligence is uniquely human. For many indigenous people animals not only have Spiritual Intelligence they are themselves defined as spirits, so the view that Spiritual Intelligence is only a human trait places these definitions firmly within Westernised cultural viewpoints.

To refute this view Coles (1990) cites examples of conversations with children referring to spiritual aspects of their lives and in particular discusses Natalie, a young Hopi Indian girl in New Mexico. This young girl appears to communicate telepathically with her dog, and the hawks and rabbits that are part of her natural existence. She explains that her grandmother told her “that we travel from one place to another; we move through people, and maybe we move through animals” (Coles, 1990, p. 153).

Natalie states emphatically that:

Blackie [the dog] has a soul, I know. She looks at me and I know she is ready to live for me and die for me! She cries when I cry. She barks, to laugh, when I laugh. When I slow down – the sun’s heat – she sits still. When I run she is ahead of me and her tail is dancing! …I look at those birds and I think I might be one someday. Blackie too – then we’d be together still. When I look into Blackie’s eyes, she cries a little: she is telling me of her love, and I tell her that I love her (Coles, 1990, pp. 153-154).

Natalie tries to explain how she communicates with her ancestors and how they are present on the plain, particularly on the mesa:

I don’t know how to explain this: the Hopis are there on the mesa, their spirits. Each spirit is a soul. You can’t see them, not the way you see me and I see you. But they are there – and when we go there, we sit, and they talk to us. The wind sweeps across the mesa, and that way we know we’ve been noticed and welcomed! I say
As Coles (1990) described it Natalie’s spirituality was an everyday lived experience. Her spirit communicated with the spirits of the animals. Death for her meant merely a shift in the universe, the spirit moving on to new territory. Coles (1990) discusses the spirituality inherent in many children, although he again contends that words are inadequate to describe many of these experiences. Coles also mentions there is something about their eyes, something unexplainable that shines through them.

Again this relates to Streznewski’s contention of an intangible ‘something’ about the eyes of those who are gifted; Bevan-Brown, et al. (2008) concept of ‘Mana’ attributable to gifted Maoris as previously discussed; and Stanislavski’s, 1982 (cited in Sefer, 2007) reference to “eyes as the mirror of the soul” Stanislavski, 1982 (cited in Sefer, 2007, p.335). This link between the ‘soul’ of a person shining through their gaze is recorded by many researchers, and sometimes something beyond their soul.

Kerr confirms this perspective describing a moment when she suddenly realises that Ten Bears, an American Indian guide, is the genuine article, not a phony or a fanatic:

> In those moments that I looked into his face, I realised that I was seeing, not the face of this man, known as John in the Christian world, but the face behind the face, Ten Bears, and further still, through the portals of Ten Bears eyes, for a fleeting moment – All, All (Kerr & McAlister, 2002, p. 48).

King (2008) more recently defines spiritual intelligence as a set of mental capacities which are based on nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of reality; specifically those which are related to the nature of one’s existence, personal meaning and heightened states of consciousness. When applied, these processes are adaptive in their ability to facilitate unique means of problem-solving, abstract-reasoning, and coping, and lead to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, recognition of a transcendent self, and mastery of spiritual states (King, 2008).
King (2008) further proposes 4 core abilities or capacities of spiritual intelligence:

1. Critical Existential Thinking - The capacity to critically contemplate the nature of existence, reality, the universe, space, time, and other existential/metaphysical issues; also the capacity to contemplate non-existential issues in relation to one’s existence.

2. Personal Meaning Production - The ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose.

3. Transcendental Awareness - The capacity to identify transcendent dimensions/patterns of the self, of others, and of the physical world during normal states of consciousness, accompanied by the capacity to identify their relationship to one’s self and to the physical.

4. Conscious State Expansion - The ability to enter and exit higher states of consciousness and other states of trance at one’s own discretion, such as deep contemplation, meditation and/or prayer.

(King, 2008)

At this stage King’s (2008) broader descriptive explanation of spiritual intelligence allows some room for indigenous beliefs and those of other cultures, including a transcendent relationship to the physical that could encompass a spiritual relationship with animals. His work in this field is ongoing and shows some possibilities for a wider scope within the realm of spiritual intelligence.

In terms of spiritual intelligence, as with the other new intelligences, evidence is largely anecdotal and difficult to measure. Although many of the definitions of Spiritual Intelligence come from a variety of research fields the majority of the literature is presented through the literature within the field of giftedness.

4.6.4.2 The Search for Spiritual Intelligence

Emerson believed that all human beings have an inherent right to an original relationship to the universe (Miller, 2006).

Lovecky’s (1997) study of the spirituality of gifted children leading them toward religious study was challenged by Streznewski’s (1999) observation that although many gifted adults remained spiritual, they had moved away from organized religion. Again, Piirto’s (2003) more recent empirical study of talented American students found that world events, such as the September 11 terrorist attack, had little effect on the preconceived value systems of these students or their opinions of organized religion.
indicating adolescent value systems are intrapersonal rather than subject to influence by external factors. A point that conflicts with the teaching of values in Australian schools.

Despite this teenagers who remain part of a religious community are advantaged in moral values and behaviour because it promotes responsible academic and social behaviour and discourages misconduct such as drug and alcohol use, early sexual activity and delinquency (Berk, 2007). “The more activities they shared with this network [religious] the higher they scored in empathy and prosocial behaviour” (King & Furrow, 2004, cited in Berk, 2007, p.411). But as adolescents search for a personally meaningful identity, involvement in formal religion declines. For youth in the U.S.A. involvement in religion has declined from 55 percent at age 13-15 years down to 40 percent at ages 17-18 years (Kerestes & Youniss, 2003, cited in Berk, 2007).

But a lack of involvement in a religious community does not preclude a sense of spirituality. “Adolescents who feel connected to a higher being may develop certain inner strengths, including moral self-relevance, that help translating their thinking into action” (Furrow, King, & White, 2004, cited in Berk, 2007, p. 411). Berk (2007) contends that many people voice notions of religion and spirituality in resolving real life moral dilemmas. Nearly two thirds of Americans and one half of Canadians reported being religious, compared with one third of people in Great Britain and Italy and even fewer elsewhere in Europe (Adams, 2003, cited in Berk, 2007). In Australia the statistics report on over 75 percent of the population registering as having a religion, but do not record how religious they are (ABS, 2007).

Freeman’s (1991) questioning regarding religious beliefs and moral values amongst gifted individuals in the U.S.A. raised some interesting points. Although over two-thirds of the sample group prayed privately, the majority of the participants reported “that their idea of God was more of a general life spirit than a ‘sentient being’ who listened in” (Freeman, 1991, p. 62). She also noted that gifted individuals, whether religious or atheists, were “more intense in their choice” (Freeman, 1991, p. 62), therefore manifesting either very religious or very non-religious viewpoints.
A similar study would be difficult in Australia due to the multicultural and multireligious population. Bouma (2006) has provided the most comprehensive coverage of religion and spirituality within Australia and raises some interesting points concerning the differences to overseas conditions:

While Australia’s deep Aboriginal origins have been largely ignored, they remain present and active. While of British modern origins, Australian society is not British. While heavily overlaid with substantial European migration, it is not European. While deeply allied with the U.S.A., it is not American. While close to Asia it is not Asian….Australia provides a different context for the production of religious beliefs and practice, a different context for the enactment of spirituality (Bouma, 2006, p. 3).

The most significant aspect of Australian religious and spiritual difference is that so many religions exist and are actively practiced alongside another religion. Within Australia religious communities are not only focused on religious centres such as mosques, temples and shrines, they also have links to supermarkets and shopping centres that provide the food and resources to meet religious requirements. The religious structures and the communities they serve “often stand cheek by jowl with each other and with Christian Churches. The communities making up Australia’s multicultural and multifaith society are not geographically or residentially segregated but live in each others’ presence” (Bouma, 2006, p.56).

Moreover there are Australians who practice multiple faiths. Bouma (2006) mentions those who record responses such as ‘multidenominational’; ‘Christian Jew’; ‘Hindu Muslim’; ‘Catholic Orthodox’ and ‘Christian Aboriginal Dreaming’, which clearly express plural religious identities. His previous research found that some Vietnamese Buddhists in Melbourne also considered themselves to be Catholics, and saw “no contradiction between being Christian and reading regularly their star signs” (Bouma, 2006, p. 64).

In contrast are the rising number of ‘nones’ those who simply put ‘none’ when asked for a religion. However, the answer of ‘none’ does not necessarily mean that one has no religious or spiritual belief. Bouma and Dixon (1986, cited in Bouma, 2006) report that 21.2 percent of Australian nones described themselves as religious, 37.8 percent prayed and 16.2 percent said that God was important in their lives. The difference was that these
‘nones’ did not attend or belong actively to a religion and did not attend a religious centre such as a Church or Temple (Bouma, 2006). Basically they “believe but do not belong” (Davie, 1994, cited in Bouma, 2006, p. 54). Many other respondents to the census question on religion ticked ‘other’ and then wrote that they were ‘spiritual but not religious’, or said they believed in ‘their own’ religion or ‘all’ religions (Bouma, 2006, p.62).

Bouma (2006) contends that many of the expectations of Australian religiosity are linked to societal expectations. Those in their late teens and early twenties are not really expected to give religion and/or spirituality much time, at least until they have children, and then could be seen as legitimately too busy to participate (Bouma, 2006). Religious groups are generally not expected to be intensely demanding. Weekly attendance is often seen as over-conforming, and “religiosity and spirituality should not require exuberant expression, particularly in public” (Bouma, 2006, p. 35). Australian society tends to permit people to believe what they like but does not to expect anyone to be explicit about putting beliefs into practice (Bouma, 2006), which does make it difficult for people to discuss their beliefs.

Noble (2001) agrees it is difficult to discuss issues surrounding spirituality or beliefs as there are “unfortunately few places in western culture where one can turn for help in understanding a spiritual event unless one is a member of organised religions and one’s experience does not conflict with its dogma (Noble, 2001, p.111). Many people in Western culture respond with embarrassment, discomfort or outright skepticism to experience that people in other cultures take for granted. Noble cites a participant Maya as saying ”It’s hard to talk about my experiences outside my native culture…it feels as if I’m exposing a side of myself that’s alien” (Noble, 2001, p.111).

In studies of children is appears easier to discuss elements of spirituality. Harrison (2000) has completed Australian studies on spiritual awareness in young gifted children. She reports on rich anecdotal evidence that is compelling: “In gifted children spiritual sensitivity encompasses precocious questions, unusual types of questions asked at an early age, and reported transcendent moments. It also encompasses areas of faith and
compassion. The seeking of the transcendent may be an experience of connection to something larger than oneself, to nature, the universe, or as an inner experience of wonder and awe” (Lovecky, cited in Harrison, 2000, p.32). Harrison’s (2000) research concurs with Giensenberg’s (2007), although as previously stated, Giesenber (2007) found the children in her study did not express a relationship with a transcendent being. Hyde (2005) has also completed an Australian study within Catholic primary schools and found that children’s spirituality “the felt sense, integrating awareness, weaving the threads of meaning and spiritual questing” could be supported within a primary religion education classroom but were inhibited by the pursuit of material gain and the trivialising of belief.

Again the notion that trivialising belief, making it unacceptable within societal norms, appears to affect the expression of spirituality. Wilson’s (1994) comment that religion was important to the women in her study during their teenage years but became irrelevant when they were older appears to support a transition in expressing religiosity or spirituality. Beliefs may be questioned and therefore faith was lost, or, as with giftedness, spiritual beliefs may be hidden in order to fit in with societal expectations of behaviour.

In terms of educational experiences, it appears that those students educated in religious based schools are more indoctrinated in their specific religion (Symes & Preston, 1997). It also appears the gifted individual fares better in religious schools due to the perception that giftedness is a ‘gift from god’ (Gross, 1993). However, such examples are often quoted from Christian religions and it is not known whether such beliefs also exist across other religions and cultures. Nor is giftedness defined well in terms of anything other than intellectual giftedness. Throughout the range of gifted studies presented, few are concerned with those of non-Western cultures. Widespread confusion and disagreement over concepts of giftedness seem to exist. "Giftedness is something that we invent, not something we discover. It is what one society or another wants it to be, and hence its conceptualization can change over time and place" (Sternberg & Davidson, cited in Fielder 1998, pp. 3-4).
To study spiritual intelligence scientifically appears to be difficult, the two may compliment each other but empirical evidence of spiritual intelligence is difficult to gather. Kerr (2002) discusses the blend of sage and science, where science is the discipline that teaches us to observe, to withhold assumptions, “to respect the accumulated learning of the scholars who have gone before. It teaches us independence of mind and the value of a rational search for the truth” (Kerr & McAlister, 2002, p.227) “but religious meditation and ceremony give broader truths, with many possible interpretations” (Kerr & McAlister, 2002, p.227). Spiritual intelligence involves understanding that there is not a distinction between real and not real, rather there are layers of realities, with different ways of knowing at each level (Kerr, 2000, p. 53).

Wigglesworth (2008) contends that the traits displayed by ‘spiritual leaders’ typically include descriptors such as: loving, kind, forgiving, peaceful, courageous, honest, generous, persistent, faithful, wise, and inspiring. Therefore we already have a general perception of what makes someone ‘spiritually intelligent’. What we do not yet have is a way of describing Spiritual Intelligence that is faith-neutral and specifically focused on the skills and abilities we are trying to attain when we seek spiritual growth (Wigglesworth, 2008).

4.7 SUMMARY

Whatever gifted adults may be, they are not people with talents that should be developed, but they are people with unusual minds; If they enter adulthood blind to their unusual mental capabilities, they may go through their lives fragmented, frustrated, unfulfilled and alienated from their innermost beings (Piirto, 1999, p. 349).

This chapter has dealt with a range of literature reporting on topics that relate to the analysis of this study. Although it is not possible to include a review of all the literature researched during the refinement of the study focus, the literature most pertinent to the current study is reviewed. I have attempted to provide a panoramic vista of the literature as it pertains to areas that will impact on this study and the perceptions of the participants. In line with the definition of ‘Vista’ as ‘a distant view or prospect; an awareness of a range of time, events, or subjects; a broad mental view (Free dictionary, 2008) I have attempted to maintain an almost phenomenological viewpoint throughout
this review, presenting the literature by the experts in the field of gifted education and other areas, and where possible, restricting my own commentary on their opinions. Realistically this has not been entirely possible as the researcher cannot entirely remove themselves from a study, as will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, and some areas invite more commentary than others, nevertheless the attempt has been made.

In this regard I have ‘listened’ to the opinions of others in terms of defining giftedness; including the characteristics of the gifted; outlining the myths surrounding giftedness; presenting the view of underachievement; investigating the deficit viewpoint; presenting various cultural conceptions of giftedness; and incorporated the literature on gifted adults, and moral, emotional, empathic and spiritual intelligences. This chapter has therefore reviewed the phenomenon of giftedness as it is presented by a range of researchers and theorists across a variety of disciplines.

Throughout this literature review there are still questions that remain unanswered:

- Are the gifted ‘other’?
- Are there cultural definitions of giftedness within Australia that contrast with Western definitions?
- Are gifted adults more inclined to be morally, emotionally, empathically and/or spiritually intelligent?
- To what extent do chance factors decide pathways of the gifted through life?

These are the main questions that will be addressed by the investigation into the lives of the gifted adults within this study.

The following chapter discusses the literature surrounding the methodology that provides the foundation for this study.
CHAPTER 5

The Odyssey

Illustration 9 – Incorporating perspectives

The original two separate paintings, Illustrations 5 and 6, were joined to incorporate all perspectives encountered within the research journey thus far. Icons of contrast and duality were joined to depict the incorporation of a range of perspectives and possibilities, as demonstrated through the choice of research methodology as the research odyssey continued.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

A singular discussion of the duality of perspectives and its portrayal visually in Illustration 9 is almost insulting in its simplicity. The phenomenon of giftedness, aspects of cultural diversity, the way in which adults develop their value systems and beliefs, have been previously investigated and resulted in a myriad of perspectives, as discussed in Chapter 4. The multiple methods used to research aspects of giftedness, culture and beliefs are similarly varied, and each researcher has their own definition and/or explanation of the way they understand their own unique research methodology. As with this study, the refining of methodology is ongoing throughout the course of a research project, as each researcher addresses the choice of ways to research their chosen topic.

When first approaching this research the decision of which method to use appeared simple, when researching the phenomenon of giftedness clearly phenomenology would be the ideal methodological approach. A qualitative case study provided the depth of interaction required, although the recruitment of participants needed careful ethical detail as discussed in chapters 3 and 6. Again, it seemed equally clear that the inclusion of an autobiographical component would address the issue of researcher bias and provide a forum for reflection (Gruppetta, 2004e). The decision to focus on the narrative presentation of the participants lives was also apparent from the early stages. Not only was it the most comfortable way for all parties to communicate, but when researching the ‘lived experience’ it needed to be told as a life ‘story’, not dissected into poorly related elements. There are however clear differences between the concepts of narrative research and those of stories, an issue that will be examined later within this chapter.

During the initial phases the research followed quite traditional methodology, however these methods were found inadequate to express the multiplicity of reflective metacognition within the researcher’s journey. The standard representation was without soul (Gruppetta, 2006b). There was no way to express the myriad thoughts, feelings and ideas that presented during encounters with participants, literature and the formation of ideas. Presenting ideas in only textual forms was also at odds with my own tendency
toward visual imagery, a legacy of my Indigenous heritage. Disenchanted with the standard results of quantitative research (Thomas & Pollio, 2002) I experimented with other qualitative methods, including art inquiry methodology. The use of collage provided more depth to investigate the experiences of the participants, and later the introduction of visual imagery, representative of elements of the research, enhanced presentation of the findings.

As the research momentum built other aspects required consideration. The participants approached their own roles from another perspective entirely; their view was ethnographical rather than phenomenological, as each was bound by their own experience within their cultural setting and background. Therefore the research methodology was broadened to include their perspectives of both the phenomenon and the way it should be investigated. Aspects of data collection became minutely examined, as interviews provided only one facet of their experience. The development of the value activity to increase their interaction supplemented the ‘art inquiry’ methodology, and again complimented ‘Indigenous ways of knowing’. As interaction with the participants also required interaction with representatives of some of their communities, due to the ethical requirements of the research, the cultural viewpoints of these communities also influenced the research, particularly the viewpoints of Maori and Aboriginal communities.

Yet, it was only in the later stages that the wider focus of the methodology became apparent. The variety of qualitative methods combined to form a ‘bricolage’ of both research technique and data collection, effectively solving the puzzle (Appendix A16) of best approach to the phenomenon. There was no one correct way – there were multiple ways, multiple layers and perspectives, all working together to provide a multi-layered viewpoint of the phenomenon of the gifted adult. The detailed applications of case study methodology, phenomenology, ethnographic enquiry, narrative and art inquiry methods, as they relate to this study, will be discussed within the phases of the research journey toward a coherent cohesive research strategy are dissected, examined and reconstructed within this chapter.
5.2 QUALITATIVE STUDY

As the purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of Gifted and Talented Adults in more depth, qualitative methodology was the most reasonable choice. Qualitative research is “an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter disciplinary…it is many things at the same time…Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1048). Although qualitative research is considered by some to be an easier alternative to quantitative methodology as it does not require structured measurement and statistics (Vockell & Asher, 1995), in reality, “good qualitative research is no easier to conduct than good quantitative research” (Vockell & Asher, 1995, p.194), and indeed should not be compared as each serves a different purpose.

Quantitative research is used for a broader perspective and larger sample group, usually to test a specific theory, whereas qualitative research uses a smaller sample group and examines a situation in more detail. The qualitative researcher searches for the “nugget of essential meaning” (Kvale, 1996, p.3) within the data collected from the participants, a search only possible with a small number of participants in order to examine their perspectives in detail. Qualitative research is “more intensive than extensive in its objectives” (McCracken, 1988, p.17); rather than survey the terrain, “it mines it” (McCracken, 1988, p.17). An integral part of qualitative research is the refinement of the study by analysing the themes and gradually winnowing them down “to those that you want to examine in detail” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.43). More detail of this technique will be provided in Chapter Seven.

By employing a variety of qualitative methodologies during the course of the study a greater range of data was generated for analysis. The wealth of data collected also provided an effective means of ‘triangulation’ (Burns, 1997; Leedy, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985a; Merriam, 1989; Vockell & Asher, 1995) necessary to the legitimisation of the study, an aspect discussed later in this chapter.
5.3 CASE STUDY

The utilisation of qualitative case study methodology was specifically focused on the collection of data provided by a small number of participants within this geographic area, through personal interviews, collage and value activities, observations, and ongoing discussion. This type of case study research encompassed several areas relating to qualitative case study methodology, including phenomenology, ethnographic enquiry, narrative and art inquiry methods, each requiring an explanation of their methodological implications and justification of their use for this study over an alternative technique (Hart, 1998).

Many researchers use the term case study when unable to justify their methodology by other means. “The case study has unfortunately been used as a ‘catch all’ category for anything that does not fit into experimental, survey or historical methods” (Burns, 1997, p.364), despite this assertion, there can be no doubt this is a bona fide qualitative case study. To “qualify as a case study, it must be a bounded system, an entity in itself” (Burns, 1997, p.364), and “should focus on a bounded subject/unit that is either very representative or extremely atypical” (Burns, 1997, p.364). As this study was confined to the experiences of participants within a specified area, it qualifies as being focused on a bounded unit. As the participants were representative of Gifted Adults within Sydney, New South Wales (N.S.W.) and therefore provided a range of experiences atypical to the experiences of the Gifted Adults within that bounded unit, the use of case study methodology was warranted.

A case study is “more adapted to a description of the multiple realities encountered at any given site” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 42) and permits an in-depth understanding of the subject by focusing on discovery rather than confirmation (Burns, 1997). A case study generally requires a small sample group, typically seven to eight participants (Burns, 1997). The case study “allows, indeed endorses, a focus on just one example, or…one individual, or a small number of individuals” (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001, p. 71), therefore, the small number of participants that were involved in this study was also justified in order to allow for in-depth analysis. Again, “as a form of research, case
study is defined by interest in individual cases” (Stake, 2000, p.435). A case study may be quantitative or qualitative or a combination of both (Stake, 2005) but is further defined by its intensive focus on the case itself. As Stake explains:

As topics of inquiry, ethnomethodologists study methods, such as methods of doctoring, methods of cooking, examining how things get done, and the work and play of people (Garfinkel, 1967). Coming to understand a case usually requires extensive examining of how things get done, but the prime referent in case study is the case, not the methods by which the case operates. An Agency may be a case... But the reasons for child neglect or the policies of dealing with neglectful parents seldom would be considered a case. We think of those topics as generalities rather than specificities. The case is a specific one (Stake, 2005, p.444).

The need to focus specifically on the case being researched can be difficult; for example it is hard to see where the participant ends and the environment begins (Goode & Hart, 1952, cited in Stake, 2005), nevertheless these issues of specific focus are part of case study methodology. Researchers must clarify the ‘bounded area’ of the case study and acknowledge environmental issues where they specifically impact on the case at hand.

The case study is also “intensive and rich in subjective data” (Burns, 1997, p.365) providing “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 42) through reporting on data obtained from observations, interviews and document analysis. The term ‘thick description’ is not necessarily a description of the physical aspects of the participants’ cultural setting, but it allows the exploration of deeper meaning structures within the ‘stories’ provided by the participants, even those the participants themselves may be unable to confirm or validate (van Manen, 2000). “A thin description simply reports facts, independent of intention or circumstances. A thick description, in contrast, gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organized the experience, and reveals the experience as a process” (Denzin, 1998, p.324). Again acknowledging affects of participants’ environments on their lived experiences.

Through the use of case study methodology and utilising a range of data collection procedures as discussed in Chapter Seven, this study was able to identify issues relating to the “contemporary phenomenon” (Burns, 1997, p.365) of the experiences of Gifted Adults within their own cultural contexts.
The initial idea incorporated in Illustration 6 was then expanded to incorporate the researcher’s eye, the eye with which to view the research, with the original painting as the pupil. Seen in this perspective it then becomes a ‘disembodied research eye’, one that is necessary for phenomenology. The researcher’s bias and previous viewpoints are stated and reviewed and continually set aside in order to research the phenomenon effectively (Creswell, 1998; Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

5.4 PHENOMENOLOGY

The discussion of phenomenology is essential to this study due to its focused phenomenological base. Various aspects of this phenomenological study will also be covered within this section including a discussion of the researcher as an instrument of research; Autophenomenology; Autobiographical research and the vulnerability of the observer.

Phenomenology is the study of the lived experience from the unique perspective of the individual that is engaged in the experience (Thibodeau & MacRae, 1997). It is a theoretical perspective where the researcher is concerned with the way the participant views the world (van Manen, 2000) and their perceptions of it. Byrne (2001, p.2) citing
Leonard (1993) refers to Husserl (1900), a German philosopher, as the ‘father’ of phenomenology. Husserl referred to phenomenology as a descriptive science that is concerned with universal essences rather than facts (Lovat, 1995). Yet Husserl warned of avoiding the temptation to speculate, hypothesize and judge, as with other research methods. In phenomenology, the researcher must suspend their own judgements in order to learn to see what stands before their eyes (Husserl, cited in Lovat, 1995).

In spite of this directive, Lovat (1995) describes a method of teaching religious studies where the student is immersed within the phenomena of a particular religion for a short time. This would appear to be in contrast to the ideology of phenomenology, where an objective stance is perceived as the goal. However, immersion in a phenomenon does not necessarily taint the phenomenological methodology. The researcher assumes a subordinate position, channelling thoughts back through the participant to gather their essential lived experience (Shultz, 2002).

Husserl’s work on phenomenology was reconceived by Heidegger (Leonard, 1993, cited by Byrne, 2001, p.2). Heidegger acknowledged that gender, culture, history, and related life experiences “prohibit an objective viewpoint” (Leonard, 1993 cited by Byrne, 2001, p.2) yet enable people to experience shared practices and common meanings. These common meanings are possible because “as human beings, our meanings are co-developed through the experience of being born human, our collective life experiences, our background, and the world in which we live” (Byrne, 2001, p.2). Thomas and Pollio (2002, p.11) criticise the current trend to describe participants’ experiences within the “context of a culture”. They assert that traditional phenomenology searches for universal essences divorced from cultural context (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Phenomenology has also been criticised because the vast majority of phenomenological researchers have not participated in the processes that are the focus of their enquiries (Stockard 1987 cited by Richardson, 1999). These researchers “typically relied upon the secondhand accounts of distant correspondents” (Stockard, 1987 cited by Richardson, 1999, p.57), yet the point of phenomenological research is to ‘borrow’ other peoples’ experiences and their reflections on their experiences “in order to better understand
human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience” (van Manen, 1990 cited by Shultz, 2002, p.206). The goal of phenomenology is to provide ‘voice’ for the participant, not to interpret or subjugate meaning through the lenses of the researcher’s perception (Shultz, 2002), and Richardson (1999) reiterates this point. He contends, “phenomenological researchers are different from contemporary ethnographers in this regard too, because they do not adopt a sceptical attitude towards the statements that are made by their interviewees” (Richardson, 1999, p.57). These points made by Shultz (2002) and Richardson (1999) are integral to this study. The voice of each participant is respected and preserved, the ‘truth’ provided by the participants is accepted as the truth sought by the researcher, and statements provided by participants are respected as compelling and legitimate sources of expertise in the area of study.

Even so, all researchers interpret their data, that is the nature of research (Burns, 1997; Charles & Mertler, 2002; Denzin & Loncoln, 2003). Whilst phenomenology permits the researcher “to draw connections between the everyday ways in which people make sense of the world” (Thibodeau & MacRae, 1997, p.67), as individuals rather than through a collective cultural meaning, understanding is always an interpretation (van Manen, 2000). Thomas and Pollio (2002) insist the goal of phenomenology is to provide interpretation. The researcher must interpret the participants’ experience, as the participants see it, rather than infer meaning through their own personal biases (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Although we each interpret others on the basis of our own understandings, and only when the researcher is open to new ideas is phenomenological interviewing actually possible (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Thomas and Pollio (2002) have developed an interesting method of bracketing their researchers’ biases and perceptions prior to phenomenological interviewing. The researcher is interviewed by an experienced member of the research group concerning the phenomena under investigation. The researcher then transcribes their own interview whilst searching for biases and perspectives toward the phenomena. “The goal of the bracketing interview is to highlight to the researcher his/her pre-understandings about the topic of investigation” (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p.33; Creswell, 1998). Once noted, the researcher is then expected to ensure their pre-conceptions about the topic are set
aside during the interviewing process. Thomas and Pollio’s (2002) method included ongoing discussion of the study with the phenomenological research team. This addressed changes to perceptions throughout the research process and permitted reflection by the researcher. “Bracketing is not a one-time event” (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p.33), a researcher’s biases are only temporarily suspended whilst interviewing, the research demands an ongoing cycle of reflection throughout the study in order to maintain awareness of these issues. Creswell (1998) again suggests the researcher must bracket his or her own preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of the informants.

Creswell (1998) contends that phenomenological analysis requires the researcher to state his or her assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation, and then bracket or suspend these preconceptions in order to fully understand the experience of the subject and not impose their own hypothesis on the experience of the participant (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998, p.55) also states “the researcher needs to decide how and in what way his or own personal experiences will be introduced into the study”, confirming the necessity of including the researcher’s own perspectives and experiences within a phenomenological study.

5.4.1 RESEARCHER AS INSTRUMENT

The researcher is the instrument, therefore I am the instrument for this study, and qualitative research is always from someone’s perspective (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). The affect of researcher ‘assumptions and biases’, and the “value judgements of the researcher are an important (and often overlooked) ingredient” (Tolich & Davison, 1999: 42) in research. Therefore that perspective, those values, assumptions and biases should be stated from the outset. Autobiographical research allows us to explore aspects of our interpretive horizons (Roth, 2000 cited in Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002) and thus of our biases. These forms of self-exposure have recently led to the flourishing of autoethnography where “investigators explore in depth the ways in which their personal histories saturate the ethnographic inquiry” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p.1028). But our personal histories and biases saturate all research inquiry. Inclusion of the researcher’s
autobiography, their prior history and interest in the topic, as well as changes to their thoughts and feelings throughout the research journey, will enrich the study. The researcher as first participant is able to increase the trust between researcher and participant, and equalise their relationship (Gruppetta, 2004e). In this way my bias as researcher was established, and the findings are further enhanced because readers are given a contextual frame for the research interpretation.

As previously stated, phenomenology is concerned with the way people perceive their world (van Manen, 2000), yet as researchers we also have perceptions of our world, and these are shaped and/or restricted by our own experiences. These biases must be acknowledged in order to become effective researchers. Interviewers are generally expected to keep their ‘selves’ out of the interview process; “Neutrality is the byword” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p.31). However, it is also argued that all research is ideologically driven. “There is no value-free or bias-free design” (Janesick, 2003, p.56).

Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p.23) confirm that behind every interpretive study stands the biographically, multiculturally situated researcher, “who speaks from a particular class, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective”. Within that multi-situated researcher there are layers. Settelmaier and Taylor (2002) refer to a ‘top-layer’ of self-knowledge that is always present, a layer constructed and never really questioned. Yet beneath this layer are other issues that have been hidden from sight, and these come to the surface when one engages in critical self-reflectivity in combination with the act of writing (Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002). “The research self is not separable from the lived self. Who we are and what we can be, what we can study, and how we can write about what we study are all tied” (Richardson, 2003, p.197). Dealing with one’s own biases before interpreting and representing others becomes an important question of research ethics, we need to ask the question ‘who is the self that does the research?’ (Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002) How does my life history, experiences, issues and stories from my life affect my research and my attitude toward what I hear from the participants? (Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002)
Many researchers now acknowledge that they are not disinterested but rather deeply invested in their studies, personally and profoundly (Bullough & Pinngar, 2001, cited in Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002). Tolich and Davidson (1999) again suggest the best place to start your research is with your ‘personal biography’, an explanation of who and where you are. They also discuss the need to get “out of our own way” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p.183), to overcome ourselves, our own prior knowledge when crossing the boundaries into qualitative research. A notion that links to the method used by Thomas and Pollio (2002) where the personal biases of the researcher are identified and put aside prior to engaging with participants.

Qualitative researchers identify their biases and ideology as part of their conceptual frame for the study, within qualitative research “there is no attempt to pretend that research is value free” (Janesick, 2003, p.56). Rather than an invisible author, where the author’s voice is presumed absent from the truth of the context, we “see the author’s hand there, albeit in carefully disguised form” (Lincoln, 1997, p.39). It is impossible to set aside our own biases completely, and indeed not desirable (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). We cannot lose ourselves and become the other person, the best we can do is mediate between the two of us within meaningful and empathic dialogue (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Therefore the position of this researcher must be stated and providing my autobiographical perspective provides meaning to the dialogue.

5.4.2 AUTOPHENOMENOLOGY

Theoretically autophenomenology is not only achievable, it can be justified (Gruppetta, 2004e). The phenomenological researcher is required to promote an “air of equality” (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p.24) rather than an air of superiority due to age, position, power or prior knowledge, and the participant is the real authority. Yet how can the researcher be ‘equal’ if they are not willing to share the participant’s position by becoming a participant themselves? (Gruppetta, 2004e) It is not until “we begin to talk from our own dark recesses can we fully appreciate the risk for others…to open up to us” (Rockhill, 1987, p.13, cited in Church, 1995, p.67). Thomas and Pollio (2002, p.4) assert participants must be “co-researchers not subjects” in successful phenomenological
studies. A point that can be taken one step further to include the researcher as a participant (Gruppetta, 2004e).

The technique used by Thomas and Pollio (2002) to bracket the researcher’s perspectives and biases was adapted to include an autobiographical component for this study. The researcher simply began by analysing her own perspective of the phenomenon prior to beginning interviewing and the analysis was used to fine tune the questions the researcher intended to use in interviews. I wrote my own responses to the topic and then analysed them for traces of bias. Once identified, these biases were suspended (bracketed) during interviews with participants in order to fulfill the requirements of a phenomenological study (Gruppetta, 2004e). The researcher’s journal then serves a similar purpose to the ongoing reflective discussion. Although Thomas and Pollio (2002) recommended sharing journal entries with a research ‘team’ to identify shifts in viewpoints throughout the study, this was not practical in individual research. To ensure this aspect of the criteria for phenomenology were met, and any researcher bias clearly identified, reflective entries were shared with my supervisor and analysed for traces of bias. The use of a research journal was effective as a technique for both recording events and reflecting on those events during the course of the study (Burns, 1997; Vockell & Asher, 1995) and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7.

5.4.3 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BASED RESEARCH

There has been an increase in autobiographical based research techniques recently, particularly those involving personal narratives. Auto-ethnography is usually the term of choice for studies connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). However, other forms of autobiographical research are open to investigation. For instance, if one were to study a phenomenon rather than a ‘cultural place’ the study would involve auto-phenomenology rather than auto-ethnography. The use of the author as subject establishes researcher bias unequivocally. The author as first participant in a study becomes not only the key informant of their own experience but also extends empathy to the experiences of the other participants, increasing the in-depth nature of the study (Gruppetta, 2004e).
Phenomenology is usually not autobiographical, due largely to the researcher’s goal of suspending their own perspective of the phenomenon under investigation whilst engaging in the study (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). However, the researcher’s bias must be stated within qualitative studies, as it is integral to ethical research (Burns, 1997; Charles & Mertler, 2002). Equally, the researcher’s interest in the phenomenon is quite often related to their own personal history. Therefore autobiographical data provided by the researcher enhances understanding not only of the subject matter covered, but often demonstrates the researcher’s reason for investigating the topic. Thus the personal link between researcher and their subject matter is acknowledged, and this permits the researcher to explore changes in their own perceptions throughout the study, hence the trend for autobiographical studies in postmodern research representation.

For Denzin (1989, cited in Reed-Danahay, 1997) autoethnography is characterised by a blend of autobiography and ethnography, where the writer does not adopt an ‘objective outsider’ viewpoint. It differs from other research by incorporation of elements of the researcher’s own life experience when writing about others. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) cite as evidence Kenyatta (1938), Tung (1930), Nakeane (1970) and Yang (1972) as indigenous anthropologists writing ethnographically about their own cultural group. Yet, only Yang (1972) “wrote a self-reflexive essay about the experience of doing an autoethnography” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.184). Reed-Danahay (1997) differentiates between studies that are truly autobiographical and those that merely reflect the researcher’s responses to the research at hand, yet both are classified as autobiographical studies.

“The voice of the insider is assumed to be more ‘true’ than that of the outsider in current debate” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.4), hence the need for other researchers not linked to a specific culture or sub-culture to locate a ‘key-informant’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Ellis and Bochner (2000) maintain the autoethnographic researcher is a full ‘insider’ by virtue of being a ‘native’. Within autoethnographic studies, the autobiographical notes of the author attempt to position the researcher within the role of ‘key-informant’. The key informant, the “consummate insider” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p.27), is a full member of the culture or sub-cultures being studied, and as such is
privy to information that may be withheld from the researcher. The key informant also understands cultural norms that may be misinterpreted by the researcher, and therefore is able to clarify and confirm the researcher’s interpretation (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

By these definitions, a researcher close enough to their native culture to understand the cultural norms, and be privy to culturally specific information is able to operate as their own key informant within the study. Yet Reed-Danahay (1997, p.4) contends the autoethnographer is “not completely at home” within their cultural identity. Although linked by culture to the “phenomenon of displacement” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.4) that positions them outside the dominant Western masculine discourse, they maintain a dual identity. Neither insider nor outsider, the researcher is positioned both within the culture and as an external observer, which then raises the question of truth within their research. It must also be noted, that these researchers, those operating as their own key informants, are not able to speak for every individual within that culture. One Asian cannot speak for all Asians, one Aboriginal cannot speak for all Aborigines, nor can one woman speak for all women (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002). Nevertheless, they provide an authoritative voice that permits an insightful glimpse of an otherwise hidden world.

Despite the insight provided within autobiographical studies, these new texts are often criticised as narcissistic and self-indulgent (Nader, 1993 cited in Denzin, 1997). Bruner (1993, cited in Denzin, 1997, p.218) cautioned that the writer must always “guard against putting the personal self so deeply back into the text that it completely dominates, so that the work becomes narcissistic and egotistical’. Authors still fret about the potential contamination through subjectivity, that it is a blemish upon research that should be minimised (Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002). Many contend that autobiographical research is a form of arts based fictional writing which contributes to scientific dilettantism (Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002). That it is research only for the pleasure or benefit of the researcher. Only when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to, and bearing on, the context and ethos of a time, does the self-study become research (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, cited in Settelmaier & Taylor, 2002).
Because the phenomenological approach is primarily an attempt to understand empirical matters from the perspective of those being studied (Creswell, 1998) rather than from the perspective of the researcher, few would consider an autobiographical study appropriate. Yet, Ellis and Bochner (2000) contend that qualitative research is characterised by empathetic understanding and personal involvement. Rather than narcissism Ellis and Bochner (2000) assert that the self-questioning required of auto-ethnography is extremely difficult. I also found auto-phenomenology to be complex. Honest autobiographical exploration generates a lot of fear and doubt. There is emotional pain and the vulnerability of revealing yourself, and having no control over how readers interpret what you have written, nor are you able to take it back. “It’s hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.738). As the researcher I have no anonymity to protect my identity, I am myself vulnerable. An issue acknowledged by de Laine (2000), she contends that these types of researchers are “willing to take more risks and write about personal experiences, which many conventional ethnographers object to” (de Laine, 2000, p.98).

5.4.4 THE VULNERABLE OBSERVER

It is assumed that first person narratives are valuable, that individuals have access to their own experiences, and these are the site of personal meaning. Epiphanies, in the form of particular experiences, are assumed to leave great marks or scars on a person (Denzin, 2001), and individuals are assumed to have public and private authentic selves, where the private self is the real self. Yet, “there is no essential self or private, or real self behind the public self. There are only different selves, different performances, different ways of being” (Denzin, 2001, p.28) in a social situation.

Researchers are directed to the study and collection of the personal experience and self-stories people tell one another about the important events in their lives (Denzin, 1989, p.43, cited in Denzin, 1997, p.47). These narratives work outward from the researcher’s biography, entangling his or her tales of the self with the stories told by others and “how our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others is and has always been our topic” (Denzin, 1997, p.27). Ellis and Berger (2003) agree that a ‘double subjectivity’
abounds in interviewing, where each participant’s feelings, thoughts and attitudes are affected by the reciprocity between the participants, so too can the personal and social identities of the interviewer and the interviewee become important factors and change the relationship.

“Academia calls for an impartial observer, yet we search for the epiphanies of our subjects but fail to acknowledge our own” (Gruppetta, 2004e, p. 5). Intelligence breaks through, the ‘ah ha’ experience is acknowledged, provided it is related to intelligence not to emotion. But what of our emotions, these are meant to be buried – at what cost? (Gruppetta, 2004e). Research practitioners are warned about becoming over-involved with those in their care (Tolich & Davidson, 1999:16). The worst sin is to be ‘too personal’ (Behar, 1996:13, cited in de Laine, 2000:98). Despite this, Kvale (1996, cited in Thomas & Pollio, 2002) suggests the success of phenomenological interviewing depends on the sensitivity of the interviewer. Thomas and Pollio (2002) again discuss the necessity of caring for participants as we witness the essences of their experiences. Behar (1996:5) refers to anthropology as “the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left”, and also one that breaks your heart. In this context she refers to the notion of the ‘vulnerable observer’ (Behar, 1996). Leith (2004) also discusses the consequences of such witnessing in regard to journalists recording events in the field. In the process of witnessing researchers risk burning themselves out emotionally, some acknowledgement of these emotional experiences throughout the research process should be included in post-modern qualitative studies (Gruppetta, 2004e). Within this study the researcher’s journal also serves as a record of these emotional experiences and dilemmas. In order to comprehensively analyse my own reaction to participant interactions and situations that arose during the course of the research my own feelings, frustrations and personal observations were recorded as part of the journal record.

Researchers too search for new ideas, new fields to study, new cultures and sub-cultures to explore, and new ways to explore them. Disenchanted with the results of quantitative research (Thomas & Pollio, 2002), postmodern researchers experiment with qualitative methods without acknowledgement of the affect on themselves. Some level of mutually
negotiated self-disclosure is fundamental to the research relationship (Church, 1995). However, self-disclosure requires an emotional commitment from the researcher. This may be difficult for some. Church (1995) refers to her own experience of research training, where subjectivity and emotion were schooled into hiding. Whilst being educated into the necessary skills to undertake a research project she found the process had simultaneously stripped her of the emotional attachments which would actually make it possible (Church, 1995). I too struggled with the emotional attachment to my research, and personal feelings when interacting with participants as it contrasts with the need to remove my own biases from the research. Again aspects of my own self-disclosure had to be carefully examined in order to ensure participants’ responses to questions were not tainted with my own viewpoints. Techniques for addressing these issues will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Personal narratives have long been tradition in anthropology and human history (Behar, 1995). It seems we are turning full circle, removing ourselves from the objective viewpoint and returning to the story telling of long ago. Gergen and Gergen (2000, p.217) agree, accounts of experience seem more adequately understood as the outcome of a particular textual/cultural history in which people learn “to tell stories of their lives to themselves and others”. We connect with each other in past and present contexts (Thomas & Pollio, 2002) and researchers must confirm this connection, not only with their participants but with themselves. In a Postructuralist frame “There is no such thing as removing the observers from the knowledge acquisition process, since to do so would be like trying to see without eyes” (Stivers, 1993, p.311, cited in Church, 1995, p.5). The researcher must acknowledge the self, not just the academic self, but also the emotional self (Grupetta, 2004e). Subjectivity is not possible without emotional connection and there is a place in academe for the emotional voice (Church, 1995).
The previous view provided in Illustration 8 may not support the participants within their research journey. The researcher as only observer and recorder may inadvertently cause harm (Church, 1995; Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Therefore the ‘disembodied research eye’ must be tempered within a sea of compassion. The researcher must acknowledge her own vulnerability and that of the participants. The sharing of intimate aspects of life experiences requires compassionate interaction and understanding of the participants’ viewpoints and memories.

5.5 ETHNOGRAPHY

As previously stated the original methodology selected was phenomenology within a case study of a small number of participants, with an auto phenomenology component to effectively state researcher’s bias/prior perspectives. However as the research progressed it became apparent the participants were conducting auto ethnography as they were each bound to their own individual lived experience within the context in which they lived it. In the sense that the study focused on the phenomenon of giftedness, participants were bound by their understanding of giftedness as it was perceived within their own cultural experience, as well as the common perceptions of giftedness defined by mainstream IQ tests.

As some discussion of ethnography has been included in the previous section on ‘autobiographical based research’, and the discussion of cultural issues has already been
covered in Chapter Four, this section briefly defines the concepts of ethnography as an influence on this study.

“The word ‘ethnography’ literally means writing about people” (Burns, 1997, p.297), this broad subjective use of the term does not define it effectively in terms of qualitative research methodology. Technically the report of any study involving humans could be defined as ‘writing about people’. Phenomenology searches for universal essences divorced from cultural context (Thomas & Pollio, 2002), a concept that appears to contrast with ethnographic principles. Yet, there is an intricate link between ethnography and phenomenology, as the two are related but not interchangeable. It could be summed up as: where phenomenology is a singular viewpoint (Thibodeau & MacRae, 1997), ethnography is concerned with the shared viewpoint as “ethnographers are attempting to capture the social reality of a group (Burns, 1997, pp. 299-300).

Phenomenology is concerned with the way people perceive their world (van Manen, 2000), the lens with which they view it (Hall, 1997), and the experiences that shaped their lens or viewpoint. Ethnography provides a broader perspective, it “accepts that human behaviour occurs within a context” (Burns, 1997, p.298) and that this context will affect that behaviour. Therefore “ethnography studies the culturally shared, common sense perceptions of everyday experiences” (van Manen, 2000). In order to effectively investigate the phenomenon of giftedness as perceived by the participants it must be acknowledged that their own cultural context will affect their manifestation of giftedness, or at least their perceptions of it. Stake’s (2005) contention that it is hard to see where the participant ends and their environment begins is valid in terms of this research. As discussed in detail in the findings the participants were unable to divorce their cultural context from their lived experiences of giftedness. Their perceptions of the phenomenon of giftedness were grounded in their own cultural and environmental interactions, therefore this aspect needed to be incorporated into the study.

This study interprets the individual viewpoint of its participants via the interviewing process, and a shared perspective was achieved through analysis of the commonalities of experience as a gifted adult, effectively incorporating both phenomenological and
ethnographic viewpoints. However, it could be contended that this study does not meet the ethnographic criteria due to the need for a ‘natural setting’. A concept Burns (1997) explains thusly:

> Ethnographers recognise that the things people say and do depend on the social context in which they find themselves. They urge, therefore, that social life be studied as it occurs, in natural settings rather than ‘artificial’ ones created only for the purposes of research (p.301).

Whilst it could be argued that the participants in this study were not viewed in a naturalistic setting during the course of the research as the majority of the interviews and activities were conducted in neutral meeting places, rather than within their natural environments, realistically these participants do not have a ‘natural setting’ pertinent to their roles as a gifted adult. The ethnographical requirement was met during the final interviews, which were held in the participants’ ‘home’ environments, whether work or home settings, and therefore their own ‘natural’ setting. Regardless of setting, these people were experts on the subject of the study, the experience of the gifted adult in Australia. As Burns (1997) confirms “in ethnography, people are not subjects; they are experts on what the ethnographer wants to find out” (p. 297). When they moved from their own naturalistic setting to the shared interview space, they brought their expertise with them (Gruppetta, 2003a).

### 5.6 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry is increasingly used within the field of educational research (Hones, 1996), as it has shown itself to be a congenial and useful research tool (Conle, 2000). Narrative analysis is the contextual analysis of stories (Bailey, 1996) provided by the participants. Narrative research “can be considered research using texts as the main source of data to inform a study” (Reason, 2001, p. 94).

As Cole (1989) so aptly described the differences between the viewpoints of his supervisors, and explained his own journey toward narrative forms of research, he succinctly stated the problem of losing the details of an individual life by burying it under “professional jargon” (p.17). It is possible to use theory as a means to getting to

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the core of things but in doing so, explain "away those people" (Cole, 1989, p. 28) involved in a study. His citation of the words of his supervisor explain it best:

The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is their story (Cole, 1989, p.7).

The stories of the participants in a study are important because “human beings listen and tell stories. We use narrative to communicate and understand people and events. We think and dream in narrative” (Conle, 2000, p. 49). It is through narrative that cultures have “created and expressed their world views and have provided models of identity and agency to their members” (Bruner, 1996, cited in Conle, 2000, P.49). On a cultural or community level, “narratives convey norms and values to newcomers” (Mattingly, 1991, cited in Reason, 2001, p.94). The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of “the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, cited in Reason, 2001, p. 94). Narrative is a human way of thinking, the way people make sense of their worlds and construct their identities (Bruner, 1987, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002), “of course, it is not possible to represent a life as it is actually lived or experienced” (Denzin, 1997, p.61). Yet it is possible to represent a life, or its meanings, “as it is told in narrative, a proverb, a story, a slice of conversation, or a folktale” (Bruner, 1986, p.6), spoken, performed, told and retold in the narrative form, this is the realm of lived experience that is recoverable” (Denzin, 1997, p.61).

The terms ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’ are often used interchangeably within research literature, although earlier works tend to use the term ‘story’ and more recent studies focus more on the ‘narrative’. Definitions of the difference between a narrative and a story are often unclear and these terms are discussed throughout the research literature. Denzin (1989) contends that personal experience narratives and self stories differ in several ways. “These narratives do not necessarily position the self of the teller in the centre of the story, as self stories do” (Denzin, 1989, p. 187, cited in Denzin, 1989, p.44), although they may. Their focus is on shareable experience. Personal experience narratives are more likely to be based on anecdotal, everyday, commonplace experiences, while self stories involve pivotal, often critical life experiences (Denzin,
1989). They “need not entertain or recreate cherished values and memories of a group, while personal experience narratives do” (Stahl, 1977, p.19, Cited in Denzin, 1989, p.44). Self stories are often mandated by a group; personal experience narratives are not. “Self stories are often told to groups, while personal experience narratives may be told only to another individual. These two biographical forms are alike, however, in that they both rest on personal experiences (Denzin, 1989, p.187, cited in Denzin, 1989, p.44).

Martin (1986) contends a story is made up in various ways with the preverbal materials in chronological order:

This is achieved at a certain price: it implies what the narrator is telling is a chronological story (fabula) – one that the reader tries to reconstruct in the right temporal order – and that the elements of narration are deviation from a simple tale that existed beforehand. The result is a powerful method of dissecting a narrative, but it pays scant heed to the narrator’s structural reintegration of the materials in larger units of action and theme. That is why some theorists hold that there is no reason, in principle or fact, to reconstruct a hypothetical chronological ‘story’ from which the written narrative deviates (Martin, 1986, p.109).

Therefore the sequence of a narrative is a theoretical construction, made on the basis of the laws of everyday logic, an order of events as told in chronological sequence in the fibula. The reader will assume chronological order due to everyday logic, “one cannot arrive in a place before one has set out to go there” (Bal, 1997, p.80). A story too, must be more than just an enumeration of events in serial order; it must organize them into “an intelligible whole, of a sort such that we can always ask what is the ‘thought’ of this story” (Ricoeur, 1990a, p.65). Equally there is a threefold present within the tale, a present of future things, a present or past things and a present of present things – “Henceforth, that is from now on, I commit myself to doing that tomorrow. The present of the past? Now I intend to do that because I just realised that…The present of the present? Now I am doing it, because now I can do it” (Ricoeur, 1990a, p.60). This element enhances the narrative because in the process of relating the narrative the participant has the benefit of hindsight:

A real time, life experience can only measure what we can see, during the time of the life experience. When we step back and separate ourselves from a lesson-learned, life
experience, we receive what is referred to as ‘hindsight’. Hindsight is the process of deriving meaning from what we have seen or experienced. It’s an examination of the ‘lesson learned’. Hindsight allows us to reflect and clearly see our past, then with depth perception, connect it to our ‘now’. When we fuse these two pictures together we gain optimal focus and extraordinary clarity. It allows us to shed light on a decade old event with pristine, peripheral vision. Hindsight lets us start from the beginning, middle or end. From here we can go fast or slow; up or down, forward or backwards. We can even pause…or zoom in and inspect…It allows us to see clearly even from a great distance of years. Therefore hindsight could not possibly be 20/20…In truth, hindsight is at least 40/20, which is exceptional vision…your perception is amazingly sharper and loaded with much more detail so you can learn the life lesson. It was impossible to do this when you were closer and actually living the experience in real time (Briggs, 2005, p.5).

Zweibel (2005) confirms Briggs’ viewpoint and provides three categories of hindsight. These are lessons learned from mistakes made; those learned from opportunities missed; and those learned from opportunities realized; “Hindsight learning includes all those after-the-fact realizations that we somehow come to understand in a deep and meaningful way” (Zweibel, 2005, p. 3).

Rachlinski (1998) contends it is important to distinguish “between hindsight bias and the more ordinary process of learning from experience” (p.575). Hindsight exaggerates one’s ability to know the future and virtually every study on judging hindsight has concluded that events seem more predictable than they actually are (Rachlinski, 1998). Hindsight bias is a phenomenon that psychologists have repeatedly demonstrated where people overstate the predictability of past events, consistently exaggerating what could have been anticipated in foresight (Rachlinski, 1998). The findings of ‘hindsight bias’ contradict a person’s ability to learn from experience. The tendency toward “I should have know it all along” (Bukszar & Connolly, 1988, p.630) impacts on affective areas, people are puzzled by their poor decision making, and search for confirming information in retrospective accounts of the events (Bukszar & Connolly, 1988; Mackay & McKiernan, 2004). These tendencies can be derivatives of another disruptive bias known as ‘creeping determinism’:

Creeping determinism is a phenomenon that can lead unknowingly to misinterpretation, through an inherent human tendency to gravitate towards determinist explanation of history that result from the process of retrospection itself. In other words, the logic of past events leads us to believe that they could not have happened otherwise (Mackay & McKiernan, 2004, p.165).
Everyone is familiar with the feeling they knew it all along, and it is easy to be wise after an event (Rachlinski, 1998). Therefore it is a human tendency to explain circumstances surrounding an event that could only be seen in hindsight as they were not visible to the person involved at the time the event occurred. Again the sequence of events seems perfectly logical in hindsight and contributes to the development of the life story, creating a plot that rationalises the whole.

In basic terms a ‘plot’ is all the events in a story working toward the achievement of a particular goal or purpose. Martin (1986) contends that plot is crucial to defining a narrative. “The literary term for narrative structure is of course ‘plot’…plot is formed from a combination of temporal succession and causality. As E.M. Forster put it, ‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a story. ‘The king died and then the queen died of grief’ is a plot (Martin, 1986, p.81). Ricoeur (1990a) elaborates “as a consequence, an event must be more than just a singular occurrence. It gets its definition from its contribution to the development of the plot” (Ricoeur, 1990a, p.65). Therefore the analysis of an event is related to its consequences for the development of the narrative as a whole. The event might only occur once, yet its occurrence is crucial to the development of the character, whereas another event might occur repeatedly but have no bearing on the outcome. Within this causal analysis (Ricoeur, 1990a) it is essential to examine antecedents and consequences and their contribution to the entire life experience. For instance: “if this X had not occurred that Y which did occur would not have happened or would have been different” (Ricoeur, 1990a:126). In essence this analysis relies on the clarity of hindsight in order for the participant “to judge what difference its non occurrence would have made in light of what else he knows about the situation” (Ricoeur, 1990a:126).

Denzin (1998) refers to these significant life events as epiphanies, where personal character is manifested and made apparent. “By recording these experiences in detail, and by listening to the stories people tell about them, the researcher is able to illuminate the moments of crisis that occur in a person’s life” (Denzin, 1998, p.335). The task within this study is to produce “richly detailed inscriptions and accounts of such experiences” (Denzin, 1998, p.335) with a focus on those life experiences that radically
alter and shape the meanings the participants give to themselves and their lives (Denzin, 1998). As previously stated phenomenological research is concerned with ascertaining information regarding the way participants view their world (Hall, 1997; van Manen, 2000). The analysis of narrative text provides insight into the way participants orientate to their world (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). It can uncover “commonalities existing across life stories” (Hones, 1996, p. 227) and open up the possibility for “multiple meanings and perspectives” (Clark & Medina, 2000, p.65). It can also uncover the “negotiated meaning” (Clark & Medina, 2000, p. 65) of social ‘realities’ within cultural groups. The use of narrative inquiry within this study was essential to compliment this process.

Narrative enquirers use both contextualising and categorizing analytic strategies in their work (Maxwell & Miller, 1992, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002). In interviews in particular, contextualising approaches discern the contiguous, storied dimensions of field texts to create the narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Reissman, 1993, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002). Categorising can be used to search for patterns and ascertain similarities or themes that occur across individual narratives, although it is not particularly helpful in identifying stories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002).

During this study the elements of participants’ narratives were gathered during all phases of data collection. Although the main elements of their background were gathered in the initial interviews, the majority related their narratives in smaller portions when they used elements of their own experiences or anecdotal evidence to lend weight to their input during consequent discussions and research activities. These narratives were reconstructed during analysis to provide the ‘life stories’ of participants, which are presented in a condensed form within the findings. As specified by Hones (1996), “in narrative research, stories are what the inquirer collects, retells and rewrites” (p.226). These stories provide an effective basis for interpreting the participants’ phenomenological viewpoint.

Bailey (1996) recommends narrativists present “data in the form of the texts used in the analysis, with full transcripts and tapes that can be made available to other researchers”
to combat the perception that narrative inquiry is “indistinguishable from fiction” (Conle, 2000, p. 55), and ensure credible and valuable interpretation. Consequently samples of transcripts generated through interviews, observational sessions and participant reflection are provided in the appendix and additional examples are available on request.

The structure of these narratives was “suggested by our ordinary way of talking about stories that happen to us or which we are caught up in, or simply about the story of someone’s life” (Ricoeur, 1990a, p.59-60), however in an effort to maintain the participants’ voices these stories are written as ‘found narratives’. This technique is adapted from Mishler’s (1992, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002, p.4) “chained narrative” and builds upon Butler-Kisber’s (2002) use of “found poetry”. In chained narrative “the researcher distills episodes of a participant’s story from transcripts and then arranges these temporally from the origins, to its turning point, and conclusion” (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p.4), whereas found poetry “takes the words of others and transforms them into poetic form to recreate lived experience and evoke emotional responses” (Richardson, 1994, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002, p.4).

Rather than use either method, ‘found narratives’ uses the words of the participant, in their own voice to tell their story by arranging their anecdotes and tales into chronological order. The context of their anecdote is preserved and their own discussion of the antecedent and consequence remains, without any artificial attempt to establish a plot or a conclusion. This is their lived experience and their voice, their words, relates their life story. Although I have selected the excerpts that are woven together to form their final narrative, the final decisions of what to include or omit were left entirely up to the individual participant, as discussed in Chapter Seven. These narratives include only what they have chosen to tell and that is a highly selective constructive act on their part, depending on the stories they wish to convey about themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). These narratives are unique, as each self is unique (Martin, 1986) although the essence of each narrative, the ‘gist’ is the same (Martin, 1986) as each has been constructed using the same method.
A full explanation of the contextualising and categorising of the narrative data collected during the interview process in this study will be provided in Chapter Seven along with full explanation of additional art inquiry data which enhanced the interview data. Art inquiry methodology was used supplementary to narrative methodology in order to increase the wealth of data collected during this study.

### 5.7 ART INQUIRY

While the purpose of ethnography is to investigate the participants’ viewpoints within their own personal contexts (Burns, 1997), the goal of phenomenology is to provide ‘voice’ for the participant, not to interpret or subjugate meaning through the lenses of the researcher’s perception (Shultz, 2002). Consistent with the advice from the literature I outlined my background and prior perspectives and assumptions, however by standing aside to view the phenomenon inherently presented within participant data I felt disconnected from the research and removed from the experiences of the participants.

During the initial phases the research followed quite ‘traditional’ methodology (Butler-Kisber, 2002) however these methods were found inadequate to express the multiplicity of reflective metacognition within the researcher’s journey (Gruppetta, 2006b). The standard representation was without soul (Gruppetta, 2006b). There was no way to express the myriad thoughts, feelings and ideas that presented during encounters with participants, literature and the formation of ideas. Presenting ideas in only textual forms was also at odds with my own tendency toward visual imagery, a legacy of my Indigenous heritage and ways of knowing. Consistent with the experience of Scott-Hoy (2003, p. 268) “I had become dissatisfied with the direction my writing and research were taking” and felt a lack of connection to the research, largely due to the researcher’s goal of suspending their own perspective of the phenomenon under investigation whilst engaging in the study (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Disenchanted with the “standard results of quantitative research” (Thomas & Pollio, 2002) I experimented with other qualitative methods.
As a novice venturing into art-based inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2002) the focus remained on data collection forms of interview transcripts and field notes. The only art based method I initially attempted myself was a ‘sample’ collage to experiment with the time and materials required for my participants prior to requesting their involvement in the activity. Then, in an experience similar to Scott-Hoy’s (2003) a picture began to form in my mind. It was insistent in its presentation and haunted in a similar manner to those songs that ‘get stuck in your head’. It simply would not fade away. Eventually it was sketched, which eased the torment, but as it continued to demand life and form, the sketch was changed again and again, and many additions incorporated throughout data analysis and after interactions with participants (Gruppetta, 2006b). Although I attempted to ignore the picture haunting my mind it insisted on its creation, until finally it took form and was painted on canvas. I then found myself in unchartered territory, for the artwork once created seemed integral to the presentation of the research (Gruppetta, 2006b).

Butler–Kisber, (2002) suggests that when artful portrayals are included in public work, they are chosen to serve a particular communicative purpose, and that no one becomes seduced into using an arts-based approach just for the sake of it. According to the literature this type of art-based inquiry is becoming more commonplace among educational researchers. In the last decade there has been a burgeoning interest in stretching the boundaries of narrative reporting to include other genres including nontextual or visual modes of representation such as collage, quilts, portraits, drawings, photographs, film, and video (Banks, 1998, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002).

Promislow (2005) combined stories of experience, poetry, collage and academic discourse, within the research text, allowing for diverse ways of engaging with and understanding the phenomena explored, as does Petrucci (2005). Borgerson (1998, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002) uses "life notes" as a reflective journal. He sketches what he sees around him, augments this with poetry and words from songs of his own and others, dialogues with himself about this during his inquiry, and incorporates these life notes into visual renderings (drawings and collages) that augment his written text. However, Borgerson has a background in painting and music, whereas many researchers, including...
myself, have no artistic background to draw upon. Butler-Kisber (2002) runs workshops
to “encourage those who have an interest in arts-based work but no background” and
notes that many students who come to the arts course “already have a background in
qualitative research and are frequently well into their thesis work” (Butler-Kisber, 2002).

Increasingly, educational research suggests that the more traditional, textual descriptions
of qualitative findings do not adequately reflect the complexity of studying human
behavior. Nor do they satisfy the ethical issues of voice and relationship to which
researchers have become more sensitive, or permit the possibility of multiple
interpretations that the postmodern world has come to accept (Butler-Kisber, 2002).

“Any study is only the researcher’s impressions” (Scott-Hoy, 2003: 274), therefore if
those impressions and interpretations take artistic form, they must be included in the
presentation of the findings. By including a visual vocabulary (Beer Houpert, 2004)
new knowledge can be created (Herman, 2005: 468) and incorporated into the
presentation of the research. Yet there are both “promises and perils” (Eisner, 1997,
cited in Slattery, 2001, p.382) in art based inquiry methodology, not least of which is
how the will artwork be judged.

Grey (1998) contends the mission of art is a personal catharsis and spiritual awakening,
whereas Wilber (1998, cited in Grey, 1998: ixx) demands it must “simply take your
breath away”. Richardson and Lockridge (1998, cited in Finley, 2003: 285) suggest that
truly great art leaves “one in the state of emotional stasis”. Barone and Eisner (1997,
cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002, p.73) define arts-based research differently and contend it
"is defined by the presence of aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the
inquiry and its writing”. Nevertheless Finley’s (2003, p.287) discussion of the demand
for an “expert artist” to ensure quality craftsmanship and the notation that arts-based
researchers should seek comparison for their work not in science field but in the arts
(Finley, 2003) is enough to deter most from attempting this type of work. As is Butler-
Kisber’s (2002) commentary surrounding the need for researchers to develop both
technical and artistic skills. Most researchers, already stretching time and existing
expertise, would be deterred by the need for further study.
In contrast Bochner and Ellis (2003, p. 510) “believe that art-based research will be judged not so much by what it promises as by what it delivers – its ideas, insights, values, and meanings”. Piantanida, McMahon and Garman (2003, pp. 186-187) have concerns regarding the critique of such artworks. Researchers “claim their work as art, and prefer that it be judged primarily on its aesthetics. Yet collectively as an educational discourse community, are we prepared to have our research judged as much on its aesthetics as its scholarly merit?” Again Finley (2003, p. 291) suggest there should be some way of allowing “deviance from conventions in the artworld” (Finley, 2003, p.291) but supplies no definitive standard for these deviations.

Grey’s (1998) contention that the mission of art is to bring about spiritual awakening and personal catharsis fails to consider that for the researcher with little art background such an awakening can be daunting and fraught with doubt. It is difficult to imagine oneself as an artist, when this is out of our realm of experience (Gruppetta, 2006b). It is disconcerting to realize that once the artwork took form it became an integral part of my research journey and therefore would have an audience. No longer a personal reflective journey, it becomes an expression of meaning, another method of recording the researcher journey using visual metaphors to guide the reflective thought process that was otherwise hidden (Gruppetta, 2006b). Therefore the artwork must be included in the final presentation of the thesis, and will be seen by the markers, and possibly a wider audience. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) note there is emotional pain and the vulnerability of revealing yourself, and having no control over how readers interpret what you have written, or created, nor are you able to take it back. “It’s hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.738).

Barone and Eisner (1997, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002) put forward seven features of arts-based work. These include "The creation of a virtual reality," "The presence of ambiguity," "The use of expressive language," "The use of contextualized and vernacular language," "The promotion of empathic understanding," "The use of the personal signature of the author," and "The presence of aesthetic form". “These qualities have the capacity to pull the reader/viewer into a world that is recognizable enough to be
credible, but ambiguous enough to allow new insights and meanings to emerge” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002). These features imply some standards have been developed toward critiquing art-based work.

Finley (2003: 282) cites Lincoln (1995) as setting five standards of art-based work. It:

- displays the author’s own contextual grounds for argumentation (positionality)
- addresses the group of people in which the research was carried out (community)
- engages and includes persons who might otherwise be marginalized (Voice)
- explores the author’s understanding of his or her psychological and emotional states before, during and after the research experience (Critical subjectivity or reflexivity);
- and demonstrates openness and sharing among researchers and participants who are collaborators in research and reflective practice (reciprocity).

In critiquing my own art work I find it definitely deviates from traditional artwork, but at least meets the criteria of ‘virtual reality’ ‘ambiguity’ and ‘personal signature of the author’ (Gruppetta, 2006b). I do not claim it has ‘aesthetic form’ (Barone & Eisner, 1997, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002), as this is too subjective to judge. Within Lincoln’s criteria my digitised art work and its analysis would meet the criteria for ‘positionality’ and ‘Critical subjectivity or reflexivity’ but was not shared with the participants until the end of the research so it is difficult to ascertain if the elements of ‘community’, ‘voice’ and ‘reciprocity’ apply. Such “Self-conscious method” (Kilbourn, 1999 cited in Piantanida, McMahon & Garman, 2003: 186) where the artist inquirer questions the worth of their work can be beneficial as it encourages reflective research practice. However Oikarinen-Jabai’s (cited in Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p.511) comment that she had to “expose herself in order to place herself at a distance again” relates particularly well to my own experience, and pertains to the ideals of phenomenology. The artwork created permitted me to re-examine my own viewpoint and once again distance myself from prior assumptions (Gruppetta, 2006b).

As with many of Butler-Kisber’s (2002) students, I find myself unable to completely abandon conventional methodology, therefore the artwork is not presented in lieu of the traditional ethnographic researcher’s journal (Burns, 1997; Richardson, 1998) but supplementary to it. It presents a different perspective and an effective aid to clarify the thinking process. Whilst concentrating on the creation of this painting a completely different kind of mental gestation occurred. Tapping into other areas of the brain gave
the logical researcher part of the mind access to more creative areas. Ideas that were mere threads took shape and were illuminated within the peripheral edges of the research. Data that previously seemed unconnected suddenly became part of the whole, facets of other aspects were integrated into the findings in ways that may never have been accessed unless metaphoric imagery was used (Gruppetta, 2006b).

Consistent with this experience, Lampert (2006) found that learning in the arts builds strengths in several critical thinking dispositions and offers evidence that the arts do indeed enhance the disposition to think critically. Butler-Kisber, (1997 cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002) contends that art can tap into talents that were otherwise not apparent, and refers to Eisner's explanation of how understanding is mediated by form. “What we know and how we know are inextricably related”. (Butler-Kisber, 2002), therefore accessing other ways of knowing may release unconscious meaning.

Slattery (2001) refers to the source of a painting as being the unconscious. By excavating the unconscious (Slattery, 2001) one can understand complex layers, express deeply guarded secrets and “release the imagination to open new perspectives to identify alternatives…[as] they offer new lenses through which to look out at and interpret” Greene (1995 cited in Slattery, 2001). Slattery (2001) cites Pollock’s experience as a metaphor for the educational researcher “as artist working within” (Slattery, 2001, p.378). “When I am in my painting, I am not aware of what I am doing. It is only after a short get acquainted period that I see what I have been about” (Pollock 1971 cited in Slattery, 2001, p.378). This experience is close to my own experience, I was not aware of symbolically representing meaning until after I “autopsied” (Saarnivaara, cited in Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p.512) the art experience.

The picture (Illustration 1, p.v) haunted me for months before finally finding life on a canvas (Gruppetta, 2006b). After analysing the initial visual representations I realised that the artwork was integral to the research and clarified many contrasting ideas into a more concise depiction. The artwork visually represented my own thought processes, as well as highlighting significant areas of difficulty and clarity that occurred through the course of the research. The artwork to a certain extent became my voice, the one
constant presence of self throughout the dissertation. I am aware that within this tome my voice weaves in, and then out again, as I constantly am at war with myself struggling with the facets of my dual existence. I feel the need to stand aside, firstly in order to maintain the essence of phenomenology but also to maintain an academic standpoint where the literature is presented and analysed from an intellectual rather than emotional viewpoint. Yet I also feel the need to comment, add asides, and generally review my own actions and opinions within the course of the research, hence the use of the ‘soliloquy’ in text boxes. The painting is a constant thread, always guiding, presenting a viewpoint, saying something – even when my true voice is absent. Therefore, once the significance of the artwork was realised, each phase of the artwork was initially hand painted, then photographed and digitally enhanced using computer graphic tools to present a clear image for inclusion in this dissertation. By including the artwork and using each phase of its development to represent the journey of the research I am also acknowledging my own Indigenous background and honouring Indigenous Ways of knowing.

5.8 INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING

“Speak softly, Listen well” (Charles Moran)

This comment by Charles Moran epitomises Indigenous understanding and is at odds with the notion of ‘expert’ expected by academia. There can be no real experts, no one single ‘expert’ viewpoint. Unlike westerners, Indigenous people seem to lack the capacity to flaunt their knowledge as a badge of intellect and cultural integrity in a very public sense (West, 1998), a viewpoint that is at odds with the notion of ‘expert’ expected by academia. Also academics are expected to cite only the most ‘recent’ relevant pieces of academic literature, recent usually referring to publications within the last five years. Yet such a notion is completely at odds to those with over 100,000 years of history with very little recorded on paper. Such contrasting viewpoints encourage the subtext of “Indigenous Intellectual nullius” [sic] (Rigney, 2001) and again restrict Indigenous researchers to only those Indigenist studies where they can argue their knowledges are of value. From an Indigenous standpoint “there are no authoritative
sources of knowledge, and no ‘source’ is particularly reliable” (Popper, 1972a, cited in Niwa, 2007, p.134) because “all sources of knowledge are potentially fallible” (Niwa, 2007, p.134).

The literature concerning ‘Indigenous Ways of Knowing’ (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Martin, 2006) is mainly concerned with Indigenous knowledge within Indigenist studies. Quite often this knowledge is confined to the research of Indigenous communities by Indigenous scholars rather than extending Indigenous Ways of Knowing beyond these confines. Indigenist studies refer to the ‘body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars in relation to research methodological approaches’ (Rigney, 2001). This body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars is utilised in the interest of Indigenous peoples for the purpose of self-determination (Rigney, 2001). As a multi-disciplinary paradigm the key characteristic of Indigenism is the identity and colonizing experience of the writer (Rigney, 2001).

Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non Indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values (Rigney, 1997). Indigenous ways of knowing are not about establishing ‘Truth’ but in acknowledging the place of multiple perspectives and realities that are a feature of our worlds (Martin, 2006). Knowledge is shared, retained, expressed, contracted and expanded, and there are various types of knowledges with different levels of knowing (Martin, 2006). For instance, watching or observing is not a passive activity within Indigenous Ways of Knowing, the strength is in knowing what to observe and when to apply the knowledge gained from such activity (Martin, 2006). Knowing is an act. ‘It is a moment of awareness is which contact occurs between the knowing and the known’ (Puhakka, 2000p.15). These integral knowledges surrounding observation and application bring new insights into all research situations, not only those applicable to Indigenous research settings. The inclusion of various perspectives and realities broadens viewpoints to bring new insights into all research venues.

Knowledge itself is relational: “confronting the western ideal of objective knowledge is the Aboriginal question, ‘Who has the right to know this?’ Who owns the story?”
Stockton, 1995p. 40) The ‘right to know’ is a Western assumption (O’Riley, 2003, p.154). The researcher, student, academic world in general believes they have a ‘right to know’ all facets of the culture or individual being presented. O’Riley (2003) also speaks of the “right of those who know not to share what they know” (p.154). There are intimate knowledges within most cultures that are understood by the members of that culture. From habits to secrets, they are not easily explained to an outsider, and many are not intended to be shared beyond the circle of that specific culture. As previously stated participant’s right to withhold or omit such information must be respected (Gruppetta, 2008).

As research is essentially a western practice, a research paradigm that is entirely Indigenous is not possible. However, a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on a number of social research frameworks such as ethnography, phenomenology and hermeneutics is typical for research involving Aboriginal people with emphasis on the lived realities of participants (Martin, 2006). Such combination of methods need not be restricted to only Indigenist studies and the Indigenous researcher can utilise their inherent ability to interweave these disciplines to research any group of people, beyond the confines of purely Indigenist research.

Indigenous ‘Ways of Being’ encompass beliefs, laws, morals, values and our responsibilities to self and others (Martin, 2006:4). Indigenous researchers recognize their responsibilities to participants in their studies, and “for the Indigenist researcher, acting in a culturally safe manner is a twenty-four hours per day situation” (Martin, 2006:6). Within Indigenist research “ethical rigour is part and parcel of our Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing” (Martin, 2006:6). Therefore this integral ethical behaviour underpins all research undertaken by an Indigenous researcher and can extend studies of other cultures beyond those of Indigenous people by capitalising on the inherently ethical nature of Indigenous research practice.

Within Indigenous ways of knowing is a key concept, that of ‘Reciprocity’. This is where shared responsibility agreements are based on the concept of mutual obligation as “a natural principle of human society” (Kowal, 2006), which, in Aboriginal terms, is
normally referred to as ‘reciprocity’. “The concept of Aboriginal reciprocity implies that those who have resources share them with those who do not, and that those who receive this generosity have the same duty to provide for and share with others” (Kowal, 2006). In the context of research, reciprocity implies inclusion and recognition of partners’ contributions, and ensuring equitable benefits of value to communities or individuals (Kowal, 2006).

The Indigenous researcher also brings other ‘Ways of Doing’ which include traditions of story telling, art and imagery (Oodgeroo Noonuccal 1993, p.22 cited in Martin, 2006, p.5) as a synthesis and articulation of our Ways of Knowing and Being (Martin, 2006). These traditions are compatible with techniques of art based inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Finley, 2003; Scott-Hoy, 2003; Slattery, 2001; 2003) and narrative research (Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Behar, 1995; Church, 1995; Bochner & Ellis, 2003; Ellis & Berger, 2003; Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Butler-Kisber (2000) contends that what we know and how we know are inextricably related. Bochner and Ellis (2003, p. 510) believe that “art-based research will be judged not so much by what it promises as by what it delivers – its ideas, insights, values, and meanings”. Therefore utilising other Ways of Knowing through art inquiry methodology may release unconscious meaning, and drawing on the interpretative knowledge of Indigenous researchers will add insight and new meaning to these areas of research.

Again, none know the importance of stories better than an Indigenous researcher. Personal narratives have long been tradition in anthropology, and human history (Behar, 1995; Church, 1995). Accounts of experience seem more adequately understood as the outcome of a particular textual/cultural history in which people learn “to tell stories of their lives to themselves and others” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p.217). We connect with each other in past and present contexts (Thomas & Pollio, 2002) and researchers must confirm this connection, not only with their participants but with themselves.

The stories of the participants in a study are important because “human beings listen and tell stories. We use narrative to communicate and understand people and events. We
think and dream in narrative” (Conle, 2000, p.49). It is through narrative that cultures have “created and expressed their world views and have provided models of identity and agency to their members” (Bruner, 1996, cited in Conle, 2000, p.49). On a cultural or community level, “narratives convey norms and values to newcomers” (Mattingly, 1991, cited in Reason, 2001, p.94). The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of “the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, cited in Reason, 2001, p.94), and the Indigenous researcher with their intimate understanding of the importance of stories, and range of interpretive skills in this area possesses unique abilities to further the exploration of narrative research methodologies. Furthermore Aboriginal people know “that every story calls for a response” (Stockton, 1995, P.58), and that every story has its own pattern based on the life experience of the storyteller. Stories are not linear, they are provided in anecdotal pieces that must be interwoven into a holistic life story.

Broomfield (1997) speaks of a linear view of time and the world in western culture, where everything runs in straight lines. This contrasts sharply with Aboriginal ways of knowing where pattern thinking is paramount. Pattern thinking is Aboriginal thinking, patterns are about belonging, and nothing is separated from anything else, because everything belongs in the pattern (Stockton, 1995). “Triangle thinking is western culture thinking, it separates everything into layers of power and administration” (Stockton, 1995, p.42). Bennett (1996) detailed the difference between the linear style of thinking between an American businessman and a Native American Indian. The businessman felt the need to come straight to the point and followed an A led to B led to C type of thinking, whereas the Native American Indian started with a story about when he was 10 years old. In this instance the storyteller is still going through A, B and C, but in a more circular fashion, and is completely unconcerned with making a point, simply giving the listener enough information to arrive at their own point of view (Bennett, 1996). Using a linear perspective “capitulates a proclivity towards negating Western modes of rationality in preference for reaffirmed and revitalized indigenous social and cultural rationalities centred in notions of holism and interconnectedness” (Niwa, 2007, p.134).
My use of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Doing and Being (Martin, 2006) will provide valuable insights to a range of areas within this research forum and more research should be completed on extending these facets of Indigenous knowledge rather than restrict an Indigenous researcher solely to Indigenist studies. As Arbon (2008) states within her Indigenist studies, I take up this position of using my Indigenous ways of knowing to collect all the relevant knowledge, thereby bringing all the knowledge together and working for the participants in this research study. “My knowledge in this way does not become alien or external to me. My knowledge remains imbedded within me, and I within it in fundamental relationship to this research study” (Arbon, 2008, p.22).

As this study evolved qualitative methodology and data collection methods have been revised and refined to suit my own Indigenous ways of knowing, academic expectations and the investigation itself, and thus a bricolage of methodology and data collection methods were formed to address the needs of this research.

5.9 Bricolage

Whilst purists decry the blending... In postmodernity we can expect what has been called bricolage, the piecing together of cultural elements drawn from a variety of sources (Bouma, 2006, p. 211).

As Bouma (2006) states above, in postmodernity we expect a blending of cultures and perspectives; although he was specifically referring to ‘interspirituality’ and the blending of religious beliefs and practices, nevertheless the trend to combine many elements into achieve a new direction or practice has become commonplace in the modern world.

Bricolage is actually a French term for improvisation or a piece of makeshift handiwork. It is sometimes applied to artistic works in a sense similar to collage: a bricolage is an assemblage improvised from materials ready to hand, or the practice of transforming ‘found’ materials by incorporating them in a new work (answers.com, 2008). The core meaning in French is to "fiddle, tinker" and, by extension, "make creative and resourceful use of whatever materials are to hand regardless of their original purpose" (answers.com, 2008). In this sense bricolage was originally used as a visual art term and
referred to ‘finding items and using them for a new purpose’ (freedictionary.com, 2007) or to applying multiple layers “before stripping away certain areas to reveal the layers underneath” (Marsh, Watts & Malyon, 2003, p.111).

Bricolage has also been referred to as a ‘construction’ in terms of a sculpture or a structure of ideas, achieved by using whatever comes to hand; and it again refers to something constructed in this way (Merriam-webster.com, 2008). The term has been used in a variety of areas beyond the original artistic definition and can be found in areas such as archeology, music, psychology and education. Papert refers to bricolage as a way to learn and solve problems by trial and testing in contrast to the analytical style of solving problems he describes within constructionism as an educational method (Papert & Harel, 1991). In all these areas the essence of the definition is the same, however these definitions, although accurately describing the ideal of bricolage, pay the technique little respect, as they imply a happenstance approach rather than a skilled use of the method.

The term bricolage was first applied to research by the French social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in a publication in 1966 (Dictionary of Psychology, 2001). Within qualitative research design bricolage is used to characterise the use of multiple diverse research methods, such as observation, interviewing, interpretation of textual material and introspection, together with multiple theoretical approaches (Dictionary of Psychology, 2001). A bricoleur is defined as more than just a person who engages in bricolage, a bricoleur is someone who invents his or her own strategies for using existing materials in a creative, resourceful, and original way (Levi-Strauss, 1966).

The product of the bricoleur’s labour is “a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collagelike creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, pp. 3-4) and the presentation of this dissertation reflects exactly that. By using art inquiry methodologies to complement the phenomenological, ethnographical and narrative investigations a richer interpretation of both the participant’s experiences and my own is possible.
As a bricoleur I also understand that research is an interactive process shaped by my own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and those of the participants in this study. Moreover bricolage should be used as a key innovation in evolving critical research “through highlighting the relationship between the researcher’s way of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2006, p. 316). Therefore my own personal biography including my gender, social class and racial mix was clearly stated at the onset of this study, as is the relevant background information of each of the participants. The autobiographical components of both the researcher and participants are included to clearly identify the viewpoint of all. The ongoing recording of perceptions, issues, ethical dilemmas, and participant interactions via my research journal has monitored my own way of seeing, and that of the participants. The decision to use multiple methodologies and data collection strategies in response to specific situations arising within this research has also been clearly tracked and justified throughout the research journey.

Levi-Strauss (1966) defines an intellectual as well as a practical bricolage, focusing in the former case on the contrast that is often drawn between ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ thought, and the cognitive hierarchy that this involves:

Levi-Strauss contrasts mythical thinking, what he calls ‘the science of the concrete’, with modern science. He regards them as different modes of thought; intellectual bricolage works with sensory appearances, whereas in his view science identifies underlying structural principles. He sees art as lying somewhere between bricolage and science in its capacity to symbolize underlying structural determinants through the representation of concrete individual forms….He emphasizes that, despite some similarities, there is a real difference between the scientist or engineer and the bricoleur, in that the former is always trying to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilisation while the ‘bricoleur by inclination or necessity always remains within them’ (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p.19, cited in Hammersly, 2004).

Despite Levi-Strauss’ contention the bricoleur remains bound by the constraints of civilisation, he fails to specify which civilisation. This notion is of particular interest to me, as a person bound by differing cultural viewpoints, and often marginalised from mainstream viewpoints. Denzin and Lincoln contend that “we are all interpretive bricoleurs stuck in the present working against the past as we move into the future (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.xv). The meaning that Denzin and Lincoln give to bricolage is closer to the modern notion of art, and this viewpoint coincides with my own. Crudely
speaking such art is concerned with imaginative freedom, and to a large extent this means freedom from the constraints of reality (Hammersley, 2004), a point that contrasts sharply with Levi-Strauss’ view. Freedom took the focus on the subjectivity of perception within impressionism and a similar search for freedom seems to underlie the idea of qualitative research as bricolage (Hammersley, 2004). The interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage – “that is a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.4). Denzin and Lincoln also comment that interpretive bricolage involves the aesthetic issues and aesthetics of representation that goes beyond the pragmatic, or the practical (Hammersley, 2004).

Bricolage is an ‘emergent construction’ which ‘changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods and techniques of representation and interpretation are added to the puzzle’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.4). This technique is particularly suited to my research as representation and interpretation needed to evolve throughout the research. The qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur deploys whatever strategies, methods or empirical materials are at hand as the tools of his or her methodological trade and if new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this (Becker, 1989, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The choice of which tools to use, which research methods to employ, is not set in advance (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Specifically, the choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context, what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting (Nelson, et al., 1992 p. 2, cited in Denzin & Linclon, 1998). This description of bricolage is accurate in terms of the ongoing evolution of methodology and data collection in this study, yet once again it applies a happenstance rather than focused technique. Kincheloe has a contrasting view:

In its hard labors in the domain of complexity the bricolage views research methods actively rather than passively, meaning that we actively construct our research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2006, p.317).

In the active bricolage, understanding of the research context is brought together with previous experience of research methods. “Using these knowledges we tinker in the Levi-Straussian sense with our research methods in field based and interpretive
contexts” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2006, p.317). In lieu of the rationalisation of the process, bricoleurs enter in the research act as methodological negotiators promoting the elasticity of the research forum rather than setting it in concrete (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2006). Bricoleurs, in their appreciation of the complexity of the research process, view research method as involving far more than procedure (Kincheloe, 2006). They seek multiple perspectives to avoid the monological knowledge that emerges from the dismissal of the numerous relationships and connections that link various forms of knowledge together (Kincheloe, 2006).

Within this study it was imperative to incorporate my own indigenous ways of knowing with the range of cultural knowledge and perspectives brought by the participants. Relying on monological knowledge not only reduces human life to its objectifiable dimensions it is incapable of moving beyond one individual’s unilateral experience of the world (Kincheloe, 2006). Therefore numerous strategies were actively developed within this research to move beyond a one dimensional monological context and incorporate the need for other perspectives.

In a monological context, thick descriptions are lost to the forces of order and certainty that are satisfied with right and wrong answers that preclude the need for other perspectives (Kincheloe, 2006) and provide quick resolutions to the problems that confront researchers (Madison, 1988 & Thomas, 1998, cited in Kincheloe, 2006). As previously stated, within this research forum the choice of methodologies initially became a problem when I realised the participants were engaging in an autoethnographical mode in their investigation of the phenomenon of giftedness. A quick resolution would have been to attempt to change the participants’ mode of inquiry and perception. A more satisfying solution was to adjust the methodology to incorporate multiple modes and perspectives in order to deeply examine the phenomenon of giftedness.

Depending on where observers stand in the multidimensional web of reality, they will come to see different phenomena in different ways. As opposed to European modes of knowledge production, diverse peoples of the planet have produced ways of knowing
that often have come directly into conflict (Kincheloe, 2006). Bricoleurs seek out these diverse epistemologies for their unique insights and sophisticated modes of making meaning. They employ “any means necessary”, and as many methods as possible to research a world of diverse meanings and multiple epistemologies (Kincheloe, 2006).

In critical concern for social change, the bricolage seeks insight from the margins of Western societies and the knowledge and ways of knowing of non-western peoples, including the “double consciousness” of the racially oppressed (Kincheloe & McLarne, 2006, p. 318). In this search, they gain provocative insights into epistemological diversity on issues of the relationships between mind and body, Self and Other, spirit and matter, knower and known, relationships, logic and emotion, and these insights allow them to ask new questions of the research act (Kincheloe, 2006). Within this research these diverse insights were explored and embraced, and ethical aspects of the research act were refined and questioned to include a broader view of participants’ reality.

The reality that bricoleurs engage is not a fixed entity. The research process is always more complex than initially perceived. Different words and phrases, depending on the context in which they are used, can mean different things to different individuals increasing the complexity of interpretation. In direct relationship to this research, Kincheloe, Steinberg and Villaverde (1999) use as an example the recognition of universal theories of intelligence as an area of complexity, where researchers might have to respect and, thus, account for the way individuals and groups in diverse social settings conceptualise the concept of giftedness. Kincheloe (2006) contends the task of the bricoleur is to attack this complexity, uncovering the invisible artifacts of power and culture and documenting the nature of their influence not only on their own scholarship but also scholarship in general. Within this study my own perceptions of the influences of academic expectations have been noted and addressed in all aspects, particularly in the presentation of this dissertation and the explanation of choices of method, data collection and ethical concerns when interacting with participants. The participants perspectives of giftedness and their experiences of it are clearly documented within the findings of this study, as are the responses from the cultural representatives that
nominated each participant. These cultural perspectives of giftedness are necessary because who we are as human beings, an inseparable portion of what we call the self, is dependent on the nature of such cultural relationships and connections (Kincheloe, 2006).

Here rests a central epistemological and ontological assumption of the bricolage: The domains of the physical, the social, the cultural, the psychological, and the educational consist of the interplay of a wide variety of entities—thus, the complexity and the need for multiple ways of seeing advocated by bricoleurs (Kincheloe, 2006).

In discussion of the bricolage, Kincheloe (2006) and Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue for the use of the multi-method approach to address these complexities but are less specific on details of the technique. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) state that the bricoleur reads widely and is knowledgeable about the many interpretive paradigms that can be brought to any particular problem, and that the researcher as bricoleur theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms. They also state the bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to observing, to interpreting personal and historical documents, to intensive self-reflection and introspection (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Yet, they do not provide precise instructions on how to incorporate all these elements within a single study.

It seems that almost by definition the bricoleur is self-taught – that is what leads to the ingenuity and novelty of what is produced (Hammersley, 2004). Kincheloe concurs stating that it is obvious that learning the bricolage is a lifelong process (Kincheloe, 2006). A Bricoleur is a “Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person” (Levi-Straus, 1966, p.17). The bricoleur produces a bricolage, which is a pieced together, close knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation. “The solution (bricolage) which is the result of the bricoleur’s method is an [emergent] construction” (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991, p.161) that changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques are added to the puzzle.

While working on my methodology and attempting to explain the bricolage involving all these qualitative elements, I once again referred to visual aids using the image of a jigsaw (Appendix) as I realised the choice of theoretical underpinning for research is
quite literally a puzzle, one that must be solved in order to investigate the phenomenon of giftedness in any real depth. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) contend the use of multiple methods secures an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) to this investigation. They also state the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This study is therefore a bricolage due to the combination of the multiple qualitative methods of phenomenology, ethnography, autobiographical and narrative inquiries, art inquiry methodologies and indigenous ways of knowing. The multiple methods of data collection and analysis are also consistent with the use of bricolage and again add to the legitimisation of this research by including multiple perspectives of the phenomenon.

5.10 LEGITIMISATION

Whilst commencing my research with the intention of including triangulation (Burns, 1997; Kemp, 1999; Leedy, 1993; Lincoln & Guba; 1985a; Merriam, 1989; Vockell & Asher, 1995) to achieve consistency and soundness within my research, the conflict of opinions concerning triangulation, reliability, credibility, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, and rigour ensured a complex and evolving process in the legitimisation of this research.

Debate around the relevance and use in the naturalistic paradigm of the terms validity, reliability and generalisability has continued for over 20 years (Guba & Lincoln 1981, Sandelowski 1986, Mishler 1990, Lather 1995, Lincoln 1995, Morse et al. 2001 cited in Tobin & Begley, 2004). Researchers have striven for clarity of purpose in qualitative methodologies and endeavoured to establish arguments for rigour in their methodology (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It has been suggested that concerns about rigour draw qualitative researchers into a positivist, reductionist mode of thought and the process reduces integrity in our own methodological positions (Arioni et al. 1999 cited in Tobin & Begley, 2004). The need to ‘prove’ that an ‘unbiased’ approach has been used may
stem from a desire for intellectual and scientific acceptance by the academic community (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Qualitative research is often questioned in terms of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985a), indeed, some qualitative theorists maintain “that such quantitative terms do not apply at all in qualitative research” (Vockell & Asher, 1995, p.205). Despite assertions that qualitative studies are undisciplined and that “rigor” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985a, p. 289) is not a hallmark, there are ways of establishing the basic criteria for ‘trustworthiness’ in qualitative studies in terms of reliability, validity and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985a).

The concept of trustworthiness has been challenged in the literature. Lincoln and Guba’s starting point was that of the conventional inquirer, and their aim to develop comparable criteria to replace the inappropriateness of the ‘trinity of truth’ is questionable (Sparks, 2001, cited in Tobin & Begley, 2004). The concept of ‘checking’, as advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is certainly antithetical to the epistemology of qualitative inquiry and reveals philosophical inconsistencies (Tobin & Begley, 2004), which highlight the contradiction of developing criteria that are parallel to positivist criteria, while rejecting the positivist paradigm (Smith, 1993; Gallagher, 1995; Bloor, 1997; Silverman, 2000; Sparks, 2001, cited in Tobin & Begley, 2004). Nevertheless there are standard conditions for the establishment of reliability and validity in qualitative studies (Vockell & Asher, 1995), although “the concepts of reliability and validity must be reexamined and expanded for qualitative data” (Vockell & Asher, 1995, p. 205).

Reliability refers to the technique for gathering data needing to be “both consistent and stable” (Vockell & Asher, 1995, p.205) that it must systematic and the system itself can be justified as providing consistency of data. By using a structured guide for interview questions (Appendix), although allowing for additional data to be gathered, the basic data collected in this study were consistent between participant interviews. By using the same value cards for each participant the consistency of the value activity was maintained. Again constancy in delivering the same instructions to each participant
when requesting the collage ensured consistency between participant responses to this task.

Another way of ensuring consistency of data is by using methods of triangulation; that is to compare the data collected from multiple sites, sources and perspectives to ensure a consistency in results (Burns, 1997; Leedy, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985a; Merriam, 1989; Vockell & Asher, 1995). As there were nine participants, in addition to the researcher as first participant, and a variety of sites for interview and interaction, as well as the involvement of a range of cultural advisory groups, this study certainly met the criteria for providing a range of sources for data collection. Furthermore, as the data collection system was consistent across situations and individuals the data gathered were reliable.

Within the last decade the meaning of Triangulation has changed. Triangulation is not a tool or strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Triangulation is most often referred to as the use of more than one method in a study with the goals of achieving confirmation and/or completeness, and is most often currently used as a synonym for a particular form of triangulation called by Denzin (1978, cited in Kemp, 1999) 'between methods', or 'methodological triangulation'. Triangulation, in its most simplistic view, is an apt term because there is a distinct sense of linearity in the process. The qualitative methods can be sequential - where each stage of the sequence is a 'new' study – confirming or rounding out the previous findings. Alternatively, triangulation can occur in a concurrent fashion – a kind of jigsaw where the use of multiple methods will display various parts of the picture and the researcher can put it together as a whole and combinations of the above can result in a complexity of form (Kemp, 1999).

Within this study both forms of triangulation are present. Multiple methodologies have been used to gather a variety of data which has then been combined to present a complete picture of the phenomenon of giftedness. The participants’ use of autoethnography has not detracted from this purpose but rather enhanced it by providing a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of giftedness as it applies within their own
personal contexts. The variety of data collection methods has increased the opportunity to confirm findings across settings and the lived experiences of the participants.

Once the data were collected it was analysed for consistency of findings across sites, sources and perspectives to ensure data was reliable during the study period. Vockell and Asher (1995) refer to this as “Synchronic reliability [sic]” (Vockell & Asher, 1995, p. 205), which is the similarity of observations made within the same time period. Additionally, all facets of the research were checked against available research literature to identify any commonalities with other studies, and interpretation of the results was discussed and confirmed with each of the participants and my supervisor to provide further triangulation of the data and ensure reliability (Merriam, 1989) of findings.

However, the linearity of process within triangulation which, whilst providing a 'complete' picture, prevents any alteration of the component parts, due to the positivist, linear approach and shape of the triangulation, the methods become linear, rigid and unchangeable (Kemp, 1999). It is also at odds with my own Indigenous ways of knowing because triangle thinking separates everything into layers of power and administration (Stockton, 1995). More recently, the metaphor of triangulation has been expressed as crystallisation (Richardson, 1994 cited in Kemp, 1999). Crystallization is said to complement triangulation by being another lens with which to view qualitative studies; “crystallisation recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life” (Janesick, 2000, p.392, cited in Nash, 2004, p.166). The crystal metaphor replaces the triangle one, with the basic proposition of including various disciplines as part of multifaceted qualitative research designs (Nash, 2004, p.166).

The proponents of this metaphor highlight the increased complexity of the crystal and its ability to change appearance depending upon the angle of observation. Recognizing that our world is ‘far more than three sides’ (Richardson 2000, p. 934), we are challenged to embrace the concept of crystallization. This enables a shift from seeing something as a fixed rigid two-dimensional object towards a concept of the crystal, which allows for infinite variety of shape, substance, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities and angles of approach.Whilst this is an inspiring image, there remains some concern with
crystallization as a workable technique (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Crystals too have a rigidity of shape and form, and are made up of linear planes (Kemp, 1999). The linearity of triangulation and crystallisation is their limitation. Again there is a somewhat inherent positivism in the use of these methods, where one can ask a question, and by proceeding in the 'straight line' pursuit of a number of methods, the entity will become known in some way (Begley, 1996, cited in Kemp, 1999). Such linear methods are guilty of not making the most of the data, and you cannot answer some questions in this linear fashion (Kemp, 1999). As explained within my own Indigenous ways of knowing a circular approach is more comfortable. Although a linear layout of this dissertation has been presented, and the research methodology is presented in a reasonably linear fashion, this type of presentation is unnatural to me. Rather than keeping with the linear concept of triangulation, where each individual method was pursued to their conclusion, the qualitative methods were wound through each other in a complimentary way (Kemp, 1999).

In terms of validity, Vockell and Asher (1995) refer to qualitative methods as being more valid because they “really do get at the underlying concepts being observed rather than measure an artificial entity created by a data collection process” (p. 206). Validity in terms of research is concerned with two different areas. External validity “is concerned with the generalizability of the conclusions reached” (Leedy, 1993, p.41), in terms of their ability to be generalised to other cases or situations. As previously stated one of the limitations of the study is the small number of participants, which reduces the ability of findings to be generalised to other situations. However the variety of environments and participants’ backgrounds provide a vast range of descriptors that would provide links to similar settings, consistent with the “transferability to other sites” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 42) due to its “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 42) a feature of case study reporting.

Tobin and Begly (2004) refer to generalisability as ‘Transferability’ and state it is comparable with external validity. However, they contend that Qualitative inquirers need to recognize that the comparable ‘external validity’ is substantially different in qualitative inquiry, as there is no single correct or ‘true’ interpretation in the naturalistic
paradigm, as naturalistic inquiry has individual subjective meaning as central (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The complexity of subjective meaning has already been discussed within the previous section, particularly in regard to the conceptualization of giftedness (Kincheloe, et al., 1999) across cultures and individual interpretations. Within this study concepts of giftedness are explored in a range of ways that extend beyond those presented in the current literature and these issues will be discussed in Chapter Nine. Therefore it has been accepted from the onset of this study that there will be a variety of interpretations of the lived experience of giftedness within the knowledge shared by the multicultural participants. These experiences, concepts and knowledges are presented as the results of this study, not as a single ‘truth’ but a range of perspectives as perceived by these participants at this time. Silverman (2001, cited in Tobin & Begley, 2004) asks: “Must we choose between seeing interviews as either potentially ‘true’ reports or situated narratives? May not multiple meanings of a situation or of an activity be represented by what people say to the researcher” (Silverman, 2001, p.113). Within this study the multiple meanings of the lived experience of giftedness is represented by what the participants said and conclusions were drawn from the data they provided.
The inclusion of Aboriginal meeting place symbols, such as the ‘horseshoe shape’ representing a person sitting, and lines to indicate the paths/tracks they have travelled to reach the meeting place establish a new perspective of the research. It is now a place where many sit to view the research, and their ideas and commentary are acknowledged and incorporated into the findings. This highlights the importance of ‘member checking’ (Vockell & Asher, 1995) by participants of their interview transcripts and narratives, and permits negotiation of the way they are ultimately portrayed within the research findings. The reader could interpret this illustration as an invitation to join the discussion/meeting.
6.1 PARTICIPANT SELECTION PROCESS

The quest for participants for this research project presented some challenges. As the focus of the research project involved interviewing a small number of gifted adults, within multicultural Australia, who have been nominated as gifted within their field and/or culture, with a view to building individual narratives of their life experiences, some thought was required into the best way to recruit suitable participants. The required participants were adults, between the ages of eighteen to eighty plus years of age, as outlined in the information letter (Appendix A7). The project did not target any particular ethnic or community group, but rather sought participants from a range of ethnicities and cultures (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). Twelve participants were originally invited to participate to ensure that if some participants withdrew from the study, at least eight participants would remain (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e).

6.1.1 SNOWBALL RECRUITING

Due to the small number of participants required ‘snowball sampling’ (Rowan & Huston, 1997), a type of “chain-referral sampling” (Jeffri, 2004), methodology was used to recruit subjects. Snowball recruiting has been used successfully in a number of studies. It has been used most effectively when contacting hidden, hard-to-reach or deviant groups such as communities involved in illegal activities or when investigating sensitive issues such as child abuse or euthanasia (Streeton et al, 2004). It has been used in studies of educational interaction between general practitioners and hospital specialists (Marshall, 1998, cited in Streeton et al. 2004); To reach participants such as artists (Jeffri, 2004); older mothers of offspring with lifelong disabilities (Patrick, Pruchno & Rose, 1998); smokers within the broader population (Etter & Perneger, 2000); women who use the drug ‘crack’ (Brown, 2003); and patients to assess the effectiveness of the health care industry (Hignett, 2003).

Therefore this type of recruitment is valuable within studies where the participants required represent a rather narrow subgroup of the general population for which
adequate sampling frames are not available (Patrick, Pruchno & Rose, 1998). For instance the participants may represent a small percentage of the population, are not commonly gathered in specific groups, and may be ‘hidden’ or difficult to identify or contact (Brown, 2003; Hignett & Wilson, 2004; Streeton, Cooke & Campbell, 2004). As gifted adults represent a statistically small minority of the population, and are not typically gathered in groups, other recruitment methods were not suitable to this study (Grupetta, 2005d, 2005e).

Although this method has been criticized as it “cannot claim representativeness” (Jeffri, 2004, p.11) of the wider population, and there is a tendency toward in-group recruitment and the over-sampling of groups with larger personal network links, strategies to address these issues were incorporated into the study. This method of recruitment is often misrepresented, and the potential for bias in passing invitations along a line of contacts within similar fields or with similar information is acknowledged (Streeton et al. 2004). Rather than the mistaken belief that all the researcher has to do is begin with one or two contacts and then let the information snowball until the required sample size is achieved, in reality this methodology requires much research in order to be effective (Streeton et al. 2004).

Characteristic of this approach is the use of groups or individuals to gain access to the population sample (Faugier & Sergeant, 1997, cited in Streeton et al. 2004). These contacts enable access to some of the ‘hidden’ or difficult to reach participants by sending out letters of introduction to possible participants and/or nominating contacts to the researcher (Streeton et al. 2004). These initial contacts take the form of ‘key informants’ or ‘informal research assistants’ (Streeton, et al., 2004, p.38) within the research study by providing information on cultural sensitivities or expectation that may be otherwise unknown to the researcher, and negotiating contact with the participants. Therefore considerable research was required into locating a range of cultural and religious groups that could be sourced for recruitment purposes.
6.2 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

As the invitation included gifted participants across cultures, religions and socio-economic status, various groups were contacted and requested to nominate a ‘gifted’ individual to represent their particular group. For example groups representing religious populations such as Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Arabic, Asian and other cultural groups, were contacted and asked to nominate a ‘gifted’ individual for the study (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). Full disclosure of the focus of the study, the commitment and expectations of the participants were explained in the initial contact phase.

In order to address the issue of giftedness identification for the purposes of this study, participants were identified only through nomination, and the nominees were requested to explain the reasons for their nomination of participants. Gifted individuals are those that ‘stand out’ within their cultural groups, displaying ‘excellence’ relative to their peers (Sternberg, Grigorenko & Bundy, 2001; Renzulli, 1996), however it was recognised that individual groups would have their own concepts of giftedness, therefore no characteristics or definitions of giftedness were provided (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). The key informants were asked to provide their own concept of giftedness and nominate individuals for the study using their own criteria.

Initial contact with these groups was through telephone contact, to identify the correct addressee for letters to each group, and ascertain whether any cultural sensitivities needed to be considered (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). Full disclosure of the focus of the study, the commitment and expectations of the participants were explained in the initial contact phase. The representative of the group was then asked to forward the information about the study to any person they felt met the criteria of giftedness. Participants were initially only contacted via the nominee, who forwarded the information letter and expression of interest form (Appendices A7 & A9), and participants were only contacted directly and invited to participate in the study once they had expressed interest in participating (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e).
6.3 PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

After nomination and return of the ‘expression of interest’ form (Appendix A9) participants were contacted and formally invited to participate in the study. The requirements of attending interviews and member checking interview data and narratives were clearly explained in the initial contact phase.

As outlined in the ‘information letter’ (Appendix A7), participant involvement was expected to include a minimum of five interview sessions lasting approximately two hours each. During these sessions participants were asked questions regarding their backgrounds and significant events within their lives. These sessions were audio-recorded and transcripts provided to the participants to be checked for accuracy. Participants were clearly informed prior to the beginning of the interviews that the goal of the research was to record their narrative life stories, which participants were initially asked to construct themselves, and that some activities would be used within these sessions to stimulate discussion and memory. Participants were also asked to select their own pseudonym, and assist in the removal of any specific references to people or places within the raw data and ensure that all parties are referred to by approximate values to preserve their anonymity.

It was explained to participants that narrative life interviewing can be intensive, and that every effort would be made to ensure minimum disruption to their regular duties. Interview times and the type and length of narratives were negotiated to suit the individual. As per ethical guidelines, it was also explained that they could withdraw from the study at any time and their data would be returned to them or destroyed.

At the first interview, the participants were also requested to complete a Likert scale questionnaire (Macy, 1996, Appendix A12) in order to assess the commonalities of gifted traits and characteristics. This activity was not intended to provide identification of their giftedness but served the purpose of self-identification amongst participants who did not identify themselves as gifted individuals, and invited further discussion of gifted traits, as well as determining whether the Likert scale itself was culturally weighted.
6.4 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF SNOWBALL RECRUITMENT

Researchers using ‘snowball’ recruiting increasingly rely on informal methods of communication to access ‘hidden’ or hard to locate participants. However, as with all recruitment methods there are positive and negative aspects. During the recruitment stage of the study, both positive and negative aspects were identified as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21. Positive and negative aspects of ‘snowball’ recruitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE ASPECTS</th>
<th>NEGATIVE ASPECTS</th>
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<td>Sensitive data was not available to researcher</td>
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<td>Informal networks of communication</td>
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The positive and negative aspects identified within Figure 21 are explained in more detail below.

6.4.1 POSITIVE ASPECTS

6.4.1.1 A wider range of participants

The religious and cultural groups identified for initial contact were identified as representative of a wide range of cultures. For instance: one Islamic agency represented Islamic groups from Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey and many other countries; A Buddhist Agency included Buddhists from China, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea, Burma and Nepal. Yet, membership of each of these groups was voluntary, therefore individuals had chosen to align themselves with these groups and accept their representation of their interests. Hence the use of these groups to access participants, as
each group represented the interests of their members. Using these agencies as nominating bodies generated a richer possible pool of participants than the researcher could locate using other recruitment methods. Usually to access gifted individuals a researcher is confined to groups whose sole criteria for membership is a high Intelligence Quotient score (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e).

6.4.1.2 The reduced possibility of coercion

Participants were provided with full details of the study and their expected role, including full details of their commitment, the expected time involved, confidential storage of data, use of pseudonyms and dissemination of results prior to obtaining consent. Consent was entirely voluntary and no participants were approached directly, therefore there was little opportunity for coercion by the researcher within the initial recruitment process.

The interested person was required return the ‘expression of interest form’ (A9), which involves no commitment to participate, and then begin a dialogue with the researcher in order to ascertain whether they wish to participate in the study. At this time the researcher could also verify that there had been no coercion by the cultural/religious group initially contacted and that the individual concerned has not been pressured in any way to take part in the project (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). Additionally, participants were informed that should they initially agree to participate they may withdraw their consent at any time during the study without penalty, and further assured that this withdrawal will not conflict with their relationship to the researcher or any other person.

6.4.1.3 Sensitive data were not accessible to the researcher

Any records the cultural organisations held regarding any of the participants could not be accessed or sighted by the researcher at any time. Therefore the research involved no access to existing records, which are not in the public domain. The contact letters only requested the forwarding of information letters to prospective participants. The researcher did not request names, addresses, telephone numbers, emails or any other identifying data from any of the contact organisations. This satisfied the definition
within the latest Privacy Act (Privacy NSW, 2002) and provides further protection for participants.

6.4.1.4 A reduction of researcher bias

As the researcher was reliant on nominees to provide participants for the study, there was a reduction in researcher bias. Because the researcher cannot simply select participants according to their own agenda or perspective, but must conform to the definitions of giftedness provided by contact agencies and nominees, the possibility of a biased recruitment was therefore limited.

6.4.1.5 Access to informal networks of communication

To recruit participants researchers need contacts. Many researchers resort to newspaper advertisements or other forms of advertising to recruit enough participants to successfully complete their research projects. Yet capitalising on informal networks of communication established between agencies and existing contacts can be quite effective. ‘Word of mouth’ is proving to be a real methodology for locating participants, and gives substance to Milgram’s (1967) contention that there are only ‘six degrees’ of separation between any two people on our planet at any give time.

6.4.1.6 Cost effective

This method of recruitment has been identified by Streeton et al. (2004) as cheaper than other methods of recruitment. Certainly it was more cost-effective than a random letter drop to a broad selection of Australia’s population, or running a newspaper advertisement indefinitely. By telephoning the agency prior to forwarding information letters, the researcher reduced the possibility of letters not reaching their targets. By stipulating that only one or two participants can be identified by each agency, once again reducing the cost of multiple postings, the researcher was still ensured a broad range of participant contact.
6.4.2 NEGATIVE ASPECTS

The positive aspects of this recruitment methodology far outweighed the negative. Nevertheless, as highlighted in Figure 21, there are some negative aspects to this type of recruitment.

6.4.2.1 Human Research Ethical Committee (HREC) application

The initial ethical applications for this type of recruitment required some negotiation. Apparently from an ethical aspect, the initial contacts are considered to be as much a participant as the actual interviewees (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). Therefore the identities of these agencies and contacts must be protected by the same privacy guidelines as the interviewees. Signed consent was also required from nominees to include any discussions or commentary incurred during the search for participants (Gruppetta, 2005d, 2005e). Although a negative in terms of the time and work involved in obtaining ethical clearance, the process forced the researcher to clearly identify aspects of their ethical underpinnings for the research.

6.4.2.2 Time factor

This was not a swift method of recruitment. The ethical application required negotiation which caused delays. Then the time taken to contact various agencies and wait for their replies and negotiations must be added to the time spent in direct negotiations with participants. Using this method of recruitment required some patience.

6.4.2.3 Coercion

As previously mentioned this method reduces the possibility of coercion by the researcher, however there was some possibility of coercion by the religious or cultural groups during the nomination phase. To reduce this possibility all nominees will be asked whether there was any coercion involved in the referral process, and then provided with negotiation on methods of withdrawal. For instance the researcher could find they were ‘not suitable’ for the study, which would permit them to return to the nominating
body with no repercussions. Obviously an unwilling participant is ‘unsuitable’ therefore no ethical dilemmas were raised through this process and the aims of the research were protected.

6.4.2.4 ‘Closed Group’ phenomenon

There existed the possibility of the multiple nominations within one of the groups in regard to the ‘closed group’ phenomenon previously mentioned. To address this issue only one or two nominations were taken per contact, although the likelihood of connection between the selected groups is impossible to eliminate due to the ‘small world’ phenomenon, usually referred to as ‘six degrees of separation’ (Milgram, 1967).

6.4.2.4 Inability to select participants

Although this aspect ensures a reduction in researcher bias, limiting the researcher’s ability to select their own participants includes some negative aspects. The nominated participants were not always those anticipated by the researcher, as participants neither expected nor visualized by the researcher in their initial planning of the study were recruited. Yet this in itself proved to have its positive aspects. By moving the researcher out of her own ‘comfort zone’ and introducing a more challenging aspect to the study, a broader range of participants were encountered which enriched the study.

6.5 RECRUITING THE PARTICIPANTS

During the course of the recruitment process several individuals were nominated for participation in the study. Unfortunately some of these individuals were unable to participate due to the extensive time commitment involved in a series of interviews. In all there were eleven recruits, however two of the original participants completed the initial interview and then declined to continue with the research project. The first, a middle-aged Principal from Nepal, declined to continue as he felt the process would be too personal and he was not able to reveal aspects of himself to public scrutiny. As stipulated in my application for ethical clearance, this individual was given the option of taking his data and having all trace of our interaction destroyed. He chose not to destroy
the data, and did give me permission to use it; nevertheless I have not used any of his interview data within this study in order to respect his privacy.

The second participant, an Indonesian Muslim woman, left the study due to a lack of time to participate. However in the interests of transparency it should be noted that from our initial meeting there was a clash of cultural beliefs that we needed to address. Although I critically researched aspects of correct attire, customs and conduct prior to all initial meetings with participants, when first meeting ‘Zara’ (pseudonym) she was obviously distressed and actually recoiled when I approached. The problem was the minute strands of dog hair evident on my clothing. Zara’s explained: "according to Hadith, anything a dog touches must be washed seven times, the final time in dust.” This aspect of Islamic belief was previously unknown to the researcher, and had not been mentioned during arrangements with the Islamic agency referring the participant; however it meant much negotiation was required before another interview could be scheduled (Gruppetta, 2008).

Therefore it was arranged that I would shower and change into ‘dog free’ clothing prior to our next meeting and upon arrival wash my hands the required seven times, the last time ‘in dust’, which meant the I then conducted the interview with filthy hands as ‘Zara’ required full compliance. Taking the trouble to comply was crucial to establishing trust (Gruppetta, 2008). It should be noted that this belief concerning dogs is not common to all Muslims. Dogs are considered unclean according to some who study Islamic law, and contested by modern scholars of the Qu’ran (El Fadl, 2006).

After further research into this area, reference to newspaper articles referring to Muslim taxi drivers refusing to carry guide dogs in their cars (Saleh, 2006) at the next meeting was also a cultural faux pas, as ‘Zara’ explained that no access to newspaper or television reports was permitted during Ramadan. As another Muslim participant was not restricted from media forums during this time this restriction was specific to Zara’s interpretation of her own religious practice (Gruppetta, 2008). This perspective highlights the need for individual interpretation as one Asian cannot speak for all Asians, one Aboriginal cannot speak for all Aborigines, nor can one woman speak for all
women (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Nevertheless, they provide an authoritative voice that permits an insightful glimpse of an otherwise hidden world. Zara’s hidden world may not be one shared by all Muslims, but her interpretation is as valid as any other interpretation, because it is her ‘lived experience’ (Thibodeau & MacRae, 1997). Despite my best efforts ‘Zara’ declined to continue with the study, although she did give me permission to use all of her data, including discussion of our cultural negotiations.

6.5.1 INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

In all there were ten participants in the study, including myself. I will introduce the participants in this section prior to the discussion of data collection and analysis in the next Chapter. The participants are listed in chronological order of recruitment:

- Maree - As stated I am the first participant in the study, and have already introduced myself in the initial stages of this dissertation.

- Harriet was the second participant recruited. Harriet is Anglo Saxon, Catholic and considered herself the token ‘mainstream middle-class’ participant in the study. Harriet is in her early forties, has several university degrees and is currently living in the U.S.A. with her husband and children.

- Esi, in her seventies, was the third recruit and is the eldest participant in the study. Japan is her native land, although she has lived in Australia since she was a young child. Esi is a grandmother and teacher, and has travelled extensively.

- Mark is the next eldest participant and the fourth recruited; he is in his late sixties and is a semi-retired European businessman. Mark has lived in Australia for most of his adult life.

- Bobbie was the next recruited. She is in her forties and was born in New Zealand, as were her children, although she has made her home among the Maori community in Australia for a number of years.
• Brenda is the sixth recruit. She is in her early thirties and also has European background, although she comes from Czechoslovakia, so her culture differs from Mark’s. Brenda has been in Australia since she was a young child.

• Zaynab is in her fifties, is a School Principal and has a large number of children, and some grandchildren. She originally comes from Indonesia, although attended school in Australia.

• Tiffany is in her late thirties, also has children and is Aboriginal.

• Alex, in his early twenties, is the youngest participant in the study. Alex is from Fiji, and refers to himself as a Fijian-Indian.

• Son is probably in his late fifties, although he never mentioned his age, he is married with children and originally came from Laos, although he has lived in many countries and now makes his home in Australia.

The participants present their own stories in detail in Chapter Eight.

As participant recruitment has been explained in this chapter, the next chapter details the range of data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 7

METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

Illustration 13 - The Raven of Interpretation
(Excerpt from main image – A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Grupetta, 2006b)

Illustration 13 - The Raven of Interpretation
The ‘raven’ is a deliberate metaphor, representative once again of Indigenous ways of knowing, incorporating the belief that the Raven’ is messenger to Aboriginal people (Duffy, 2003). However the raven only speaks to those who will listen, all others hear only noise. The Raven also brings into the research the work of O’Riley (2003) and her use of the raven as trickster, in regard to her own indigenous beliefs. The ‘raven’ of O’Riley’s (2003) northwestern American Indian tradition tricks the listener if they do not think about what they really hear. This metaphor is yet another perspective of the research, findings may be influenced by the researcher’s perspective and require confirmation from the participants to ensure the viewpoint is accurate and not a misportrayal of either the participants or their lived experiences as presented to the researcher.

The Raven however is a common theme among many cultures, therefore applicable to a multicultural study. This raven is also that of Edgar Allen Poe’s writings, eternally croaking ‘nevermore’ (Poe, 1845), and one of the ravens of legend from the Tower of London, whose residence is linked to the fall of the monarchy (Destinations, U.K. 2006). Raven is a complex bird, both in nature and in mythology, representing symbolism of both positive and negative aspects (Black, 2006). Raven is the fatal touch of the Calleach in winter, the wisdom of Odin, the vessel of prophecy given to a seer, the mighty protector of the Western Isles, and the healing message of an Indian shaman (Black, 2005; Cooper, 1992; Goodchild, 1991). Raven is magic and symbolizes the void – the mystery of that which is not yet formed. Ravens are symbolic of the Black Hole in Space, which draws in all energy toward itself and releases it in new forms (Cooper, 1992; Goodchild, 1991).

All these faces of the raven have meaning in terms of the research forum, although Odin’s ravens are most connotative. Odin had two ravens – Huginn (thought) and Muninn (memory) who flew about the world, delivering messages, gathering knowledge and reporting back to him (Black, 2006; Cooper, 1992; Goodchild, 1991), these twin meanings are an appropriate description of the research, which relies on participant memory and much thought to interpret meaning. Moreover, Raven is considered one of the oldest and wisest of animals, known for their high level of intelligence, flexibility, and adaptability. Ravens have probably achieved the highest degree of intelligence and highest mental development among the avian species (Savage, 1995; Terres, 1991), which makes this symbol particularly apt for a study of gifted individuals.

The raven is portrayed with the iridescent blue and purple sheen to the feathers that represent constant change of form within the void (Goodchild, 1991). The large area of darkness within the curve of the wings is the void itself, and the darkness of the abyss that dwells within. Within the raven’s eye is the researcher’s ‘id’, that element of self reflection needed to ensure integrity of findings throughout the research. Therefore although the larger research eye looks without to gather the research, the smaller eye looks within to monitor the researcher’s journey (Gruppetta, 2006b).
7.1 DATA COLLECTION

As shown in Figure 22 data were collected from a variety of sources including: a review and analysis of pertinent literature; recorded interviews; value activities; collages; characteristic surveys; and electronic communication from periods between interviews; and the researcher’s own journal entries and analytical field notes, in order to provide as much detail as possible.

7.1.1 LITERATURE ANALYSIS

The first step of qualitative interviewing “begins with an exhaustive review of the literature” (McCracken, 1988, p. 29). The main purpose of a literature review is to gain “command of the subject area” (Hart, 1998, p.13). By accessing as much literature as possible relating to the research topic and investigating the variety of viewpoints put forward by previous researchers, the researcher builds an understanding of the research topic (Hart, 1998). Therefore in order to build an effective base for the topic a large range of literature was accessed relating to the field of gifted education.

Literature was also accessed from a variety of related fields including psychology, as giftedness is usually allocated to this subject area. As the participants were adults and relating their experiences of the phenomenon of giftedness throughout their lifetimes, some exploration of the literature concerning the expected stages of development in terms of psychological, moral and spiritual stages were also required. Because participants were recruited from a multicultural pool, literature regarding cultural and religious differences, and research surrounding the notion of the ‘other’ in society was also necessary to effectively underpin this research. An extensive review of the research methodology was required as well, particularly when using a bricolage of methodology, because a bricoleur must read widely in order to use research method and data collection effectively (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).
Figure 22. The data collected

Adapted from: Kumar (1996, p. 104)
The extensive knowledge base provided by this range of literature had two primary purposes. Firstly, the literature review, by providing a range of other opinions and study findings, broadens the researcher’s outlook and reduces the incidence of ‘researcher bias’ by manufacturing “distance” (McCracken, 1988, p.31) from the researcher’s original preconceived ideas. Secondly, the literature review is valuable to the researcher because it will “sharpen his or her capacity for surprise” (McCracken, 1988, p.31). McCracken (1988) explains this as “the investigator who is well versed in the literature now has a set of expectations the data can defy. Although it is acknowledged some previous research in regard to identifying giftedness was completed within my Honours research (Gruppetta, 2003a) this area required updating to more current information and the areas surrounding cultural definitions of giftedness; and moral and spiritual value development were entirely new areas of research. “Counter expectational data are conspicuous, readable and highly provocative data” (McCracken, 1988, p.31). Certainly, this premise was confirmed during the course of the study, as issues previously considered to be important were found to have no bearing and entirely new and unexpected issues were raised during the course of the research. Consequently the literature review was constant and ongoing throughout the course of the study in order to address the requirements of the participants, and address any new issues that arose.

7.1.2 TRANSCRIPTS

Data were collected from a variety of sources including: taped interviews; the participants’ explanation of their collages; the participants’ discussion during value activities; and electronic communication from periods between interview sessions; and the researcher’s own journal entries and field notes. These sources provided as much detail as possible. All data collected from participants were transcribed into typewritten documents for ease of data matching and categorisation (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001; Burns, 1997), and to permit participants the opportunity to ‘member check’ (Merriam, 1989) their data. All participants chose to use email to check transcripts and either confirmed the accuracy or returned an edited version by electronic transmission.
7.1.2.1 Interviews

Although interviews were not the sole means of generating data for the study, they were a source of data collection and as such needed to be carefully designed. Although unstructured interviews would provide a greater wealth of data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), it was decided to use structured questions as a guide (Burns, 1997), with deviations from the structured guide where necessary to clarify points or expand knowledge. The reasons for this decision were based on the disadvantages referred to by Burns (1997) where “the flexibility afforded by unstructured interview may generate difficulties when attempts are made to categorise” (p. 485). Some of the questions were designed to establish rapport in the initial stages, such as requesting participants supply their own pseudonym and requesting an explanation of their name choice. A full transcript of interview questions is provided in Appendix A21.

As the main goal was to interview for the participant’s life experiences and construct a narrative or story of these experiences, structured interview questions were an effective method of providing some organisation for the narrative. However, “interviewers don’t work out three to four questions in advance and ask them regardless of answers to earlier questions” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.7). Therefore, although a structured format was used as a basis for the interviews, additional questions, deviating from the structured guide (Burns, 1997) were asked in order to expand knowledge and clarify points where pertinent. Narrative responses were always encouraged in order to reveal how the participant structured experiential meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The participants needed to tell their own stories from their own perspectives to remain true to the narrative and phenomenological principles underpinning the research. Therefore a set format could not be maintained as each participant had their own unique epiphanies, and thus interview questions and discussions were required to evolve during the course of the research in order to follow individual life stories.

Initial interview questions were designed to be fairly simple, to test knowledge gained through the initial literature review, and to challenge the researcher’s prior assumptions. The questions relating to each participant’s background (Appendix A21) were designed
to be easy in order to reduce “question threat” (Foddy, 1992, p.112) that might inhibit participants, and to aid in establishing a relationship with the participants (Burns, 1997). The first five questions were closed, with only one answer (Foddy, 1993), in order to further put participants at ease. Once the basic information was provided regarding participants’ background knowledge and experience, more open questions, those with more than one possible answer (Foddy, 1993; Burns, 1997) were included in order to allow more open data collection of their lives and perspectives of the phenomenon of giftedness, without suggesting answers to the participants (Foddy, 1993). Also, the more open question format allowed the funnelling of broad areas into a more narrow focus, and permitted flexibility for adjustment (Burns, 1997).

In order to ensure the interview data were as unbiased as possible, I put aside my own need for reciprocal relationship with the participants, as part of my Indigenous heritage, at least within the initial stages of establishing contact. I quickly found that the participants would ask questions about me, as a person, not as a researcher, and this conflicted with the notion that I was only listener to their lived experience. I rapidly found that if I gave each participant the opportunity to answer the question I could then share my own experiences, and therefore establish a more conversational tone. For instance, when each participant was asked whether they were married and/or had children, or when they related an anecdote about their spouse or child, the opportunity arose for my own anecdotes to be shared – after they had provided the required data.

In this manner I was able to acknowledge my own Indigenous ways of knowing, which required some reciprocity in any sharing of life story, and yet ensure the initial data were not tainted by my own life experience and/or viewpoint. By giving the participant the lead on every question, allowing them to share their story first, any possible bias was minimised. Oakley (1981) concurs with the sharing of the researcher’s own stories with participants:

So while positivists regard departure from an interview schedule as a possible source of bias, emotionalists may actively encourage it. For instance feminist interviewers are sometimes advised to take the opportunity to tell their own stories to respondents (Oakley, 1981, cited in Silverman, 2001:90).
All interviews were recorded and transcribed (Burns, 1997; Seidman, 1998) with full permission of the participants. Burns (1997) refers to many people feeling uncomfortable about having their answers taped and suggests they may become “inhibited and excessively cautious about what they say” (p.484). However, the participants in this study appeared to be undisturbed by the recording process. From my point of view the tapes provided an accurate means of ensuring I had followed my own guidelines and, in particular, only shared my self stories after the participants had shared their own. Therefore the recordings, and resulting transcripts, assisted in providing an additional check on my own research practice.

By having members check their transcripts for accuracy (Merriam, 1989), and to confirm statements and opinions of participants, it was possible for both interviewer and respondent to “collaboratively construct the meaning of interview narratives” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p.59). One participant, Brenda, actually transcribed her own interview tapes rather than wait for me to do so, and was therefore able to member check the document whilst transcribing the text. “Saturation point” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 72), when data gathered does not result in any new data, and it only confirms previously collected data, was reached during the final interviews. The point of ‘saturation’ was most evident within my own journal notes. Entries became quite repetitive as I finalised working with the data, which demonstrated no further new material was being generated.

7.1.2.2 Value Activity

The Value activity was designed to provoke responses to a variety of small cardboard cards, each with a single word typed on it. Each word was taken from a list of moral values, and a full list of these words is provided in Appendix A39. In order to enhance the data gathered from the interview, participants were also asked to complete a ‘value’ activity, where cards with words such as ‘truth’, ‘ justice’, ‘honesty’, etc were sorted into piles that did or did not apply to their beliefs. The participants were each asked to firstly decide if that word applied to themselves, and during the activity asked to sort these cards into three piles: ‘Most like me’; ‘Least like me’; and ‘Not Sure’. The participants
were also asked to explain why they thought that word or value applied to themselves, and in some cases discussed their subjective meaning of the actual word written on the card. This activity generated a wealth of data as many of the participants used anecdotal evidence to support their reasoning and this added to the record of life experience.

These activities with the value cards were also recorded and transcribed for member checking, providing a wealth of additional data to supplement the interviews. The activity itself also generated a variety of responses from participants. Some participants responded to the colour of the cards in a manner supplementary to their response to the words written on them.

The cards were printed on various coloured pieces of cardboard Appendix A42 simply because that was the cardboard I had available at the time of the first interview, and because the first participant was in the country only briefly I needed to get the cards printed quickly. However this serendipitous occurrence actually generated some interesting results. The first participant, Harriet, picked the cards by colour, and avoided one of the colours until the end of the activity. Another, Brenda, picked the cards in sequential order of colour and repeated this order throughout the activity. Still another, Bobbie, made a collage of these value cards, which I recorded with a photograph Appendix A42. Unfortunately there was no time to explore this phenomenon, the participants’ reaction to the colours on the cards, within this study. Still these responses intrigued me and it remains an area I would like to explore in another study some time in the future.

7.1.2.3 Observations

Mann and Stewart (2000) contend “observational work can have advantages over interviews” (p.84). They cite Foster’s (1996) overview of the advantages:

Information about human behaviour can be recorded directly without having to rely on the retrospective or anticipatory accounts of others; observers may see the familiar as strange, noting features of the environment/behaviour that participants may not be able to see; patterns and regularities in the environment may be observed and analysed over time; observation can give access to information about people who are busy, deviant or hostile to taking part in research (Foster, 1996, p. 58 cited in Mann & Stewart, 2000, p.84).
In order to address these areas observational data were gathered during the interviews regarding body language and vocal tone. The voices of the participants, using their own words, were faithfully transcribed verbatim. Reference to the participant’s vocal tone, facial expression and body language were noted during transcription in order to ensure contextual analysis of the data (Burns, 1997), and increase the interpretation of meaning. These observations were noted within transcribed interview data as notations in brackets. For example ‘lowered voice’, ‘laughed’, ‘waved their arms around’, ‘fiddled with cards’, etc.

In an interview situation the researcher “listens to the words actually said and to the non-verbal cues that indicate emphasis and emotional tone” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.6), this is an implicit argument to combine observations with interviewing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). However, structured observation requires events to be recorded in a systematic manner as they occur, these events are then coded into categories and subsequently analysed (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001, p.176-177).

Fontana and Frey (1998) contend that much of the data gathered in participant observation is actually the result of unstructured or informal interviewing situations in the field. A point consistent to this study as much of the data generated was in response to conversational queries by the researcher within the context of the value activity. Ordinary conversations and qualitative interviews share much in common as both are based on questions and their answers (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

7.1.3 ARTEFACTS

Hodder (1998) refers to written texts and artefacts as “mute evidence” (p.110). They are described as ‘mute’ because there is “often no possibility of interaction” (Hodder, 1998, p.110) with the writer, and even when the participant is available the articulated explanation may not match the sentiment, or explain the cultural meaning, of the written document. This differentiates between records as having a “full state technology of power” (Hodder, 1998, p.111) and identifies them as marriages certificates, contracts, banking statements and other similar state controlled or generated records. Documents,
however, are identified as having personal rather than official purposes, are generated by personal technology and as they are “closer to speech” (Hodder, 1998, p.111) require more contextualised interpretation.

For the purpose of this study, only personal documentation in the form of participant generated text was used. Text generated in the form of interview transcripts, electronic communication, and the researcher’s journal and field notes were each analysed individually and then compared for commonalities and differences. By “reading text as a literacy narrative, the reader engages in the character’s process of developing an identity” (Clark & Medina, 2000, p.66). It is “not the fundamental thought of the other person but the world itself, the ‘lived experience’, which is expressed by the author’s text” (van Manen, 2000).

However, “text interpretation aims at reconstructing the author’s intended meanings” (van Manen, 2000). To reconstruct the intended meaning of the participant’s text, without bias, can be a difficult task. As previously stated even when the participant is available the articulated explanation may not match the sentiment, or explain the cultural meaning, of the written document (Hodder, 1998). Also, text reread in different contexts can be given new meaning (Hodder, 1998). “Similarly, how we say something may matter a great deal and may be interpreted differently in different environments. Communication is not transparent even if it comes in narrative prose” (Conle, 2000, p. 54).

The researcher’s bias can influence analysis of a text not only in terms of their own viewpoint or expectations within the study. Participants use the language that are most comfortable with, and “language in any context is a very powerful social cue” (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 166). Furthermore language can be gendered (Mann & Stewart, 2000) with different interpretations dependent on whether the writer is male or female, and also on whether the researcher interpreting the data is male or female. As previously stated in the limitations, some of the participants in this study were male and analysis of their meaning by a female researcher could provide a different interpretation.
The main aim of textual analysis within this study was to compare texts generated in different situations against other texts. Not only to ensure consistency of findings, but also to investigate the different viewpoints of participants as they presented in each textual format. As Hodder (1998) contends “texts can be used alongside other forms of evidence so that the particular biases of each can be understood and compared” (p.111). Texts can also be compared between situations and responses to ascertain participant responses in different situations. All forms of written texts supplied by the participants, usually in the form of email communication, were compared to verbal statements transcribed from interviews and observations, for commonalities and differences. This achieved a greater depth of analysis of the intended meaning, as the participants tended to provide different information in their written statements when compared to their verbal statements, and provided information that differed again within their collages.

7.1.3.1 Collage

Collage has been a significant visual form of the arts in the twentieth century (Gruppetta, 2006c). Initially referring to works of visual art in which various materials are glued to a flat surface, collage has become a term which not only often covers a range of techniques-including assemblage, photomontage, and the manipulation of found objects (Raaberg, 1998). In its various manifestations, collage is generally considered to have fundamentally changed twentieth-century theories and practices in the arts (Raaberg, 1998). Within research forums collage is slowly emerging as another facet of data collection. For example, Davis, (2001 cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002) was able to show in her analysis and final product the potential for using collage as an alternative methodology for self-study.

For the purposes of this research study the notion of a ‘collage’ was not explained to the participants. They were simply asked to make a ‘collage’ that represented either their life or themselves. No further instructions were given and the resulting responses to this task included everything from traditional magazine pictures glued on cardboard to quick sketches, and, in some cases, extremely detailed personal artworks as will be demonstrated in Chapter Eight.
The decision to include art-based practices within this research forum was based on extending methods of participant communication. Because “art can be another important avenue of communication and expression, especially when words fail” (Liebmann, 1986, p.9), the aim was to increase the depth of investigation by providing participants with alternative means of expressing themselves. The goal was to “encourage some form of graphic communication” Horowitz (cited in Wolman, 1996, p.47) instead of just talking with participants.

The spatial character of pictures can describe many aspects of experience simultaneously, and art is useful for working with the unconscious (Liebmann, 1986, pp. 9-10; Slattery, 2001, p.381), therefore extended the participants’ intrapersonal analysis. Work in the arts permitted the exploration of uncertainty and shifted the locus of evaluation to an internal subjective view. It directed their “attention inward to what we believe or feel” (Eisner, 2002, p.10). Working with art clarified ideas and provided a “means of exploring [their] own interior landscape” (Eisner, 2002, p.11).

Increasingly, educational research suggests that the more traditional, textual descriptions of qualitative findings do not adequately reflect the complexity of studying human behavior. Nor do they satisfy the ethical issues of voice and relationship to which researchers have become more sensitive, or permit the possibility of multiple interpretations that the postmodern world has come to accept (Butler-Kisber, 2002). Also, as art is related to play and is enjoyable, has few extrinsic goals and involves active engagement on the part of the player (Liebmann, 1986, p.12) the process itself was pleasurable and increased participants’ enthusiasm for the research project and interaction with the researcher. Horowitz, (cited in Wolman, 1996, p.47) suggests art therapy techniques work to establish more closeness; to evoke emotional expressions and work through feeling states”. Such closeness comes from “experiencing with another the raw humanness that we all share” (Tseng & Hsu, 1991). These nontraditional forms help disrupt the hegemony inherent in traditional texts and evoke emotional responses that bring the reader/viewer closer to the work, permitting otherwise silenced voices to be heard (Denzin, 1997). There is growing consensus
among many qualitative researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) that these new ways of
doing inquiry will contribute positively to existing educational practices (Butler-Kisber,
2002).

This form of inquiry mandates that researchers situate themselves in their studies and
work intimately with their participants. In so doing they create relationships that help to
ensure that participant voices and perspectives are respected and reported (Butler-
Kisber, 2002). Participants were encouraged to accept the notion that the activity was
“not about producing beautiful works of art” (Liebmann, 1986, p.24). Rather it was a
way of “exploring in an open-ended way” (Liebmann, 1986, p.24). Although all the
participants were surprised when asked to create a ‘collage’, only one actually refused,
although another participant never found the time to complete a collage. The rest of the
participants were delighted with the opportunity to participate in such an engaging task.

These collages, once completed, were initially reviewed superficially as a comparison to
interview data. The collages were merely evaluated for commonalities to specific
reference to life events or important aspects of the participants’ lives, as related through
narrative life stories. Further means of interpreting these collages will be discussed in
the next section of this chapter within the data analysis.

7.1.3.2 Electronic Communication

Due to the busy schedules of the participants in the study, electronic communication, in
the form of e-mail was used to maintain contact with participants in addition to the more
personal contact afforded by interviews, visits and telephone calls. Electronic
communication is useful for keeping “in contact with people you don’t have time to see
in person” (Dimmick, Kline & Stafford, 2000, p.6), and enhanced the data collection for
this study by providing another format for communication.

Mann and Stewart (2000) provide a wealth of explanation regarding etiquette and ethical
behaviour for researching ‘online’. However, as the participants were contacted
personally and gave “informed consent” (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p.48) as indicated by
their signatures, the ethical issues raised by the use of electronic communication as the
sole means of data collection do not apply. The use of e-mail contact in this study was simply another option for contact. It was a simpler way of providing interview transcripts for “member checks” (Merriam, 1989), and an opportunity for providing comments or addressing queries.

Much of the data collected by e-mail format were unsolicited. This provided more scope for comparison between these responses and the responses actively solicited (Hodder, 1998) as reflections on the in-service issues. The participants simply seized the opportunity presented to continue conversations, report on pertinent situations or events, and reflect on their life stories by using e-mail as a “mutual exchange” (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 170) of ideas. I therefore capitalised on the opportunity to increase contact with participants, and utilized electronic communication as another tool for data collection.

Davidhizar and Shearer (2001) refer to the increased use of electronic mail and contend it has become “one of the most powerful and useful tools in the workplace” (p.1). They raise issues in regard to its interpretation due to the lack of “non-verbal communication that accompanies face-to-face communication” (Davidizar & Shearer, 2001, p.1), and contend that these issues can cause difficulty in the establishing or maintaining of positive relationships between parties due to the capacity for misunderstanding text sent via this format without the accompanying verbal cues (Davidizar & Shearer, 2001). Dimmick, Kline and Stafford (2000) confirm the preference for face-to-face communication rather than e-mail for situations where there is ambiguity or uncertainty.

Data collected by this format provided no possible observation of body language, facial expression or vocal tone. This contrasted electronic data with other data collected, as no observational notation was possible. In all other ways the electronic data were treated in the same manner as other text, already discussed in terms of text analysis, as e-mails are simply an electronic text.
7.1.4 JOURNAL

Burns (1997) refers to the division of field notes into three main areas. Transcripts containing records of interviews and conversations; second a personal file that includes the researcher’s own reflections, descriptions, opinions, and methodological aspects such as gaining permission and maintaining relations with participants; and third an analytic file, which identifies and discusses the conceptual issues and emergent themes. During this study the personal and analytic files were grouped together and recorded within the researcher’s journal. Although originally there were three files, it became apparent during the course of the research that personal reflections and descriptions often suggested analytic issues and themes. Therefore these two areas were grouped together in order to maintain records of the links between reflection and analysis. The transcript file suggested by Burns (1997) was expanded to become a record of all interactions, conversations and observations in the field.

7.1.4.1 Researcher’s Journal

My researcher’s journal was a reflective journal written over the course of the research. My use of a journal is recommended as a technique for both recording events and reflecting on those events during the course of the study (Burns, 1997; Merriam, 1989; Vockell & Asher, 1995). Lincoln and Guba (1985a) recommend the use of a researcher’s journal as another criteria toward establishing the trustworthiness of a study, in order to establish an “audit trail” (p. 322). Richardson (1998) further contends the researcher’s use of reflective writing is integral to the research process. “The researcher’s self knowledge and knowledge of the topic develops through experimentation with point of view, tone, texture, sequencing, metaphor and so on” (Richardson, 1998, p. 360).

Consequently, these journal entries involved my own thoughts pertaining to the study, as a way of fleshing out brief field note entries into more depth in order to clarify details that may be omitted or retrieved inaccurately. The journal also included observational notes, pertaining to events that occurred during fieldwork (Burns, 1997; Merriam, 1989; Richardson, 1998; Vockell & Asher, 1995); methodological notes, where details of
methods used were recorded in the form of a process diary (Burns, 1997; Richardson, 1998); theoretical notes relating to “hunches, hypotheses” (Richardson, 1998, p.365), and ideas (Burns, 1997) that related to the study. The journal again proved to be invaluable as a constant underlying thread, which recorded the connections between thought and action, and recorded events in their chronological order of occurrence.

Unfortunately, despite my best intentions, and constant attempts to be conscientious in the keeping of the journal, this particular document deteriorated into the ultimate ‘messy text’ (Denzin, 1997). Initially I typed notes into a Journal file on the computer, faithfully recording date and time. Naturally, the computer was not always available, so hand written notes were kept in a hard covered journal and then transcribed onto the computer file. Eventually as my notes became more prolific this technique was reversed and the type written computer notes were printed out and pasted into the hard journal.

As my thought processes became more complex, and I began to represent ideas visually through pictures, I found it impossible to record everything within the hard journal and made notes and sketches on a variety of written surfaces. From ‘post it’ notes to the margins in magazines, from serviettes to aeroplane and hotel stationary, I jotted my thoughts down constantly, but then had to decide what to do with these random pieces of paper. I forced myself to continue with recording the time and date, regardless of the type of paper used, and then gathered these random notes and thoughts into the one constant record – that of the hard journal. To date there are four of these hard journals. Some are very neat, others are a scrapbook of newspaper articles, random poetry, sketches, thoughts and ideas, but all are pasted into the hard copy of the journal in chronological order to ensure the research process was tracked and monitored. I have provided some examples of these pages in the Appendices A17-20) and copies of the original journal entries can be supplied on request.

7.1.4.2 Researcher’s Field notes

Researchers may write field notes “in more or less detail with more or less interpretive content” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 168), a point consistent with the range of field
notes entries for this study. Many of the field notes recorded were brief points or paragraphs relating to the interview, value card and in some cases the collage sessions. Some of these notes pertained to specific body language, facial expression and vocal tone as a reminder to add these points to text transcription. Some were notes to check for details of specific points in the conversation when transcribing due to their potential use as a pertinent quote or possible importance as an area of investigation to pursue further.

However, during the search for participants, and later during the course of the study there were many occasions when interactions with individuals occurred externally to the audio taped situations. On these occasions field notes became more comprehensive in order to record as much detail as possible. As an example the telephone conversations with those nominating gifted adults during the initial search period were recorded due to their importance in establishing the cultural frame for definitions of giftedness within the study area. Examples of these field notes are provided in the Appendix (A17-A20).

Additionally, due to the demands of the participants’ schedules, the telephone became another important tool for maintaining contact and clarifying details during the course of the study. Dimmick et al. (2000) confirm the use of the telephone as a communication tool and claim it is superior to the use of email. “The telephone is superior for the sociability gratifications that are highly affective uses in personal relationships, such as expressing emotions and affection, giving advice, exchanging information, and providing companionship” (Dimmick et al, 2000, p.6). Certainly it was possible to take note of the participant’s vocal tone and range of emotions during telephone interactions. All telephone conversations with participants were recorded as field notes using as much detail as possible. Where possible, actual quotes were transcribed during the telephone call, and immediately following each telephone interaction comprehensive field notes were recorded to enhance accuracy.

Field notes were also taken as dot points or key words during interviews, although I found some participants were more disturbed by my note taking than they were by being tape recorded, which threatened to interfere with data collection. Therefore, in some
cases, note taking during the interview was avoided, with mental notes made to be written immediately following the interview. In some instances I was able to quickly jot key words, when apparently writing down a reference or telephone number they had supplied. The majority of the field notes during interviews were actually recorded whilst the participant was involved in a task, either the value card activity or the collage activity, as most of the participants became engrossed within the task at hand and paid little attention to my note taking. Immediately following the interview, more comprehensive field notes were recorded including: first impressions; body language; vocal tone; key points to look for within the transcript; any issues of ethical dilemma; points that may require research in terms of the literature, or require follow up with the participant at a later date; and/or confirmation with other participants to check for commonalities.

Clandinin and Connelly (1998) confirm the importance of including data collected from field notes during the course of a study. All interaction with participants, all experiences in the field cannot possibly be audio-taped constantly, despite the best efforts of the researcher. “It is the fear that somehow experience will be lost that drives researchers to try to record or tape all of experience. What we fail to acknowledge clearly enough is that all field texts are constructed representations of experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 168). Therefore these field notes were also pasted into the researcher’s journal to ensure consistency and accuracy whilst gathering the data.

7.1.5 CHARACTERISTIC SURVEY

The Characteristic survey (Macy, 1996, A12) has not been included within Figure 22 as part of the data collected. There are several reasons for this omission. Firstly it was never my intention that a quantitative measure would be included in this research. After discussing the cultural weighting of I.Q. tests it was hoped that this survey would provide more scope and avoid similar cultural weighting. But it was obvious during interaction with the participants that this survey provided difficulties for those participants with English as a Second Language. Many of the participants asked me to
explain what each of the statements in the survey meant, which I felt immediately voided the validity of the survey.

This presented a unique dilemma, if I explained what the statement meant I would taint the data collected, and yet if I did not explain the participant was left feeling inadequate, and certainly less than the gifted person I needed them to be. In the interests of maintaining good relationships with the participants, and maintaining their personal self esteem, I chose to explain the statements when asked. A copy of the survey is supplied within the Appendix (A12), nevertheless any results obtained from surveys could not be considered reliable, although some answers do concur with the list of Gifted Characteristics shown in Figure 5 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, cited in Gruppetta, 2003).
Illustration 14 – Finer Details

(Excerpt from Main Image – ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’, Grupetta 2006b)

Within the main metaphoric image the raven is portrayed with the iridescent blue and purple sheen to the feathers that represent constant change of form within the void (Grupetta, 2006b). However, the detail provided on the feathers is also representative of the minute detail required when processing data.
7.2.1 WORKING WITH THE DATA

The previous section documented the collection of the data throughout the research, this section will discuss the various methods of processing and analysing each facet of the data collected. As shown by Figure 23 the first phase of data processing was the collection of data from both primary and secondary sources. The process of data collection has been discussed and displayed by Figure 22. Following data collection the next step was to process the data. The process involved editing the data, then coding the data and then matching the data in order to begin analysis. These steps are outlined in Figure 24.

7.2.2 DATA EDITING

Editing or ‘cleaning’ the data consists of scrutinising the data to identify and minimise, as far as possible, errors, incompleteness, misclassification and gaps in the information obtained from the participants (Kumar, 1996). The best way to do this is by “going back to the respondent” (Kumar, 1996, p. 200) in order to verify details As with all text analysis in this study, any ambiguity or uncertainty presented by data collected was discussed with the participants either in person or by email or telephone to clarify meaning (Siedman, 1998).

As previously stated interviews were transcribed verbatim, every word the participant actually said: during interviews; value activity; and in some cases within the explanation of the collage activity, were recorded with careful note of vocal tone and any sub-noises that would remind me of any specific body language. For example: fiddling, tapping, any indication the participant was drawing away from the voice recorder or walking around, etc. The transcripts were then initially ‘cleaned’ of any small discrepancies such as ‘um’, ‘ah’, etc prior to sending to the participant for member checking.
Step 1
Gathering the Raw Data

Primary Sources
- Interviews
- Value Card Activity
- Written/visual artefacts
- Journal/Field notes

Secondary Sources
- Literature
- Govt. Publications
- Earlier Research
- Census

Identify & Address
- Errors
- Incompleteness
- Misclassification
- Misinterpretations
- Gaps in the information

Coding
- Identifying stories
- Identifying themes
- Developing categories
- Coding the data
- Verifying Coded Categories

Data matching
- Member Checking
- Between participants
- To the literature
- Analysing emerging themes

Step 2
Editing the data

Step 3
Coding the data

Step 4

Adapted from: Kumar (1996, p. 201)
It should be noted that very little cleaning was done in terms of removing any offensive language, as this was considered to be part of the participant’s normal method of conversing. Nor were words changed or omitted due to grammatical errors, particularly transcripts from participants with English as a Second Language. For instance one of the participants, Mark, with a European background, quite often said ‘Jah’ for ‘Yes’. To remove or replace this response would have changed the essence of his meaning. Equally words spoken in another language, such as Esi’s Japanese, or Bobbie’s Maori commentary, would have changed their inherent meaning. Therefore participants were asked to supply the correct spelling of the word followed by the meaning in brackets, rather than ‘clean’ the data of all personality and flavour.

While transcribing each interview another Microsoft word document was kept open titled with the participant’s name and ‘notes’. This file was used to record initial impressions through transcription, particular points of interest, future questions raised during the transcription process, etc. These notes were then compared to the original ‘field notes’ for discrepancies and commonalities, and to ascertain whether points missed during initial conversation that should have been pursued. This file was also used to confirm whether the first impression of important points recorded in the field notes were consistent with important points raised during transcription.

7.2.3 DATA CODING

In spite of the small number of participants there was a large amount of data generated during the course of the study. “Having ‘cleaned the data’, the next step is to code it” (Kumar, 1996, p.202), and a great deal of reading and rereading of the cleaned data was involved prior to constructing the participants’ stories and assigning codes in order to ensure categories of emerging themes were refined. Ricoeur (1990b) contends that reading in itself becomes a ‘Phenomenological act’ because the researcher uses their own experiences to decide the importance of the phenomenon within the participants lived experience. In an effort to avoid placing my own bias on the participants stories I used the participants own voices to construct their stories and involved the participants in the process.
7.2.3.1 Constructing the stories

In order to construct the stories the transcribed text supplied by participants was arranged into chronological order. The first step was to construct a ‘Timeline’ of the correct order of events. These ‘timelines’ were constructed by sorting through the data provided from interviews, value activities, and sometimes collage commentary. Where particular memories were presented clearly these were located and reordered into certain categories of ‘ages’. These memories were taken as chunks, entire paragraphs or pages, and reordered into sequence. They were then reduced to a single sentence dot point, for instance the example provided in Appendix A30 for Esi: the paragraph about her father and the piano, was reduced to ‘father & piano’. This reduction of each memory to a few key words was in no way indicative of the overall treatment of these anecdotes or memories. Each paragraph was carefully preserved in chronological order to be used for the construction of the final story; the use of key words within a timeline was merely a tool to ensure ease of member checking the chronological order of events. Specifically participants were asked which event occurred first, then to order them using these key phrases, prior to the construction of the final story. The timelines were then taken back to the participants to confirm order of events was correct, and participants were invited to fill in any gaps with other memories they may have recalled since the previous interview. I then used these timelines to construct each participant’s biography, as none of the participants were willing to attempt this task themselves.

Once the checked timeline was received back from the participant and the pertinent paragraphs or ‘chunks’ of the interview were reorganised into what appeared to be chronological order (See example in Appendix A30), then this file was saved for as a basis of narrative construction. Although with one participant, Esi, we had to literally go through her passport to identify the correct sequence of countries visited. When participants had confirmed correct sequence of life events, their life story was constructed directly from the interview quotes in order to preserve each of their voices.

From the participant’s viewpoint the process followed the diagram shown in Figure 24.
As per the above diagram, after the data were cleaned the entire transcript was sent to the participant for member checking (MC) for accuracy and meaning with a request to also identify any spelling errors in words used from another language.
As few actual stories were told spontaneously, other than small anecdotes I attempted via narrative analysis to “create a coherent story out of the many happenings reported through-out an interview” (Kvale, 1996, p.192). Such narrative structuring entails the organisation of a text to bring out its meaning (Kvale, 1996). Each narrative was wholly constructed from the participant’s interview data. Every word was obtained directly from the interview transcripts and then carefully reordered according to the approved timelines and finally woven together to create a ‘story’ of each life. As previously stated this technique is adapted from Mishler’s (1992, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002, p.4) “chained narrative” and builds upon Butler-Kisber’s (2002) use of “found poetry”. Rather than precisely use either method, my use of ‘found narratives’ uses the words of the participant, in their own voice, to tell their story by arranging their anecdotes and tales into chronological order. The anecdote is preserved in context and their own discussion of the antecedent and consequence remains, without any artificial attempt to establish a plot or a conclusion.

By choice I avoided attempting to establish a plot or specific structure to the story as presented by the participant. Ezzy (2002) contends that the succession of apparently unrelated events can be configured into a whole, and the story is given meaning by the plot of the story. Yet Spence (1986) refers to the process of “narrative smoothing” (Spence, 1986, p.211, cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.181) as a process where clean unconditional plots are created. In order to smooth the narrative the researcher must make a series of judgments about how to “balance the smoothing contained in the plot with what is obscured in the smoothing.” (Spence, 1986, p.211, cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp.181-182). The sequence of the story therefore becomes a theoretical construction, which we make on the basis of the laws of everyday logic. The reader will assume chronological order due to everyday logic, “one cannot arrive in a place before one has set out to go there’ (Bal, 1997, p.80). Yet Martin (1986) contends there is “no reason, in principle or fact, to reconstruct a hypothetical chronological ‘story’ from which the written narrative deviates” (Martin, 1986, p.109), to do this dissects a narrative and deviates from the life story.
Therefore the life stories were simply constructed around the personal epiphanies of each participant. If a plot developed during this process then that was purely serendipitous, rather than planned. These narrative life stories were encouraged to be autobiographical, specifically that the participants wrote or told their story in their own words. As many of the participants were uncomfortable with an autobiographical text construction, I worked with the participants to create a biographical text.

As found by Rodis, Garrod and Boscardin (2001) in their presentations of the life stories of individuals with learning disabilities, only the individual can give insight into what it is like to be that person. Only that individual can explain what it is like to learn differently from others; or how they formed a sense of self when challenged by invisible obstacles that others cannot comprehend (Rodis et al. 2001). Only that particular individual can explain the affect on their own moral development or recommend changes to their educational experiences, that may aid others with similar characteristics and experiences in the future (Rodis et al. 2001).

The participant had the final choice within the narrative construction, the final choice of what was omitted or retained. As the researcher I was merely the collector of their anecdotes, the listener to the stories of their lives. Mullen and Diamond (2002) use the metaphor of a carnival barker to describe this position:

Unlike traditional authority figures, the barker-prophet claims no personal or particular part in the utterance other than to bark/draw attention to, resembling an instrument which others play. The barker highlights the texts (works and contributions) of others rather than relegating them to the margins of his/her own text.” (Mullen & Diamond, 2002:135)

Therefore the final version of their lived experience, of the life they have lived, is a highly selective constructive act on the part of the participants, depending on the stories they wish to convey about themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998).

These stories once finally constructed were then sent back to participants to again member check sequence and organisation. Participants were requested to edit their story as they felt applicable, as some events may have more or less importance for them than
for the researcher. None of the participants elected to edit their life story, although one
did suggest that the story constructed via the use of interview transcripts was too
informal and lacked polish (Harriet Email Appendix A33).

In choosing to construct the stories in this manner I used ethnographic tools: “The
ethnographer can act as scribe for the other, writing “Messy” texts (Marcus, 1994, cited
in Denzin, 1997, 1997:xvi). The resulting stories are intensely personal but constructed
from conversational text, therefore are not polished and smoothed, but indeed slightly
‘messy’. The structure is “suggested by our ordinary way of talking about stories that
happen to us or which we are caught up in, or simply about the story of someone’s life.”
(Ricoeur, 1990a:59-60). I have also chosen to use this method of constructing the
stories as a viable alternative to having the participants write their own stories. It was
important to the integrity of the research to ensure the participants’ voices were heard.

This process was ongoing during the participant interaction phase as some participants
were recruited earlier than others. As more participants were recruited some areas
required additional questions and these subsequent questions were asked and recorded
either as email transcripts or as field notes during telephone conversations or
supplementary meetings. Any quotes that were pertinent to their life stories were added
to the file with chronologically sequenced quotes to aid in construction of the narrative.

The story construction was finalised by reducing chunks of quotes to the most pertinent
data, and this was sequenced in chronological order with minimum editing by the
researcher in order to preserve participant’s voice. Quotes that were removed from these
‘found narratives’ were pasted into another document in order to preserve them prior to
further analysis to ensure they had been incorporated into the emerging theme
categories. No data were discarded; they were simply recategorised if not pertinent to
the storyline at this time, subject to further member checking of this decision at a later
date.
7.2.3.2 Value Activity

As previously stated the transcripts of the value activities were included in the interview data, and therefore also included in the construction of the stories, and used as a basis for the coding of emerging themes. Used in this way the commentary about the choice of each of the value cards selected was analysed as a significant chunk of text. This text was used to supplement the construction of the stories and utilised as data for analysis into themes. Despite this, the choice of a single word in each instance, and then allocated that word into a category of ‘Most like me’, ‘Not sure’ and ‘Least like me’ also permitted another kind of analysis.

From each of the participant’s value activity a table was constructed which simply listed the words in each category. Moreover a code was developed to explain exactly what each participant did with each of the value cards. Those moved from one place to another, for example first placed in the ‘Not sure’ pile and then put back in the ‘like me’ pile are in Italics for their first placement and have an asterisk to mark the final placement of the card. Values that were emphasised are highlighted in bold text. Those values underlined generated the most discussion by that participant. Examples of the tables generated are located in the Appendices A40-A41 and a number of additional tables comparing the responses in each category between the participants, culminating in a final table, compiling their common value sets were completed to assist in identifying those areas of most importance to this particular group of gifted individuals. The results will be discussed throughout Chapter Nine as they relate to individual themes.

7.2.3.3 Interpreting the Collages

As previously stated the collages, once completed, were initially reviewed superficially as basic contrast to interview data. The collages were merely evaluated for commonalities to specific reference to life events or important aspects of the participants’ lives, as related through narrative life stories. When this proved inadequate, and little research literature was found specific to analysing collage, analysis using ‘art therapy’ techniques was initially attempted.
7.2.3.3.1 Art therapy

Many of the more detailed descriptions of interpreting art therapy are in less recent publications (Gruppetta, 2006b). Gardner (1980:60) refers to Nelson Goodman’s interpretation of the symbols of art, which includes syntactic and semantic density of the overall work, and exemplification – where the symbols exemplify a sample of the property it literally possesses; or multiple and complex reference – where the symbol performs an integrated and interacting function as mediated through other symbols. Wolman (1996: 48) cites two tests, the ‘Meier Art Judgement Test’ used in art appreciation, and the ‘Graves Test’ which consists entirely of abstract designs, and therefore is assumed to be independent of traditional and contemporary art values.

Kwiatkowska, Wynne and Wynne (1978: 234-256) use the ‘Dent-Kwiatkowska rating manual’ to evaluate items such as the use of colour; centred or off-centred drawings; clarity of shapes and edges; continuity of lines; complexity and the crowding of pictures, etc. These items are then ‘blind-rated’, that is the picture was given to a third party to review. This person must not be present at the time of drawing and has never had any interaction with the artist. It is then assumed that the interpretation would be more clinical as there has been no personal contact. Such blind reviewing would be difficult in the context of this study. However, the major difficulty with using art psychotherapy methods is that the interpretation of art is always subjective. Although to a certain extent all research interpretation is subjective:

> Interpretation is always a complex process and different words and phrases, depending on the context in which they are used, can mean different things to different individuals. Thus, the research process is always more complex than initially perceived...depending on where observers stand in the multidimensional web of reality, they will come to see different phenomena in different ways. (Kincheloe, 2006: 325-326)

As “each person’s view of the world is unique” (Belnick, cited in Linesch, 1993:26), all “experiences are subjective phenomena and therefore cannot be externally verified” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990: xiii). Kwiatkowska, Wynne and Wynne, (1978: 89) use the metaphor of “watching clouds and seeing different cloud formations that
remind you of animals, people, landscapes, and so on” to explain such subjectivity. We each see from our own context and even with art therapy guidelines each symbol, each artwork will be read differently by each and every viewer.

Assumptions can be made based on these guidelines that may not be accurate. For instance, a student in one of my classes was concerned about her son because he only coloured in black and never used any other colours. According to many art therapy principles this often meant the child was depressed or even suicidal. After some discussion it emerged that ‘mum’ was a sketch artist, working only in black and white. I suggested if the mother used colour, so would the son and a week later she reported that he was using every available colour. This example highlights the need for analysis in context.

Also the majority of art therapy techniques are based on European understandings. There is little scope for the presentation of symbols and interpretations within the art works created by those from non-European cultures. As Kincheloe (2005: 328-329) explains, researchers need to understand that:

In this complex context, diverse epistemologies will develop in different historical and cultural locales. As opposed to European modes of knowledge production, diverse peoples of the planet have produced ways of knowing that often have come directly into conflict…. As parts of complex systems and intricate processes, objects of inquiry are far too mercurial to be viewed by a single way of seeing or as a snapshot of a particular phenomenon at a specific moment in time.

Therefore the issue of using specific interpretations of symbols and layout, as provided in art therapy technique, is fraught with the danger of cultural weighting to the expectation of European culture.

Furthermore, within art therapy forums, interpretation is always from the therapist’s/researcher’s point of view, although participants are encouraged to talk about their art. The artist’s perception of their work is “often used as an adjunct to psychoanalysis” (Liebmann, 1986:33), but the assumed emphasis is on an external interpretation. This
contradicts the notion of shared knowledge within the research forum. As my participants were fully involved in the research process such an assumption would be offensive and not consistent with their role in the study. Thus, after struggling with art therapy conventions, it became obvious that these techniques were too culturally weighted to be of use with my multicultural participants. And there was another issue, “when they [participants] have been fearful, anxious, frightened, sad, ‘sick’ in a tenacious despair” then psychoanalysis is justified, but when the person has “simply been ‘well’, living their lives, I have often been at a loss to figure out how their mental life is to be understood” Coles (1986, p. 4). And thus we reach the crux of the issue, my participants were not broken, therefore I did not need to fix them, and psychoanalysis techniques would be inappropriate in this forum.

Working with the participants, a deeper analysis of the artwork was built through the discussion of interpretation, from both the researcher’s perspective and the participant’s perspective. Once the collage was completed participants were encouraged to analyse their work prior to the researcher’s analysis, to ‘autopsy’ (Bochner & Ellis, 2003: 512) their own experience. They were then asked to provide either a written or verbal account of the collage, what they thought it represented and why they thought they had placed/used certain symbols or icons in their current position. This text then became another piece of data for later analysis in comparison to both the collage, and the interview transcripts. However a more detailed method of researcher interpretation was required to ensure data were analysed to the depth required of academic standards. Consequently I sought a better method of interpreting collage work, and following the advice of Finley (2003, p.290) that researchers within art inquiry methodologies “should seek comparison for their work not in science but in myriad arts”, identified a technique based on the ‘four frames’ (Board of Studies, 2005) used in the Secondary Visual Art Syllabus in Australian schools that provides multiple levels of analysis for researchers.
7.2.3.3.2 The Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework used to analyse the collages comprises four agencies or functions: artist, artwork, world and audience. These are robust and elastic concepts which, in sum, can be taken as setting the boundaries to a working or functional concept of art. To speak or write about the visual arts is to engage with the artist, artworks, world and audience where each of these agencies has a function or duty to perform in relation to the other (BOS, 2005).

The sets of relationships are shaped and generated by the frames. That is, the conceptual framework tells us how the frames work. This notion is illustrated by this diagram:

Figure 25. The conceptual framework (BOS, 2005)

A description of each of these aspects is as follows:

- **Artist** – The traditional function of the artist is to make artworks, be they images or objects (BOS, 2005).

- **Artwork** – Artworks are intentionally made by artists. Artworks have a material and physical form. The form of an artwork is traditionally described by the materials and techniques from which it is fashioned (BOS, 2005).

- **Audience** – The audience function is ongoing yet changeable as artworks inhabit different viewing contexts, are bought and sold, publically exhibited, privately viewed, destroyed, damaged, lost or consigned to storage. The artist provides the first audience for an artwork (BOS, 2005).
World – Artists, artworks and audiences function in relation to each other and the function of the world. The agency of the world refers to all the vast and possible things artists and audiences get interested in, and artworks can be about (BOS, 2005).

Within these areas there are four frames of reference to investigate and experience the meaning of an artwork in more depth. The relationship is shown in the syllabus document as per Figure 26.

![Figure 26. The visual arts framework (BOS, 2005)](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Postmodern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Artwork</td>
<td>World</td>
<td>Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frames — subjective, cultural, structural and postmodern — give meaning and are the instrument for generating different understandings of the function of and relationships between the artist – artwork – world – audience.

These four frames – subjective, cultural, structural and postmodern (BOS, 2005) provide a useful framework to assign meaning and permit understanding of collage work.

- **Subjective frame** - The subjective world is concerned with individual feeling, emotion, imagination and experience…Artworks may be thought of as emotional outpourings and highly evocative reminders of personal memories and experiences, the subconscious and fantasy. Audiences can be thought of as viewers who interpret the meaning and value of art in relation to personal associations that can be made. Through this frame, the unconscious, intuition and imagination can be explored as a source of ideas and to see how human experiences are re-created and shared between artists and audiences. Artworks are viewed aesthetically as an immediate expression of sensory, imaginative, expressive, felt and perceived experience (BOS, 2005).

- **Cultural frame** - The cultural world refers to the structures and formations of societies and communities governed by economic and political agencies…In the cultural frame artists may be thought of as social agents who are influenced by and contribute to social, economic and political conditions. Artworks may be thought of...
as reflections of social, community and cultural interests. The value of art lies in its social meaning. Through this frame the visual arts are viewed aesthetically as a way of building and defining social identity. The meaning of art can be understood in relation to the social perspective of the community out of which it grows. Ideological views and notions of cultural identity can be explored including the effects on artistic practice of class, race, ethnicity, gender, technology, politics, religion, science, globalisation, the environment and economics (BOS, 2005).

- **Structural frame** - The structural world arises from systems of signs and symbols sharing the universal structure of language. In the structural frame artists may be thought of as those who know about and make use of a formalist language and who represent ideas as a system of signs that communicate meaning. Artworks may be thought of as symbolic objects within the conventions of a visual language, material forms and motifs, representing ideas and communicating meaning. The audiences read art as symbols and signs, meaning is coded within a formal structure of visual language. Through this frame art can be conceived of as a system of symbolic communication through which particular aesthetic forms of information are transmitted. The visual arts provide a visual language where meaning is accessible to those who are visually literate. The conventions of the codes, symbols and signs that are used in the making of artworks can be explored, including the ways in which meaning may be embedded in the material as well as the conceptual organisation of artworks (BOS, 2005).

- **Postmodern frame** - The postmodern world brings challenge/doubt /suspicion/scepticism to the assumptions of each of the other frames. Artworks are texts that achieve their power and meaning through intertextuality. Intertextuality refers to other texts rather than the individual, society or structure for meaning. In the postmodern frame artists may be thought of as challengers of the prevailing views about what is of value in art, and who use parody, irony and satire to expose power assumptions. Artworks may be thought of as configurations of previous texts that mimic, appropriate and reinterpret other ideas in art to reveal paradoxical and hidden assumptions about what art is. The audience may be thought of as those who are aware of power relations within the artworld that sustain dominant views about art. The meaning of art is understood in relation to the fragmented, shifting and transitory nature of contemporary life. Artworks may be explored as visual ‘texts’ which, through references to and traces of other ‘texts’, can challenge patterns of authority and widely held beliefs (BOS, 2005).

Although these frames of reference may appear difficult to use, they are taught to children from Kindergarten age, with a complexity that deepens as they learn. Teachers provide students with resources to aid in this analysis, resources that are as useful to the researcher in this field. For example, the resource shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27 demonstrates a resource which provides a list of questions in each category to use within analysis. From ages 10-12 years learning “is replaced by a more complex and reflective view of art in which students understand that different interpretations of art, informed by different theoretical views, are possible” (BOS, 2005).
### Figure 27. Resource to Identify Four Frames of Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECTIVE FRAME</th>
<th>CULTURAL FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal psychological experience</td>
<td>Cultural and Social Meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human experience, ethical, moral, reflexive</td>
<td>(political, commodity, historic, materialistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is my first impression?</td>
<td>- What cultural group, race, place, identity is represented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do I see, hear, …?</td>
<td>- What ideology is revealed in ideas, concepts, manifestos, shared beliefs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the emotional impact?</td>
<td>- What social class, gender?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What am I reminded of?</td>
<td>- What political stance (dissent or support, propaganda or protest)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What intuition or imaginings do I have about the artwork</td>
<td>- What beliefs – secular or spiritual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do I like it?</td>
<td>- What significant events?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What has it got to do with me or my experiences?</td>
<td>- What meanings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What emotions does the artist want to express?</td>
<td>- What signs and symbols reveal this information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why did he/she make it?</td>
<td>- How do these cultural and social meanings affect the art practices of this artist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is it about?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL FRAME</th>
<th>POSTMODERN FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication, systems of signs</td>
<td>Ideas that challenge the mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(media, text, formal qualities, visual convention)</td>
<td>(critical, iconic, pluralism, contra-convention, sceptism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe the visual language of line, shape, colour texture, tone, focal point, visual devices, lighting, composition, 3D space.</td>
<td>- Is it mainstream or outside mainstream?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What style or period, or art movement?</td>
<td>- What is appropriated, quoted from another source?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What materials and processes are used?</td>
<td>- Explain the source and what meaning is added?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What other use do found objects have?</td>
<td>- Does this produce humour, irony, parody, wit, playfulness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What symbolic value do the above convey?</td>
<td>- What is omitted or disregarded?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why were these symbols, signs selected?</td>
<td>- What is re-configured and reinterpreted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the relationships between the signs, symbols?</td>
<td>- What is challenged in social cultural values, beliefs, spiritual/secular, power authorities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What formal conventions are shown, eg landscape, nude?</td>
<td>- What is challenged in art practices – classifications, conventions, art movements/styles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do all these explain the world at the time and now?</td>
<td>- What is challenged about art history, the masterpiece, art for art’s sakes, the role of art?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Waters, 2006, cited in Gruppetta, 2006b)
By secondary school level students recognize more about the significance of interpretation and learn to defend their judgements based on these identified frames of value (BOS, 2005). I have used this resource to construct tables analysing each of the participant’s collages and examples of these are provided within the Appendix (A43).

Analysis of the collages has identified information that was not evident in interviews or other forms of participant researcher communication. Again any ‘new’ life events were added to the timeline. Many new issues were raised, or hidden elements that were not evident in the interview transcripts were highlighted. In fact the ‘omissions’ were the most insightful evidence. The analysis of the differences between the text and visual forms provided more insights into the reality of these participants’ lives (Gruppetta, 2006b).

It was through the analysis of the collages that it became apparent how bound each participant was by their own cultural context. In particular the ‘cultural’ frame highlighted the cultural context of each participant. Although this was not as obvious in their conversations and interviews, it was quite clear upon analysis of each collage. Examples of the significant cultural weighting of each collage are incorporated into the discussion in Chapters Eight and Nine. Once these cultural influences became clear, the focus of the phenomenological research was shifted to include the ethnographic perspective of the participants. This is shown clearly in Figure 28 where my own phenomenological viewpoint contrasts with the ethnographic viewpoint of each participant.

Although the four frames (BOS, 2005) can be used as a standard interpretation technique for analysing collage, the inherent beauty of using this technique are the possibilities for extending these frames into wider research forums. For instance, gender issues can be examined within the ‘cultural’ or ‘postmodern’ frame through links to research literature. Schapiro (1978, cited in Raaberg, 1998) coined the term ‘femmage’ to describe this kind of tradition in women's art. Schapiro pointedly confronts the devaluation of women's art activities by refuting the misleading "information about the origins of collage" generated by art historians and critics who had ignored the collages
of women, non-Western, and folk artists-"art when it is made by others" (Raaberg, 1998:2), raising the issues of power and otherness within the research forum.

These issues can be linked to more conventional research literature relating to feminist theory and investigated in more depth in terms of the expression or non expression of sub groups in contrast to the expectations of the politically dominant groups. Other research literature can then be linked to these four frames of reference to be utilized by the researcher in their quest for viable data.

This area of research, analysis of art inquiry products, requires much more investigation. I have found it quite useful as a tool to provide deeper analysis within my research. However, the need for a definitive method of interpreting such work will increase as the trend for art-based inquiry in qualitative educational research broadens, and the current range of literature provides little practical advice for researchers in this field. I also found that presentation of the research paper (Gruppetta, 2006b) displaying this method of analysing collages received quite a hostile reaction. The academic audience at an art inquiry conference were most incensed that anyone should analyse collages or any other form of art using the ‘four frames’ (BOS, 2005) method. The general opinion expressed was that art needed no analysis, it just was! Equally these academics were dismayed to learn that this method of interpretation was being taught to every school student in the state of N.S.W. Despite this negative feedback I have persisted in my use of the four frames to assist in analysing the collage data, and have again found it useful for supporting the process of identifying themes within the research data.
**Figure 28. Revising method**

**Phenomenology – Maree**
- Identify Phenomenon
- Set aside preconceptions
- Investigate phenomenon

**Researcher (Participant 1)**
- 1st person phenomenology
- Establish researcher bias
- Set aside preconceptions of the phenomenon

**Participant 2 - Autoethnographical narrative - Harriet**

**Participant 3 - Autoethnographical narrative - Esi**

**Participant 4 - Autoethnographical narrative – Mark**

**Participant 5 - Autoethnographical narrative - Bobbie**

**Participant 6 - Autoethnographical narrative - Brenda**

**Participant 7 - Autoethnographical narrative - Zaynab**

**Participant 8 - Autoethnographical narrative - Tiffany**

**Participant 9 - Autoethnographical narrative – Alex**

**Participant 10 - Autoethnographical narrative – Son**

**Deeper Analysis**
- Commonalities
- Differences

**Construct Narratives**
- Timelines
- Life Stories

**Researcher’s Journal**
- Document perceptions
- Document changes in thinking
- Initial analysis
7.2.3.4 Coding the Themes

The use of inductive methodology where transcribed material is coded into themes or categories is often recommended for phenomenological research (Byrne, 2001a; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Kvale, 1996; Kumar, 1996; Thomas, 2003). It is also recommended for case study research:

Producing a case study begins with sorting. Material that deals with the same issue must be brought together no matter where the material originally appeared in the interview transcripts. The material is then organized into a story of that issue (Weiss, 1994:168).

Coding is the “heart and soul of whole-text analysis” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 780), it is the process by which items or groups of data are assigned codes” (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001, p.204). However, Ryan and Bernard (2000) warn against using techniques that reduce texts to the fundamental meanings of specific words. These reductions make it easy for researchers to identify general patterns and make comparison across texts but these techniques remove words from the contexts in which they occur and subtle nuances are likely to be lost (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). They recommend use of key words in context (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) during coding in order to ensure whole text analysis. In selecting key words as a basis for the timelines I have ensured that each separate memory, epiphany or incident relayed by participants has a link to the original context.

Blaxter et al. (2001, p.210) reiterate, that data have been “collected within a certain interactive context…and must be analysed with that in mind. Care must be taken that comments are not lifted or quoted outside that context or out of sequence”. This is especially important when identifying “particular quotes or phrases as significant or illustrative” (Blaxter et al. 2001, p.201). The reader of an interview study has to “depend on the researcher’s selection and contextualization of interview statements” (Kvale, 1996, p. 207), therefore text was analysed in “chunks” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p.780) in order to preserve the context of the data.

Consequently when cutting and pasting text into a category, or reorganising data in any way, each passage was marked with the participant’s initial (Seidmann, 1998), the date
of the applicable transcript, and the page number for ease of reference to the original document. Also, the interview questions and/or preceding commentary were pasted with the text in order to ensure text was kept in context.

In transferring these participants’ quotes into the relevant sections I was very careful to ensure that each quote included the first initial of the participant. As there were two participants who had selected a name beginning with the letter B, these participants were identified by a shortened abbreviation of the name selected. Specifically Bobbie was shorted to ‘Bob’ and Brenda was shortened to ‘Bren’ to ensure there could be no possibility of mixing their data. As there was also a participant with the initial M, rather than use my own name or initial, my own comments and quotes were assigned the initial R for ‘researcher’ to make certain there could be no confusion of data.

By “reading text as a literacy narrative, the reader engages in the character’s process of developing an identity” (Clark & Medina, 2000, p. 66). It is “not the fundamental thought of the other person but the world itself, the ‘lived experience’, which is expressed by the author’s text” (van Manen, 2000). Within analysis it is necessary to identify concepts, develop theories and explanations, in order to increase understanding of the topic (Blaxter et al. 2001), a process difficult for researchers to explain fully as narrative analysis is almost intuitive (Manning & Cullen-Swan, 1998).

Making sense of data is partly a matter of intuition and primarily a matter of being systematic (Georgetown University, 2008). In gathering and analyzing rich qualitative data you need to recognize multiple frames of reference and avoid misinterpreting data by selecting only what interests the researcher. Avoiding the trivialisation of data and presenting only superficial analysis of your findings is crucial (Charmaz, 2003). Categories must be inductive and ‘grounded’ directly in the data gathered. “You study research participants’ meanings, intentions and actions – whether you observe your participants directly, construct life histories with them, engage in intensive interviewing, or use other materials such as clinical histories or autobiographies” (Charmaz, 2003, p.82 ). Thus you build directly from the data and refine meaning through discussion with participants.
Again, the researcher’s bias can influence analysis of a text not only in terms of their own viewpoint or expectations within the study. Participants use the language they are most comfortable with, and “language in any context is a very powerful social cue” (Mann & Stewart, 2000: 166). Furthermore language can be gendered (Mann & Stewart, 2000) with different interpretations dependent on whether the writer is male or female, and also on whether the researcher interpreting the data is male or female. Again reiterating the need for ‘member checking’ to ensure meaning is maintained.

The original transcripts were kept in a pristine state to use as a reference for “placing in context passages that have been excerpted” (Seidman, 1998, p. 103) and copies of the text were used during data processing activities. Text was read and marked using annotations in the form of “marginal notes, or underlining or highlighting the text itself” (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001, p.204), and these annotations became useful in identifying emerging themes within the data.

Initially larger portions of text were marked as of interest, then, as text was reread, only the most pertinent text was included in final data marking (Seidman, 1998). As data were read and reread less text was highlighted and marginal notes became less wordy, eventually reducing to single word or phrase ‘labels’ (Blaxter, et al., 2001) or categories. In some cases a word or phrase within the passage itself suggested the category (Seidman, 1998), for example the category ‘Not gifted – weird’, which came from a direct participant quote. At other times responses that were similar in meaning although not necessarily in language, suggested a label for a theme or category. The name given to that category is descriptive of the responses (Kumar, 1996). Two of the categories are named after songs; ‘The Great Pretender’ and ‘So Far Away’ as I originally intended to use these songs as themes. As previously mentioned due to copyright issues these songs could not be linked to the dissertation, however the song titles were retained as category names. Another category is named after the poem “A Road less Travelled” (T.S. Elliot, cited in MacKay & McKiernan, 2004) as this appeared to describe the variety of life experiences and choices most accurately.
During the initial phase of coding for this study many categories were identified (Burns, 1997; Kumar, 1996) as possibilities. Categories should be mutually exclusive and non-overlapping, so that a response cannot be placed in two categories (Kumar, 1999). Categories must also be exhaustive, so that almost every response should be able to be placed within one of the categories. Responses that cannot be categorised are “an indication of ineffective categorisation” (Kumar, 1996, p.210) meaning categories should be re-examined.

Subsequently, it became apparent that some categories were related to others, and therefore should be grouped together within a broader category. It was also apparent that some categories were too broad and therefore required regrouping into separate categories to refine the meaning and avoid confusion. For example, the participants’ discussion of their need to ‘hide’ their giftedness was in direct contrast to their leadership roles, which required a separate category to address the expectations of leadership. Again the participants’ empathy for social and global problems and their need to work toward bettering the world went beyond the leadership category; each of the participants had an example of their own involvement in a charitable cause or social/world issue they had attempted to address. Yet these incidents were not necessarily connected to their leadership roles, stemming from either their younger selves or relating to anonymous contributions. Therefore another category was required to discuss these issues separately from their leadership roles. Figure 29 displays the final categories selected and used during allocation of text.

The codes and the categories they represent must be tested (Burns, 1997; Kumar, 1996) prior to final coding of text to ensure all relevant data can be placed in its own category. The codes and categories shown in Figure 29 were tested and found to be effective. All data could be allocated to a category and the majority of the data could not be placed into two categories, with one exception. As stated above the category for ‘Moral Leadership’ contained direct links to responses contained in ‘The Great Pretender’ and ‘As I weep for the world’ categories. These links were to specific discussions within the text but did not contain exactly the same phrases or words, although some referred to the
same anecdote. Therefore the categories remained effective as the same quote was not used twice within two categories.

The colour code selected for Figure 29 was also useful in assigning text to each category. The transcribed text was simply highlighted with the relevant colour in order to ensure the category was effectively marked for later use. An example of this highlighted text is presented within the Appendix A45.

Figure 29. Coded Categories

No category was specifically assigned for information pertaining to the participant’s background and prior experience. As many of the participants used anecdotal evidence from their own backgrounds within discussions to raise an issue or make a point, this data could in fact be used twice. Firstly to construct their own narrative story as these elements were integral to establish the required elements of the participants’ background.
and prior experience, and then secondly within another category related to the issue under discussion at the time of the participant’s comment.

It became apparent after examining the final categories that they had a direct relationship to one another, and actually flowed in a logical sequence. As will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Nine because participants felt ‘weird’ they needed to become ‘Great Pretenders’ in order to mask their giftedness. This also relates to their ‘leadership’ dilemma as they are torn between their role as a leader and the need to mask their gifts. But if they mask their gifts they cannot lead effectively, and this also conflicts with their empathic need to address issues within the category of ‘As I weep for the world’.

These conflicts lead them through alternative choices within ‘The Road less Travelled’ category, but these paths also remove them from their families and cultural bases; leading to homesickness and isolation within the ‘So Far Away’ category. Again these conflicts, alternative paths and isolation led to ‘Surviving the Abyss’ as many faced issues of suicide and drug addiction whilst trying to cope with all these issues. In the final category ‘The Search for Meaning’ some reflect on their spirituality or religious beliefs as a way to cope with these life circumstances, whereas others still search for answers. This search, the drive to seek answers for a range of questions, is in itself an integral characteristic of giftedness, ensuring the categories become a complete cycle. Therefore the previous figure representing the categories is restyled to reflect the connection between categories. Figure 30 is represented as a flowchart demonstrating the pattern of this connection. The link between each of these coded categories will be clarified within Chapter Nine as each category will be presented as a separate section.
7.2.3.5 ‘Found Conversations’

Due to the ethical considerations which were necessary to preserve anonymity, the participants were never introduced to each other, yet my Indigenous way of knowing feels that gathering the participants together would create deeper analysis of the topics. In a style similar to Purcell’s (2002) ‘Black Chick’s talking or Camden-Pratt’s (2002) ‘Daughters of Persephone: legacies of maternal madness’, where a collection of participants was gathered together to discuss the final meaning of the research. Such a gathering would enhance the meaning of my research. Therefore this situation has been
created – if only within my own mind. As the link between all, my questions, to which each have responded have been included, therefore creating a ‘found conversation’ between parties who have never met but should interact with each other to share their commonalities and differences of life experience.

Once I had completed the ‘found narratives’ I discovered that a similar technique could be used to create a ‘found conversation’. The quotes from participants were woven into a discussion of each theme, in the form of a hypothetical ‘conversation’ between participants. These conversations involved excerpts taken from each participant’s interview and then organised as if each participant was responding to the comment of another participant, creating an atmosphere similar to the conversation they would have had if they were gathered together to share their experiences.

“A written text becomes a montage…a meeting place where ‘original’ voices, their inscriptions (as transcribed texts), and the writer’s interpretation come together” Denzin, 1997, p. 41). In this sense I wanted to present a montage of multiple voices all speaking together on the same topic or issue within each theme (Denzin, 1997). An abbreviated example of this ‘found conversation’ is provided within Chapter Nine, however it was necessary to restrict the use of this technique to providing only an example of the ‘found conversation’ at the beginning of each section in Chapter Nine due to restrictions of word count and presentation requirements.

7.2.4 OVERVIEW OF DATA ANALYSIS

To summarise the process of data analysis Figure 31 displays an overview of the data analysis process. Data were first analysed individually and then collectively and in a variety of ways to ensure every possible nuance of meaning was identified.
Figure 31. Overview of Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Initial Analysis</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• First Impressions – written immediately after interview, recording initial impressions of meeting, commentary, responses to questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tape Transcription – open 2nd document whilst transcribing and record further responses to spoken text, replies to questions, overall impressions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compare ‘first impressions’ to notes from actual ‘transcript’, identify accuracies and misconceptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify further questions to be asked, areas requiring clarification or further information required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify possible timeline of life story (if present)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Data Analysis - (Individual)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• For each individual (interview transcripts) identify common themes (highlight/colour code)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For each individual Value activity – Construct table of ‘Applies/Not Applies’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For each individual Collage – analyse participant explanation as text and then analyse visual using ‘four frames’ method.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For each individual narrative – observe as a whole, what is overall impression of story, identify themes if any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compare individual’s responses from interviews/activities/collage to narrative – identify any difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Data Analysis - (Collective)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Compare interviews for commonalities and differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify common themes (colour code/name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compare Value activities Tables for commonalities and differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify common themes (colour code/name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compare Collage activity for commonalities and differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify common themes (colour code/name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compare Narratives for commonalities and Differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify common themes (colour code/name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create ‘found conversation’ from individual quotes relating to each theme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Final Member Check</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify commonalities and relay to all participants for feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify differences and relay to all participants for feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collect feedback/responses and analyse for further commonalities/differences or any new information additional to previous data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Construct shared knowledge/findings and return to participants to share findings of overall – get feedback/opinion – analyse feedback again (cycle)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again this figure (32) and the previous figures 22, 23, 24, and 29 imply the process of data collection and analysis was quite linear, which indeed it was not. Figure 32 displays a more circular pattern of data collection and analysis which involved returning to the participants with my findings several times in order to clarify each and every phase of the research process. The process displayed in Figure 32 is more realistic and was
adjusted from the original planning documentation provided in the appendix (A48) once it became clear that the participants were not willing to write their own stories.

The bricolage of data collection and analysis has provided an effective means of in depth research within this case study. By using the tools of phenomenology, ethnography, narrative and art inquiry methods the greatest possible range of data was collected and analysed. Analysis incorporated the best of each technique, although the use of the ‘four frames’ (BOS, 2005) in analysing the collages appears to be unique to my own research.

All researcher commentary and summary of commonalities and/or differences was discussed with the participants to ensure reliability of findings by ‘member checking’ (Vockell & Asher, 1995). The researcher journal was made available to all the participants during the research and supervisors were requested to review journal entries and discuss situations where possible bias and/or ethical dilemmas arose in order to provide further triangulation of data.

The use of this many methodological tools, and constant checking and rechecking of findings, resulted in a vast array of information gathered during the course of the research period, which is part of the complexity of a bricolage. The presentation of these findings, particularly the presentation of each participant, required much refinement in order to maintain integrity of the results and comply with my own ethical considerations.
Computer generated blank page
Researcher – Phase 1
- Complete my own Interviews, value activity, collage activity – PRIOR to contacting participants
- Record responses
- Identify and suspend preconceptions

Participants - Phase 1 - All Participants
- Complete Identical Initial Interviews
- Complete Survey
- Complete Value Activity
- Complete Collage Activity

Researcher – Phase 2
- Initial Analysis
- Identify new information
- Identify commonalities and differences to own preconceptions
- Identify areas in need of more probing

Participants - Phase 2 - Individualise
- Individualised Questions (extending initial interview responses)
- Construct Timeline of Individual Life Sequence
- Probe Individuals Values Further (Where each learnt, how important, possibly hypothetical moral/ethical problems)

Researcher – Phase 3
- Further Analysis and repeat phenomenological process:
- Identify new information
- Identify commonalities and differences to own preconceptions
- Identify areas in need of further probing

Participants – Phase 3
- Review narratives

Researcher – Phase 4
- Construct Narratives

Participants – Phase 4
- Review findings for final presentation.

Researcher Phase 5 – Coding
- Categorise
- Construct ‘Found Conversations’

Participants – Phase 5
- Review findings for final presentation.

Figure 33. Circular Research Process
7.3 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Because I believe life is like a collage, and the participants and their life stories are multi-faceted, the final presentation of each participant’s contribution begins with their collage as a title page. This is followed by their ‘found narrative’ a biography constructed entirely from their own words as presented within the interview, value activity and collage explanation. Although the ‘found narrative’ represents each of their own stories fairly well, I remain disappointed that not even one of the participants chose to write their own story, particularly as the majority are excellent writers. These self stories are concise and eliminate many of the specific quotes assigned to themes and used in the following chapter, rather than use quotes twice, however some may be reused as it is important to ensure the narrative presents each participant as a person rather than merely an object of study. Following each of the participant’s collage and narrative is my interpretation of each individual’s overall singularity of life experience.

Chapter Nine will display the findings within themes and provide some comparison of commonalities and differences between participant experiences. As stated above each section of that chapter will begin with a ‘found conversation’, however I have also created visual collages as title pages for each of the categories. These created title pages are part of my thinking processes and have assisted me in understanding the meaning within each of the categories assigned to the major themes.

This chapter has dealt with the methods of data collection and analysis. The next chapter will introduce each of the participants in depth.
CHAPTER 8

VISION:

Through gifted eyes

Illustration 15 – Trial by Fire
(Excerpt from main image, ‘A research journey through metaphoric imagery’ Gruppetta, 2006b)

The artwork was further enhanced by the addition of flames at the bottom, to signify the trials of life, and the trials of research. Again the idea of burning, of trial by fire is presented, although the raven now almost appears as phoenix rising from the ashes. Yet the flames only lick the raven rather than burn him, in contrast with Aboriginal Dreaming Stories where the Raven became black after being charred by a campfire.
8.1 RESEARCH NARRATIVES

This Chapter presents the individual collages and ‘found narratives’ of the participants with individual analysis of each of the gifted adults. The participants are presented in order of recruitment, beginning with my own contribution to the study. The presentation of my own story is in a slightly different format, being a written statement rather than a ‘found narrative’, due to the difficulty of interviewing oneself.

Each of the participants has a ‘title’, basically a descriptor, which they either gave themselves or I used to describe them when in discussion with my supervisor to further protect their anonymity. In using this descriptor there is no deliberate intention to label each participant, as each are multi-faceted and such a title could be misleading, and yet each fits within the title they are designated as I will explain in the interpretation of each individual’s presentation.

For all the participants the same pattern will be followed. The collage will be used as a ‘title’ page, followed by an abridged version of their ‘found narrative’ and my response to their stories with an interpretation of giftedness, otherness and their general view of the world, within the context of our interaction during the course of the study. Participants’ narratives are not compared in this chapter beyond demographic information.
8.1.1.2 Maree’s story

The structure of my own narrative, and the inclusion of my family background and educational qualifications and experience, is necessary to clarify factors influencing my own perspectives prior to beginning the current research. An excerpt of my own answers to the interview questions is available in the appendix (A26), to highlight that these responses are concise in some areas due to the difficulty in interviewing oneself.

I was once considered ‘gifted’. As a child I had impressive verbal skills and could read a newspaper fluently by the age of three years. Actually my parents hid the newspaper from me as I had a tendency to ask questions they did not want to answer. I have no recollection of learning to read, it was simply something I could always do and I have remained a voracious reader throughout my life. Identified as gifted early, I was accelerated twice during my primary school years and then placed in an academically accelerated Opportunity Class (O.C.) so that I started 5th grade at the age of seven years.

Although school represented the lesser of two evils, as home with my stepfather was alternatively abusive and neglectful, it challenged me emotionally as I never really fitted in. Also the legacy of my grandfather’s and father’s early identification as gifted had consequences for our family. Those conducting longitudinal studies were keen to follow the family line and test all offspring for hereditary traits, which resulted in increasing demands for access by the gifted research study personnel. During my childhood I was constantly tested; for gross and fine motor skills, creativity, morality and a variety of other markers as well as the ever present Intellectual Quotient (I.Q.) score. These were experiences I did not appreciate and eventually rebelled against. Consequently my own experiences leave me with an inherent distrust of I.Q. tests and the labelling of people into categorisation of any kind. The family trait of ‘hiding our light under a bushel’ as my Father refers to it, is deeply ingrained. Not only because of the experiences of my Father and Grandfather but also due to my Mother’s determination to disguise her Aboriginal heritage.
For much of my life, the true origins of my family heritage were hidden and this has had a profound impact on my own life for various reasons. Although I appear white, my maternal ancestors were Aboriginal, forced to endure much through the events surrounding British colonisation, and this legacy remains strongest throughout my own perspective. Although both my mother and grandmother were aware of our Aboriginal background they were deeply ashamed of this and, having endured discrimination throughout their lives, chose to ‘act white’ in order to ensure they, and their children, never again faced such discrimination. However, the bitterness and secrecy forever marked our lives.

Reluctant to oppose authorities, my mother enforced my O.C. placement, despite my aversion to attending. Eventually she agreed to allow me to attend the local primary school in the 6th grade. The placement was not entirely successful. Much younger than my classmates, on my first day I completed an entire week’s work, forever separating me from my contemporaries. Then there was a battle to allow me to progress to secondary school. After all I was only ten years old. And, had they known I was Aboriginal, they would never have permitted my enrolment. However, secondary school allowed me to explore new subjects and ideas and I had learnt by then to aim for second place in the class as first was less socially acceptable. By the end of secondary school I was considered no more ‘gifted’ than any other student.

Whether this decline of my ability is consistent with the myth of “early ripe, early rot” (Kerr, 1994: 94) or a decision to choose intimacy over achievement (Gross, 1989) as a socially acceptable option (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde & Whalen, 1993), is debatable. Despite this attempt to fit in, I remained a loner for most of my school years and left the day I turned 15, totally ignoring my Higher School Certificate exams and the pressure from my teachers, mother and other family members to return to studying. I fast tracked a secretarial course and, as soon as I was employed, moved out of my mother’s home and pursued my own life, eventually providing a safe haven for my siblings.
Whatever the cause, I elected to pursue a career and then marriage and children rather than explore further educational opportunities. My return to tertiary studies was motivated by the need to provide further educational opportunities to my children, two of whom are recognised as gifted, and one with a recognised talent. As two of my children are also classified as disabled I have completed training in Special Education fields too, a duality that is rare in Australia, although common in overseas countries.

Whilst it was my children and their needs that motivated my return to study, in reality it was my husband’s optimism, humour and exceptional interpersonal skills that taught me how to deal with people and gave me the support to pursue my own interests.

These viewpoints colour my research, firstly as I refuse to recruit ‘subjects’ and actually dislike the term ‘participants’, preferring ‘research partners’, due to my own experiences of feeling like either a ‘performing seal’ or a ‘bug under a microscope’ dependant on the researcher. Equally I have an inherent distrust of I.Q. tests because I know how easily they can be manipulated.

Within my own research ethical underpinnings have been my main concern, and therefore I have participated in each phase to ensure that no task was too onerous for any of my participants. In analysing my own story I acknowledge and bracket (Thomas & Pollio, 2002) my perceptions, beliefs and biases. The technique I have used with interpreting the collages using the four-frame method (BOS, 2005) was more successful in allowing me to stand aside from myself when analysing my own collage.

When first making the collage the fascination with eyes seemed meaningless, simply something that appealed during the process. However when trying to explain these elements of the collage the eyes gained importance. Firstly they are the eyes with which I view, therefore my lens to see the world, and specifically the lens with which to view the research. The choice of literature, the interaction with participants, and significance of findings are subject to my viewpoint, all is interpreted ‘through my
eyes’. However, the eyes are also important in terms of the way others view me. The eyes signify the feeling of being constantly watched, judged, and observed by others.

The children present signify my own love of children, but also my own wounded childhood, the longing for the joy of play, and the band aids applied to the soul. The little boy with the paper bag also represents my own wicked sense of humour. The long hair and Rapunzel plait represent my physical appearance, and provide a cultural link. Some people in my family actually believe that my hair has almost magical properties, and must remain long enough to provide a plait that will encompass the wrist, giving the wearer protection. The golden mist could be from flames in a phoenix type sense of rising from the ashes, to become the human dynamo, complete with halo, that I am expected to be. Mother, wife, scholar, teacher, researcher, etc., each with their own demands, constantly juggled and addressed throughout the course of each day.

Lastly, the shoes made of money would amuse my friends, as my extensive collection of boots and shoes is legendary. Although it is interesting that no jewellery is present, my penchant for long outrageous earrings is equally well known. No doubt there are other significant elements apparent to external observers that are not as obvious when attempting to analyse myself. However, it is interesting to note that elements of this collage were ultimately represented within the main image ‘a research journey through metaphoric imagery (Grupetta, 2006b). I completed the collage long before I placed my ‘id’ within the eye of the raven.

I am titled ‘interpreter’ because Thomas and Pollio (2002) insist the goal of phenomenology is to provide interpretation. The researcher must interpret the participants’ experience, as the participants see it, rather than infer meaning through their own personal biases (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Although we each interpret others on the basis of our own understandings, it is only when the researcher is open to new ideas that phenomenological interviewing is actually possible (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).
8.1.2 THE RESERVED ONE – HARRIET

Harriet

The Reserved One

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Harriet’s ‘found narrative’

I am tall with dark hair and in many ways I am a fairly typical product of Sydney, middle class, long off shore Roman Catholic. I grew up in Sydney but have been living in the United States with my family for several years now, and have studied and worked in a variety of contexts, I have worked in the arts, sciences and humanities. People would probably describe my personality as reserved by and large. Sometimes it is because I think that is the proper way to behave, sometimes I am not quite sure of where I am and the situation and I am biding my time to observe a bit more, sometimes because I am being shy, different reasons.

I was an only child and close to both parents, but my father died when I was very young. My mother was a school teacher. I tend to reflect on my life in terms of carving it out in academic portions so four to six years at a time, what I had been doing at that time, also in terms of getting married, and moving overseas, that sort of thing. I have been married about ten years now and have one young child. I was educated in Australia until I completed two undergraduate degrees, and the post grad degrees are from overseas.

I have been identified as gifted, and I guess I am happy with that identification, and I do regard myself as intelligent actually, so it is fair to say that is accurate. My I.Q. score was measured long ago, and was over 135, which doesn’t really tell you much. I was an early reader, could read fluently by the time I started primary school or Kindergarten, so that would make it pretty clear in that sense. I did a lot of musical performing in fairly advanced contexts, performing in exams and so forth, right throughout high school and beyond, and mathematics was my particular thing. I was engaging in competitions and things like that, particular sessions like regular sessions, summer schools, individual sessions, things like that.

In my high school, which was a private Catholic school if they streamed the classes I was always in the top class. I was terrible at sport. But my sports teachers were really nice about that actually, because they knew that I was brainy, and I think that
everybody was sort of amused and relieved that there was something I was bad at for one thing. But they were actually very encouraging to help me do things at the level I could, and never abused me or ridiculed me, and encouraged me when things happened and just sort of laughed about it as well. My classmates and my teachers recognised my abilities, and occasionally that made me a little different, but generally it wasn’t a problem. There may have been a couple of places where it set me apart a little. For instance during my HSC years I was the only one doing four unit maths. And I was already known in the school as someone who was particularly good at maths because of the competitions I did. It was in a way, while people thought it was good for a girl to excel in a traditionally male subject because it would bring on other girls to do it. It probably worked for the years below me, but it didn’t actually for my own class because that was “Harriet’s maths” and no-one else could be nearly that good, so I was the only one doing four units. So that was a way that the distinction didn’t quite work the way people would have thought it worked.

I had very broad based academic talents. In terms of something I can quantify I ended up with the top assessments marks in all my subjects for the HSC, of course there were other subjects I wasn’t doing. I did find it a little hard to make friends in high school, with people in my year, but I was a little bit lonely for while, but my social skills weren’t as advanced as my academic skills. So it was partly my issue, so I learnt some strategies to address that for the next few years.

My best memories are some things to do with academic achievement, some things to do with people and relationships. I am proud of looking after my child reasonably well. There were times I felt I taught effectively or gave a good performance, those sorts of things. My mother would buy a frame for my certificates of achievement and awards, but the frame is now sitting in a drawer.

I thought I was going to end up as a professional musician as my main thing, and did that a little bit, but it didn’t take off well enough to be my main career. I also thought I was going to be a mathematician but lost interest essentially. Sometimes, I still do some performing and I like to do that, but a lot of it is a matter of not being able to
do everything. It is partly that it is really hard to make a career as a musician because there is just not that much work. And it is partly, in terms of what I am doing now, that there are so many things I can do at a time, particularly with a family. I am now in an academic research situation. It was not my initial choice of occupation, but I am happy with the choice. There are some other disciplines that interest me, neuroscience would be so cool. I am quite interested in how brains work, brains and linguistics all sort of wrapped up in it, and cultural aspects obviously, very interested in languages, which relates to my current research as part of my Doctorate degree.

I am fortunate to have had a decent amount of money, and still do. So that gave me a form of freedom too. I haven’t had the kind of desperate struggle for funds that makes people say I must do this work now, or have to get a job today, or I have to find a different job because I need the money that sort of thing. I am not terribly into accumulating it just for the sake of it. Presumably…If I had studied different things I could have got a higher paying job. But I didn’t want to do the lawyer/doctor route because I just wasn’t that interested in those professions, and didn’t care about the money enough for that. I am currently a disenfranchised citizen. Because I have been out of Australia, with the particular mix of how I have been out of Australia. I can’t vote here and because I am not a US citizen I can’t vote there, so that is kind of annoying. The kinds of countries I am interested in living in are the one where you are allowed to employ your conscience.

8.1.2.2 Interpreter’s response

Harriet described herself as ‘reserved’, hence the title, and indeed she was, and Harriet was difficult to interview due to her reticence to talk about herself. Harriet’s choice of name set the scene for all our interactions, she chose a name she hated so it could not possibly be traced back to her. In our consequent interactions I removed all identifiers from transcripts, and needed to ensure this was consistent throughout our interaction to build the necessary trust between us. Harriet does not like her story as it is presented, although she has approved its accuracy. She notes her awareness “that transcribed oral language is a strange beast” (Harriet, 2006, Appendix A33) and goes
on to say “I think you've done the best job you could do on it, and yet I don't think it works, unfortunately. It gives the illusion of a coherent, polished, written statement by me, but it's not really organized in a way that I would do it; the changes of subject lack motivation, and so I can tell that it has really been patched together from a bunch of answers to interview questions. There are fairly simple things that could be done to improve it -- but I don't think these would address the fundamental structural problem, and so I don't think the result would be satisfactory” (Harriet email 23rd Sept, 2006, Appendix, A33). Although Harriet then offered to rewrite the story in her own words, she found she was unable to provide written narrative to replace this one, even though she tried for five months to come up with a better version.

Harriet is in her early forties and has lived overseas for some time. As stated Harriet was born in Australia and describes herself as typical middle class Roman Catholic. Harriet’s physical description of herself as ‘tall with dark hair’ was misleading when trying to identify her at our first meeting. By her definition I would also be ‘tall’, although we are both approximately 165-170cm (5ft 6in), I consider ‘tall’ to be closer to 180cm or 6ft. Also her description of her hair as ‘dark’ may have been consistent with her original hair colour but, as her hair was now considerably peppered with grey, it made recognition via this description difficult and this example highlighted the subjectivity of viewpoints between us.

The person who nominated Harriet said she was gifted both mathematically and musically and had now moved into theology and linguistics, and had a high I.Q. score. The nominator also noted that she would be difficult to interview because she spoke very, very fast and it was difficult to follow her train of thought sometimes. Within our personal interactions I found no difficulty following the discussion and did not notice how quickly she spoke – until trying to transcribe the audio tapes. The speed of her speech made transcription quite difficult, even when the tape was slowed to the point that my own voice sounded like a 45 rpm single record played on 33 rpm, Harriet’s voice was still quite clear and still seemed to be speaking quickly. In analysis of the value activity the notation regarding Harriet’s apparent penchant for the pink and purple value cards, and significant aversion to the red value cards
highlighted another significant part of our interaction, the tangents that we could easily lead each other through. When asked whether she consciously chose the value cards by colour she firstly said “No, I was just picking them as they came” (Harriet, 2005). Then she queried whether she really had selected them by colour, checking my field notes to be sure, and then changed the subject twice, firstly to enquire “Are you the same about smarties?” (Harriet, 2005) and then to comment “That is a different study, I’ll ask you what you will research next, and you’ll say the different colours of cardboard that people pick up” (Harriet, 2005). However, this exchange also displays Harriet’s ability to adroitly shift the elements of a conversation if any subject was uncomfortable for her. Although she quite often simply refused to answer a question or bluntly moved on, her discomfort in being observed was both acute and obvious.

Initially I was concerned that our interactions were so brief and restrained that little of her story could be told, however as time went on she relaxed somewhat and once she had returned overseas her email communications became almost chatty. Although this could be a measure of the trust built up during our ongoing relationship, it may also be a symptom of her problem with observation, emails gave her plenty of time to edit her words and there was no way to tell how many drafts preceded the final version, nor could I observe any of her mannerisms or behaviours during email interaction.

Harriet point blank refused to make a collage, or do anything involving art. She said she was ‘awful at art at school’ and ‘preferred never to do anything involving drawing or art for the rest of her life’ (Harriet, 2005). In this sense Harriet displays her own perfectionism (Dabrowksi & Piechowski, 1977), she does not attempt anything that she feels she cannot do well. As participant choice is integral to the ethics of this study, no further request or pressure to complete this task were applied. Therefore the icons on the previous title page are entirely the researcher’s work, simply a representation of the music and mathematics which are the focus of Harriet’s giftedness. In reality the title page probably says more about the researcher than about the participant, as it seemed necessary to have consistency and flow to the
presentations. Although I could have left this section blank, the idea irritated me beyond belief as I felt the presentation required balance and therefore I felt it necessary to include a ‘collage’ of sorts, however did not at any stage complain to Harriet or try and force her to comply with my need for consistency. In analysis, it seems I display more need for perfectionism than Harriet.

Harriet displays many of the characteristics of giftedness (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) represented in the literature and, apart from being female, meets the stereotype of giftedness (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) in many ways. She accepts the label of giftedness, although she acknowledges that it was imposed by external identification means and prefers to be called ‘intelligent’ (Harriet, 2005). Harriet does not seem to need to hide her giftedness by underachieving, nor does she appear to be troubled by imposter syndrome (Wells, 2006) and yet chooses to mask her ‘self’. Her apparent distrust of observers appears to be based within her early years when interactions with other students socially were quite difficult. Harriet did not discuss her social interactions as an adult, other than stating she had learnt to get along with people, and she had no interest in discussing any form of spiritual intelligence.

In discussion of her personal values she tended to group terms into similar ideas and understandings. For instance she said Considerate and Courteous were similar, that Brave and Courageous were too. She also linked Peace, Calm and Leisure together as similar. She then paired Trust with Security; Friendly with Nice; Kind with Caring; and Independent to Autonomy; thereby condensing the replies intellectually.

Harriet also taught me the first and most valuable lesson from this research project – that interviewing gifted adults was not for the feint-hearted! The levels of metacognition made all interactions between us both a challenge and a delight. Any prior assumptions I initially had about interviewing a gifted person had to be instantly revised. If my mind was not truly open to the essence of the research before interviewing Harriet, it certainly was afterward.
For Esi, presentation is very important; therefore her collage was beautifully presented in a folder. The cover and first page are shown below:

8.1.3.1 Esi’s ‘found narrative’

I am middle aged, middle fat, middle ordinary, middle height, middle colour and boring. Although, I am a scholar, there is no question about it. I can’t fit any more books in my house, I shop around second hand book shops, and I find fascinating detail in the most amazing gunk. But people always ask me where I’m from and I say here, Australia, and they ask me again where I am from. And people have asked me can I speak English because I was with a bunch of Japanese. I may be a ‘round eye’ but my soul is Japanese.

I have got used to it now, because so many people, especially Asians, say ‘Are you really Australian?’ Then I met some Aboriginal people and they said ‘are you Australian?’ And I thought this is the question, and I felt so funny, you have no idea how weird I felt because here are these Aboriginal people asking me if I was Australian…Well, I thought about it for a bit, and I said I don’t know what you
think, I don’t know what you would say, but I was born here, and just gave it to them. I virtually asked them if I was Australian or not. And they said oh well you were born here, so it is alright, you are Australian. And now I feel Australian because they said I was.

I have a gift, yes, with languages and for blending or getting along with others or cultures. It is a funny thing, I can sort of suss out a whole heap of people. It was probably fine tuned by being a teacher in classrooms. But I think I was a teacher in classrooms because of that, but it is hard to say which came first, the chicken or the egg. I developed this skill from the age of about ten, because I grew up in quite a dysfunctional family, as most of us do.

I grew up in a highly migrant area. I always felt OK with that. I always felt OK in general in different groups. I was the middle child with two older brothers, one younger sister and a younger brother. I wasn’t close to either parent, although my earliest memory was when I was maybe two or three and I was standing next to a piano, and my father was playing the piano, at the time. I remember because I liked him. But I didn’t talk to my mum much. I have no recollection in my life of my mother ever hugging me or saying that she loved me, none, not ever. So I make sure I do it with my kids and grandkids. I have no recollection of my father saying he loved me either but sometimes he was kind. My mother had a favourite, out of five kids she had a favourite, and it wasn’t me. I think it was the boy who bought the party line, that was manipulatable. The one who believed what mother said, but it isolated that one from the siblings as well.

I realized after a while that I was the smartest one, and it transpired after a while that that was true. But also I was one of the quietest ones, and I had these two big brothers that were domineering, so two domineering parents and two dominating elder brothers, and bitchy younger sister and trouble-making younger brother, and you just learnt to hang in with them, because there is no where else to go…and because that is home. But I think I learnt that observing thing, or developed that part of my personality, or maybe I was just like it anyway.
In Japan you have the bun rah ku, the puppets and the puppeteer. And I generally see myself as the observer, I don’t see myself as the manipulator, more as observer than watcher. I do participate too. I blend. And I have developed the skill of blending. Somebody said to me ‘you blend’. We were on this great Tongan night out, and they said I can’t believe it, we had just come from Japan, and they said ‘you blend’. It seems to be my talent. It doesn’t matter whether it is good or not. But maybe it is better you don’t, sometimes people like attention to be outstanding and occasionally that is alright. But you learn a lot if you just blend.

Generally school was boring, I spent most of my time staring out the window waiting for the other kids in the class to catch up. The whole time basically, it was just one long boring time. But, I used to come first in the class and I was a year younger than everyone else. I came dux of the primary school and I went to a selective high school. Well there was only one high school, but it is a selection if you go to school! When I got to the high school they put me in the ‘A’ class, this didn’t please my mother and father for some reason, and my mother wrote a letter and said that wasn’t what she wanted a girl to do, so they put me in the ‘C’ class with the dumbos. I never asked mother why but it is interesting, especially when the parents say they are educated themselves, it would be different if they weren’t. I had an I.Q. test once, my mother told me the score in a fit of spite. I wanted to get married to the man I did, and she wanted to prove to me it was wrong by telling me what the score was, I don’t remember exactly what it was but it was higher than average. But I already knew it was high, and I always knew I was smarter than anyone else in the family.

I finished the Leaving Certificate at 16, so was too young for University, according to my parents. I wanted to apply for a Commonwealth Scholarship- but my parents said I was too young to live in Sydney anyway. I wanted to study Biology but they said no and found me a job. So at 16 I was working full time and going to tech 4 nights a week, studying what they selected. Eventually I rebelled and left home at 19 and went to live in Sydney by myself. I know now why I got married so young to the person I did, – I wanted a home and I was lonely.
After I was married I moved back to the same suburb as my parents. I worked six years in a district hospital. I was a pathology technician then, that was one of my first jobs. I loved it, it was fascinating. I studied science in the beginning. I wanted to study biology, but my parents decided against it, and also it wasn’t available in our area, so I did science, chemistry and physics and stuff, then I got myself a job in hospital laboratory. What a revelation, it was a big break through in my life, because I saw the world the way it really lived, all its diseases and wonderous behaviour. Life in a hospital was a really big deal. Actually I wouldn’t be any good as a nurse, I couldn’t tolerate some of the things that nurses had to do. But at that time we used to do the collecting ourselves around the hospital, so we got to go round the hospital twice a day, got to see the patients and everything. But the technical job was fascinating; hematology, biochemistry, bacteriology…..a whole range of things to study and learn.

But then I was married and had children. It is not the job you had with children. So I concentrated on raising my children. I had stayed at home while the babies were born, and that was my best memory, when the babies were born… I liked it… That was intense happiness, watching your own baby being born…When I got divorced, it was a relief, because I had been trying to get divorced for years, but I lost all my money and I have to say there was a feeling of loss. About eighteen months after I got divorced I bought a house, and I got virtually no settlement from the divorce, and people would say ‘how did you do it?’ And I have not got the faintest idea, I just knew it had to be done, that’s all.

Then when I got divorced I had to go back to work, well it was time anyway. And I investigated the possibility of going back to University and upgrading all my qualifications, but by that time technology had leapt ahead. I had moved to Sydney. It would have been a lot of study and a lot of chore, for not even the same job, things had moved on a bit. During that time I had been learning Japanese, I started when the kids were small. But I had always enjoyed languages, because I had previously been to Italian class.
So I had been teaching Japanese and then got a job in Adult Migrant Education. That’s the two big breaks in my life, I was working in the hospital where you see life as pretty raw, and then the other was working in the hostel, which was then the biggest migrant centre in Australia. But my life changed considerably, but it was migrant Australia that really saved me. Realising that all these people were making a fresh start anyway, and I am making a fresh start as well. As a learning curve you couldn’t get better, you start with nothing, and people have never seen a round-eye before, they can’t read or write anything, never heard English before and you are really starting at grass roots level, and you have got to come right down to where they are at. And that’s when I really learnt that different cultures see the world differently. These people in front of you are not seeing what you see, not thinking what you think, so you have to come to their level, not their level, their place. That learning environment, and learning a special methodology, led to a job in Japan for three months.

Later I went to work for the high school, I went there as the Japanese teacher, and one of the guys there, in the physics department, had set up an ‘electronic classroom’. I had only just arrived and was given year twelve to teach, and I thought alright, I’ll give it a go. Before I went to the high school I had never touched a computer before, so we had computer training and got to use that thing straight off, I do have technical skills, I did technical education before hand, used to work in laboratories. Anyway I got on to that, set it all up. And the next thing, I had only been there a few months, and the next thing I am in this big OTEN conference, and there I am like a movie star, with photographs and screen this big and here I am talking to kids in the countryside. I was a bit surprised actually, I had only just arrived, but nobody else wanted too. This has happened to me before actually, yes, I’ll get somewhere and somebody will say do you want to try this and well I’ll give it a go, give it a go, and bingo it is a success story. And all the people hanging around in the background are quite nasty, or people come up and say something…Yes, because it wasn’t them, they didn’t want to do it, I quite like it, I put the work in and get the result. All the resentment, the hostility, because you are doing something they
can’t, you are coming in and offering this alternative, you are the open door to the real world, you are a threat. All this knowledge that you have, and obvious expertise in the language, which doesn’t come from the Education Department, it comes from the outside, is also a threat, so there will be exclusion, you won’t be one of the mob.

The best memories involve also times spent overseas, like finding out stuff…Yes, like you are sitting in Alcazar in Spain, and you look at this thing and it is just the most beautiful building, just overwhelming, beautiful….you can look at something, sometimes just watching birds, you know nature stuff. I don’t have a qualification, but part of my learning was in Japan, I was accepted into a Japanese University as a guest researcher, I had a supervisor, I had a project. Achievement is something like, someone asking me ‘how did you get to be a guest researcher at a Japanese University?’ And I thought gee, I wonder how I did that? I got in touch with this professor, and said I was really interested in learning more Japanese, because I was a Japanese teacher here, and of course he is a wonderful man. He said ‘Why don’t you come to Japan, if you enrol it will cost you forever, so why don’t you come as a guest researcher’. You can’t say it all happens from one thing. It doesn’t happen from just one thing it happens from a continuity of your life actions. It is incredible, but I got it you know, perseverance…..Being a person someone wants to meet, being positive, making effort, persisting and offering something, five things. To get what you want from another person, just on a pure mundane basis, there has to be something in it for them, they are not on this general sort of give away thing.

The things that have made the biggest advancements in my whole life are when I have been extraordinarily brave. And looking back on it now, for goodness sake, I mean going to work in Korea for a year, at that time it was not exactly stable. I put in an application and it was rejected so many times, in the end I got the visa because I had a student here who had a relative in immigration. I just went there with a suitcase, I had nowhere to stay, the people that were going to put me up, it had all fallen through. I got myself organized into a nice flat, I got this organised, that organised, it was tough, there were riots, for three months there were riots every
day…But the experience of staying in Korea for a year, incredible, verging on the foolhardy.

I went to Ghana too, to see a friend, kind of boyfriend. I met him in Australia before I went to Japan, and we had corresponded for a couple of years, and I thought I will go there, in one way it was foolhardy, I guess. I know the scenario there is that they don’t have money, so I took money, I got everything set up. I have travelled a lot but I am always organised, always set everything up. I have been to the U.S. too… and I have found that I am more Australian than I think.

I think of myself as a global citizen, I am proud of my children….Sometimes I am proud of myself… I stopped doing the self-destructive and I have started my own business, I am studying for a Masters and writing a thesis. I like to travel but I also like to do the garden now, to keep me from going gerr while I am writing. I rearrange the plants and stuff, or take photographs and stuff, but that goes into the thesis…but the thesis also came from a hobby. I am working with the Aboriginal community now, because I feel the need to put something back, no, I want to help, I don’t need to, it’s not like I am Joan of Arc or something. I just feel I have something to offer, so I help because I can. At this stage of my life I am not particularly religious, although I lean toward Buddhism, they know stuff, but I attend all sorts of religious celebrations as I explore other cultures and search for meaning.

8.1.3.2 Interpreter’s response

Esi, at 72 years of age, is the eldest of the research partners; consequently she had the longest story to tell, even in this condensed version. Although she has a mixed background, including Scottish and Celtic, she identifies herself as Japanese. Yet she refers to herself as a ‘round-eye’ because her appearance belies her Japanese soul. It is not by any means true that Esi is as non-descript as she describes herself, she simply does not seem to intrude on any setting, therefore she has been titled ‘chameleon’. Esi chose her name because it is her ‘Agarnier name in the Arkan language’. When I was concerned that she might be recognisable by that name she
explained that it simply means, “born on a Sunday, because in that culture you are called by the day you are born” (Esi, 2005), so any number of people could have the same name, and not an identifying marker.

Esi also confirmed everything the nominator said about her. She was clearly gifted in languages, and can speak several fluently. However there was a more intangible something about her that aided her ability to not just ‘blend in’ as she put it, but easily move between cultural settings and communicate with a range of people. The nominator said that within Japanese culture it was more important to be good with people than to achieve academically or financially. Esi herself confirmed that E.Q. (Goleman, 1995) was more important than I.Q. in Japanese culture, a point not consistent with any of the literature (Chapter Four) on cultural definitions of giftedness. As an example she said that a Japanese businessman would not be prized for how much he earns but for how well he managed his staff and that meant a different skill set altogether (Esi, 2005).

Esi’s participation involved extensive interaction and we are still in contact with each other as we have found some common ground as a result of the intensity of the research relationship. Esi’s description of herself as ‘Brave’ is accurate; she has travelled extensively on her own to connect with her Japanese roots, expand her education, and extend her knowledge of cultures and places. In fact tracked her overseas journeys by physically sitting down with her passports and look at the entries for dates and countries that she had visited during her extensive travels.

There were some difficulties during our research partnership, due to clashes of ethical and moral standpoints. Esi can see no difficulty with taking photographs of people in public streets without their consent, and finds most ethical restrictions ridiculous, at least those that pose an obstacle to her research. Whereas I have issues with photographs, largely due to my Aboriginal beliefs about showing photographs of the dead, therefore I would never take a photograph without someone’s express permission. I am also very careful with ethical guidelines and try to follow them to the letter even if that means adjusting my research technique.
Despite these differences Esi was a great research partner, particularly as she was so open to the experience and so very willing to try every facet of data collection I presented – and painfully honest when she decided that an activity or question was too probing.

The collage activity delighted her, and she amazed herself when she realised that she felt the need for ‘a partner’, crediting the collage experience with clarifying this need. It was not something she had mentioned within any of the interviews or other activities. The ‘value activity’ on the other hand clearly bored her and she raced through it, only pausing to challenge my subjective definition of a term. Dependant on my answer she would either debate the meaning of the ‘value’ or simply throw it on a pile and continue with the activity. Esi approached this activity very quickly, simply looked at each word and sorted them into piles, with some commentary on the issues underlined above. Esi paid no attention to the colour, shape, or order of the cards, and simply appeared to pick them up at random. However, she often disputed the subjective meaning of each word, wanting me to define words such as Hobbies and Respect, rather than use her own definition or subjective understanding.

In terms of the literature, Esi did score highly on an I.Q. test, however that, and her characteristic sense of humour, would be the only criteria to establish her giftedness by positivist means. Certainly she is a perfectionist, as the presentation of her collage displays, but that may be more of a cultural than a gifted trait. Although she is relatively matter of fact about her achievements, she is not inclined to boast, though she does not seem to hide her giftedness either, and does not appear to be troubled by imposter syndrome.

In analysing her collage, there is clearly a cultural influence, broader than Japanese culture. Some of the icons are from Korea and there is a distinctly spiritual feel, which is ironic because Esi describes herself as a ‘None’. More discussion of Esi’s spiritual connections and beliefs are included in Chapter Nine, however she clearly believes that some sort of ‘fate’ is guiding her and mentioned a number of times how
she simply happened to be in the right place at the right time, a point consistent with Tannenbaum’s (1983) ‘Chance factor’.

Esi does not think herself wise, yet often expressed profound wisdom during our discussions. For example within her explanation of the collage:

That little star is just because in every scenario, because in any situation something sparkles. But it is also because the stars on the cover, you make them by turning the picture just a little degree at the time, and it is funny how things can change, just by moving things a little degree of perspective (Esi, 2005).

Again I have learnt much personally from interacting with Esi, in addition to gathering data for my research.
8.1.4.1 Mark’s ‘found narrative’

I am a 65 year old north European born businessman, out going businessman. I am married to an Australian, I have two sons and have been married for over 25 years I came [to Australia] at 34 and my job was to establish a [business]. However, I instantly liked it so much that I made up my mind I wanted to stay here. Because I’m 65 I actually retired from my executive job three years ago, so what I hoped for, and what actually happened, was that I got the offer of a number of boards…And I enjoy that immensely, so it is important for you to know that I’m no longer an executive responsible for the operation of the business, I’m now a non executive director on numerous companies, different companies and more responsible for the governance of the business and more to review the planning process, the strategies, these sort of things. Just that you understand that I am now actually in a second career, which is totally different to my original career.

I’d honestly tell you I don’t regard myself as gifted, it actually was hard work to sort of to come to that level. I have to say I never made an effort, I actually enjoyed it, you know it was fun for me, because I enjoy building a network, and the network became bigger and bigger…So it was on more luck it was more it happened, it evolved, it didn’t, it was not really [an effort]. I have to say, whenever I take something on then of course I make an effort to make a good job, but, it was fun, it was seriously it was just fun. I’ve been a seriously lucky person.

I was born in a little town in Germany and I was the youngest. I have two older sisters. My father died when I was only 4 years old, which was during the war which means I didn’t know my father, and I was very close to my mother who never remarried. I was sent off into boarding school and it was a boys’ school only. School actually I remember fairly well, what we call basic school you know you go for the first four years you go to basic school every kid has to do that. And by law you have to do this school for four years and then you have to do an exam and go into higher school. Or you decide I stay there and then you go on for eight, altogether eight
years, and then you finish and you learn a trade. Or what you have to do in Germany is apprenticeship. And I actually remember that period quite well, because it was the first time I got together with all sorts of other kids. Well actually we were only boys, only boys, Germany was very strict about those things in those days.

I was a very normal student in school. I actually went to a boarding school because I lost my father when I was very, very young and have only sisters, so for that reason. And this was a school system which was, the schools had to be outside cities, in the country, you had to get involved in work on farms. You had to learn a trade, so I mean I learned carpentry and book binding, working outside, you know in the agricultural sector looking after horses, looking after cattle, and also metal work, which was great fun to do. The concept of very strong about confidence building you know, and so self educate. And I think those are all the points which helped me perhaps to do certain things perhaps a little bit better than sort of the average guy, you know.

School was a great time and everything about school, and I did, of course had unhappy times in school which is quite normal but never any sort of devastating problems. Luckily our boarding schools were very big on sports. I found that very important, and sports because I found a field and had the first experience that when you work at it you can actually improve yourself. Athletics was part of our Higher School program, we actually had to go through all sorts of exercises and score points, and I scored such a high point that I got a special award from the Government, and I got that about over six years every year, a special thing, you know if you get as a youngster to that score. Which, obviously very few, guys actually got. But again, it wasn’t certainly not gifted, it was hard work, and then when I got there I was terribly pleased with myself you know, because I regarded myself as relatively average in school, and I did not get, well boys in schools want to be in teams you know, rugby, cricket, whatever teams, and we of course played other sports. I didn’t get into the top teams, I only always got into the second team or even third team. That was actually the great thing that made me more international. Then even the school had
an established program whereby I had to go for one term to an English boarding school, that was another incredible experience.

A seriously happy time was when I was actually accepted by the company for an apprenticeship. You can of course go via university and then into a profession but you would find it very hard you know. I mean because they know you haven’t done the apprenticeship, so you are not really one of them you know. So I did first my apprenticeship it’s a two year thing and then uni and then the start of the career. And the apprenticeship was great fun, because I loved it. Then I studied at Munich University, then Paris and then Hamburg, and I finished commerce and political science with both degrees. In Europe it’s actually quite normal, you do not necessarily stay in one university unless you are in a real hurry. I had great times during university but you have to do all the basic tests and then you can go on with your studies, and then you have the final exams which are horrible in Germany and I became pale and thin.

But I think the saddest memory was really the fact that in boarding school I realised that all the other boys, it was then only that I really realised, had fathers, and I didn’t have a father, and I think that was probably in my life the most sort of the thing I thought a lot about and which was sort of a sad thing for me, that I didn’t have a father who was strong and I felt the absence very much. It was extremely smart of my mother, because I think it wasn’t easy for her, to put me into boarding school because that overcame these things. Later, I very often chose my friends, both, male friends and girlfriends by their fathers…

I am proud I was able to actually really make true friends and have them still all, these are of course friends in Europe. And watching a lot of other males, especially males, I didn’t find that many of them had that capacity to actually you know, because to create a true friendship it’s a give and take. And many males, because of the male ego thing and whatever, macho thing, don’t want to give in you know, and I quite I never found that difficult at all and the fact that I could make very good friends has been an enormous positive in my life. Secondly I think I’m a very good
networker and do in fact have an enormous network of contacts in Europe and North America and South America and of course here in Australia. It’s not always to just benefit my cause…It’s all sorts of things you know, because I’m absolutely happy to get involved in something which is of no benefit to me, and I enjoy then seeing that matter getting somewhere. But again it was not hard work, it was just realizing the solution, there was no effort.

[I was awarded National and International Certificates, medals and plaques, various Honours] but it’s not of significance really. It’s really not. I never put anything on walls whatsoever and I only put it on when I do something that sounds official. I have to say that most of the things I have achieved and done, were not, I think the word achievement therefore is not the right word to describe it, it was simply finding, to put the right a to the right b and bring the two together you know, and it’s fairly easy you know. And there’s one thing I don’t think my ego is that important to me, because I have always seen men who have a strong ego somehow fail very easily, because they lose the balance, and they focus wrongly and then they fall and suffer enormously, ego and this macho attitude is a seriously weakness of men.

I’ve been a seriously lucky person, it’s not I do not recall anything that I really regret, there are things I certainly could have done better, find more, more fine tuning you know, I could have been more dedicated, I could have been more focused, but in the end I was always really smiling, laughing. I had all sorts of, not just one or two, I had all sorts of things happening, which were highly positive for me. And for my career, for my life, for you know for everything. And therefore there are several things during school time that were wonderful experiences, you know I mean for example making friends, and of course the friends came from all sorts of places, one third in the school were even foreigners. Secondly all these other things we learned in school, which were not in the normal curriculum of other schools, the very close friends you make in a boarding school because you live with them. I truly believe I’m a very lucky person, but I’m not a gifted person.
8.1.4.2 Interpreter’s response

Mark at 65 years of age was the second oldest research partner, consequently his narrative is also quite lengthy. Mark was immensely concerned with selecting an ‘international name’ as his pseudonym, one that can be pronounced in any language because his own name is difficult for others to pronounce and is often confused with those of another cultures. During the course of our discussion he related some amusing stories of how his name created confusion when travelling to other countries and the problems this caused when presenting his passport to travel between certain continents. Because of this perceived difficulty he selected ‘international’ names for both his sons so that they may more easily move across cultural boundaries.

Mark is ‘the lucky one’ simply because that is how he describes himself, and his narrative is one of the most difficult to relate, mainly due to the many national and international awards he has received. To identify any of these awards would immediately identify the recipient, contradicting the ethical guidelines for the study. Consequently Mark’s story has a hollow feel, as if many details are missing as much was generalised to protect this research partner’s true identity. For instance, the quite amusing stories of the misinterpretations of his name could not be relayed to the reader because, even in general terms, there is a risk the name itself could be recognized from the content of the story.

Another major challenge was the language difference. Mark’s native language is German, although he can converse in several European languages. His English is heavily accented and often differs to English grammatical expectations, therefore, as the story should be told in his voice, these grammatical ‘errors’ were not altered unless absolutely necessary to the flow of the story. Where an identifying concept or word was replaced, or words added to suit the flow of the narrative, these words are [bracketed] to demonstrate the changes from the original transcript.

Mark himself is a very interesting man and quite generous with his time in the early stages of the project. When I was first referred to Mark I had no idea how important
he was considered in his field until the actual meeting. Once sighting his very exclusive office in an important and expensive part of Sydney’s Central Business District, and then conducting the interviews in the company’s prestigious board room, some of his renown became obvious. An internet search conducted after the first interview revealed the true eminence of this man in his field. Despite his status Mark was welcoming and friendly, not at all intimidating or distant, and we established an ease of communication that would have been difficult if I had truly known who I was meeting in advance.

The nominee said that Mark was a gifted communicator, able to be at ease in any culture or situation, and that he used this facet of his abilities to benefit others through his vast network of commercial and political connections. Again he was nominated mainly for his E.Q. rather than I.Q., but he was nominated by an Asian agency, so it is their concept of giftedness rather than a European one that recognises his abilities. Certainly he is a most likeable and amusing man, and we laughed frequently during the interviewing phase, although he does not consider his own humour appealing to others. Nevertheless Mark is quite accomplished in his field. In addition to his commerce and political activities, Mark has published several books and is heavily involved in Opera, Art, Education and Law spheres, specifically in establishing links between European countries and Australia to promote the sharing of knowledge.

Mark’s own ethical and moral standpoint has often conflicted with his rise through the ranks, as Mark discusses in Chapter Nine. Yet a tension emerged due to his immense trust of my intentions and ethical practices during the research. Although Mark was happy to be interviewed initially, he seemed to feel that once that phase was completed no further participation was necessary and it was difficult to obtain member checks on transcripts and story drafts. Mark appeared to trust me with the entire process and appeared unconcerned with the final result.

Mark was difficult to get to know, although I did not discover that in the first instance. Whenever we met he appeared to be totally committed to the research
process and gave his time wholeheartedly whilst I was with him. Yet it was almost as if these periods of illumination only lasted as long as each meeting. To be the centre of Mark’s attention is quite gratifying. He has a talent for making one feel important, but equally once you are out of sight apparently you lose the focus of his attention. This is not a criticism of Mark, just recognition that he is quite busy and much focused, and therefore if he does not need to focus on anything peripheral to the task at hand, then he simply does not.

Mark’s collage did not materialise. Mark initially seemed delighted to be asked to complete the collage and talked about his possible creation at length, taking much time to decide on the background colour and pictures that could be included, however the collage was never completed. From the initial interview through to the finalisation of this research Mark repeatedly promised, via telephone and email, to complete the collage, selecting a yellow background and discussing its features and yet never actually sent it. Therefore his title page was constructed from elements he specifically mentioned, again it is a testament to my need for consistency.

Due to his frequent trips overseas Mark was often difficult to contact, and patience was required for following up research details. At one stage he requested new cardboard for his collage, which was sent to him, without anything materialising.

Of all our interactions it was Mark’s completion of the value activity that provided the truest sense of his character. Neither fast nor slow in approach, Mark paid little attention to colour and appeared to select the cards by random choice. There was much debate over the definitions of values, and the idea of subjectivity, and Mark was also the first to encounter difficulty with the characteristic survey (Macy, 1996). Each statement was questioned and Mark seemed most concerned with getting the ‘right’ answer or at least gaining assistance in interpreting each statement on the survey. It was apparent during our interaction that many of his queries were due to English being his second language. Mark communicated quite well in English. Equally when Mark finished the value activity he was concerned his ‘yes’ pile (most like me) was too long, and wanted to know if this was unusual.
Mark’s narrative displays some elements of imposter syndrome (Wells, 2006). When I mentioned this to Mark he was relieved to know there was actually a name for this. As he discusses he has always believed that he was simply ‘lucky’, although he had worked hard, he truly believes that he has gained his position through sheer luck. Although a lapsed Christian he believes a higher power has had a hand in his fate, once again linking to Tannebaum’s (1983) ‘chance factor. He has been waiting most of his life for the ‘bottom to drop out of his world’ as people realise he is not as gifted as they believe. Possibly this feeling was related to Mark missing a parent figure in his youth, although lack of one parent, particularly a father, is also common in gifted individuals (Piirto, 1999). Mark was also quite good at sport, which is again typical of some gifted individuals (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).
8.1.5 THE DAZZLING ONE – BOBBIE
8.1.5.1 Bobbie’s ‘found narrative’

I’m a Maori woman from the northern part of New Zealand. Where we come from we were country bumpkins, because there’s not a lot of employment. I am married, and have four sons, I live in [location withheld] and I migrated to Australia going on 16 years ago. I’m an Australian citizen, oh my gosh, I’m an Australian Citizen. In my country, my people would say I’m a traitor.

My background is I’m a social worker by trade, and have done social work, in a paid capacity for 14 years and volunteer capacity for my community for all those years I’ve been here. I’ve worked full time and I’ve studied full time. And so all my qualifications I got them from here [Australia]. So when I came from New Zealand, I had done lots of community development work over there and set up programs and run all sorts of things and that was because I basically inherited how to do it from my grandmother who was actually a woman’s movement person in the old days. So I never had any formal qualifications on doing any social work, but yeah, by her example, I learned how to take care of people. I’d say I was an expert in this particular field because I’d worked with it for over 25 years.

I did a double BA, and then I did another BA in Applied Science then I did a BA honours, and I come across to PhD. I hear them [Maori community] talking about me because you’re getting a PhD everyone sees you different. I got two horns and five tails now. My PhD is more about social justice as opposed to wealth but in saying that I like to be comfortable.

My grandma is what I called my mum, so when I refer to my mum, that’s my grandma. I was closer to my grandma, and my granddad, I was like his queen, his queen, because I was the last one, my grandmother raised about ten kids, of her own including extras, but I was the baby, so even though I was a grandchild I was the last one that they raised. I didn’t get on with my mum and dad at all. I see my maternal mother as more of a sister than I see her as a mother, which pee’s her off because she sees me as a daughter, but given I’m a mother, I know what a mother should be. So I
felt as an adult woman that I was old enough to make a decision as to where I feel I fit in, and I see her more as a sister than as a mother, and my biological dad never really got on with me, until he was ready to die, and he asked me to come back and there was all this dramatic apology before he died and that was cool. So that is my dramatic relationship with my four parents.

Mum and dad decided they needed to go to the city to get work and live, so grandma took me, and started to raise me, and they left me with my grandma. I’d have two sisters you see, cause there’s three of us, three girls. My eldest is two years older and my youngest is two years younger, so remembering them getting in the car and driving and waving is something that I don’t need to be sad about anymore, but I probably see that as one of my saddest times as a child. They were with my parents and I was raised with my grandma. But you know it’s really interesting because I look at my two sisters now (pause) I feel sad for them cause they’re so lost, and they have no idea about who they are their values because my mum and dad were to busy working to put the roof over their head and I’m not saying they’re any less than me or anything, I just think that they missed out.

My earliest memory is probably about three, because I remember having a dummy in my mouth standing on the doorstep watching the bus go to school and wanting to go. I just desperately wanted to go on the bus to school, I’ll never forget it, and I can see actually myself as a little wee child wanting to go on the bus to school. Standing there everyday, and others would go to school. My earliest memory of school is sitting down on the mat and just listening and wanting so much for them to tell stories. I remember sitting there and the teacher telling stories. I remember that, sitting there all the time, and you know how everyone is finished, the story is finished, I don’t want to do that, I want more!

When I was in high school I left three times because it was too slow for me. I was a Maori, right, my English teacher was a very old conservative English trained woman, but I loved English. It was not a good thing because I was a Maori, I should have really loved Maori language, but I didn’t, I liked other, the writing and stuff. In a lot
of ways my culture conflicted with my learning. It was interesting because if I wanted to do something in English, I could write a play and get the top mark, yet I couldn’t get myself to go to class, because it wasn’t what I should be doing as a Maori girl. I would go into English and all my English academic classes and breeze them and I would write articles and stories, and they would say ‘did you write this’ as if I was stupid or as if I stole it. So I thought well screw you people, you are not in my space, so that was why I left three times. And it was that English teacher that said to me “Why are you wasting my time, and others teachers’ time, why don’t you just go home and have a baby like the rest of the Maori girls are meant to have, because that is your lot in life.” So that was the environment that we had to learn. And I think in a lot of ways if I had a positive space in that English environment that I probably would have gone to the moon.

When I was about fourteen I was picked to netball play for the North Island which was a big deal for a little bush girl. But I really found it hard because they were all grown up women, but I had that ability. So I played 1st grade netball, a high level of sport, and I switched over to basketball, and played second division. I like sports because you can give it heaps and afterwards you feel as wasted as, but feel like you have done 100 percent. I think for me, because I couldn’t get my mind stimulated, I used my physical. I was on the road in representative teams at a very young age, so much so that someone had to come and babysit me, because they were all women. So probably because I wasn’t able to use my head, my brain, in the school, where I would have felt that lack of fulfilment, I could play sport to the top and I could go on a court and come off and feel awesome, because I did amazing things and I wasn’t restricted like I was at school.

Also at a very young age I worked, at about twelve, I worked in the dairy after school, and after about a year of working in the dairy I became manager of the dairy. So I started at 4.00 a.m. on the weekend, and then maybe at about fifteen I worked in a takeaway shop for an auntie of mine, and after a few weeks I ended up running the shop for her while she went to another shop. So I have been in a lot of manager
positions even at a young age, I start off working and then end up running it, and that was before I had my children.

I have done some really good jobs. Like my mum used to work in a butter factory, and I was like sixteen, being a ratbag at school, not making any sense, so she said she would get me a job in the factory. So I went in the factory all I had to do was put the butter into boxes, but after about a month there they put me into the laboratory testing the butter. So you know all of a sudden smarty pants goes straight in there, and all of these people who have been there for ten years who covet to go in there. So I was able to pick up things really fast, so I could test the butter and test the milk and all that sort of things. I stayed there for a few years and decided oh this is dumb, so someone said to me ‘Why don’t you come and work in the shed and do the shearing’. And I didn’t know one end of the sheep to the other, but I though oh well, I’ll go and try it.

And you know what, it was the best job I ever had! Because it was hard work but it had set guidelines, you got up at 4.30 am and they made you coffee, then you worked until about 7.00 a.m. and had breakfast, went back to work, so it was full on, and you didn’t finish until 5.30 p.m. at night, and you didn’t stop for about three months worth, and your money just piled up, and when you finished the three months work, you went on a piss up. And I did that for about three years.

Then I decided, well I didn’t decide, I got pregnant at twenty-one. But even though, a lot of the people where I came from had babies at fifteen and sixteen because that was the deal. I made it all the way until twenty-two and in my case that was a big thing, there are only two of us that never had a kid under twenty. Twenty years, I have been married, but me and my husband have been partners since he was 14 ½ and I was 15, I’m 45 and he is the same, we have been together for 30 years, that’s good, long time. I had four little kids like really close and I was a dedicated clean the house mum now as they got older I used to anticipate them growing up, but now they stay up there do their own thing. I gave up drinking when my son was three. We
used to be real bad druggies and drinkers and all sorts of things so, when our boy was three we decided to go straight and clean up.

Him [husband] and I have quite defined, a defined idea as to what we are in our community, And it’s a hard role. It’s a real hard role. To go in there and fix up things that nobody else dared to go in to. And you know our journey has been really interesting in that certain people have come into our space and given us things that have given us tools that have enabled us to do something. And in saying that I was speaking about myself, because in a lot of ways I am able to go in and do things, that what our people would say, is that the old people would have done way back.

And the thing is though, what you do in that space, determines where it goes to next, and that, and you know I mean, nobody in my community doesn’t know that I’m on this mission because that’s what I say. They say oh, why are you doing this doctorate? You know, I said because most research from our perspective, from an indigenous perspective, is done because of a need, OK and I said you know I think that Maoris’ here, there is a real need to review where we’re at, where we come from, where are we going, and how we are in this space.

And I believe that I’m not anything special I didn’t get zoomed down or anyway, but what it is all about is the learning that I have from way back and can use. Because the language that I use comes from, it’s like a strong heart thing that you know, and it’s that thing that what I call it is, I identify as, in the old days they gave you, they taught you, that you have the light, that it’s a light. The wrong and the right. When you are right the light will beam so much so that others will see it. When you’re not, it’s dark and it won’t make sense. They say in Maori that you’ll know other people with the light on because the talk you have is sweet. You feel inside is refreshed, you know that their light is on and you’re having the same talk. Some don’t even know there’s a light they walk in the room and the sad thing is because you know there’s a light, you will always have to show them where the light is.
My dream is to go home to my bush, where my house is and I suppose that is just going back to my childhood like my grandmother used to do. I would like to go home with my grandchild and work in the garden and dig a garden, well that is how I grew up, my grandmother was in the garden and I sat in the garden since I was little. I can remember putting dirt in my mouth, I can remember holding the seeds for her, and I can remember saying ‘I don’t like it here anymore, I am going to sit under the tree now’, those sorts of things. So all my life was brought up in the garden where she was sitting.

I have a connection with a garden, and have a burning desire in me always, that I want to grow a garden, and I want to grow this food. ‘If you can feed your family, the family is happy’ and I have that in my sense. The interesting thing is my house is very contemporary, I have kids that are very contemporary, they’re all on the Internet, mobile phones going, and my husband sitting there watching his movie, and someone’s playing a game and I think to myself, why can’t we all just go out and make a garden, and they say oh please mum go back inside and read your book So that’s what I feel, but realize we are not in the space for that to occur.

As they [sons] started to come into adolescence we felt that they needed to know what it was to be a Maori. What we decided was we would send them home to school for a year, and I was lucky my sister in law was a teacher. But they would go back to New Zealand live with my mum or my sister in law and they would go and learn how to dig a grave and they’d go to a Maori wake which is practiced quite traditionally back there. I realized that when we go home, and our kids are like that, they’re actually gonna be quite ostracized because they haven’t been a part of it.

I’m also sick of people asking me what I’m gonna do when I finish my PhD. I’d like to be able to have the power to tell people who make decisions on behalf of my children and myself to piss off, because of who the hell I am and what I need, and that’s about having self empowerment, community empowerment and family empowerment, that’s why I’m here.
8.1.5.2 Interpreter’s commentary

Bobbie selected her name as the name she had chosen for a daughter, and never used because she had four sons. She did not mention her many qualifications until specifically asked, and does not think herself particularly gifted, referring to more communal use of gifts than individual giftedness. There is no imposter syndrome here, nor any masking of giftedness in the sense reported in the literature; however the Maori concepts of identifying giftedness will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine. Despite this it is clear that Bobbie possesses the elusive ‘Mana’ characteristic reported by Bevan-Brown et al. (2008). She is ‘dazzling’ in the sense that the ‘light’ she refers to shines out of her. It illuminates every thing she does on both practical and spiritual levels. This woman is awe inspiring, and clearly a leader within her own culture.

I have been fortunate enough to maintain good contact with Bobbie throughout the study and have observed her in a range of settings. At any time she meets another Maori she is treated with the utmost respect and many issues are deferred to her opinion. Bobbie herself is quite down to earth and seems not to notice the way others defer to her, but should she need to address an issue, regardless of how large the audience, she speaks with a confidence and wisdom that resonates through all that hear her speak. In contrast she is fairly humble about her abilities and this is consistent with McKenzie’s (2001) concept of ‘whakaiti’, where the Maori community find being boastful of one’s ability quite offensive. Bobbie also confirmed McKenzie’s (2001) research when providing examples of her teacher’s deficit viewpoint. The teacher expected her to “go home and have a baby like the rest of the Maori girls are meant to have, because that is your lot in life” (Bobbie, 2006), and also accused her of plagiarism whenever she wrote well.

Bobbie does indeed write very well. I have also been privileged to read some of her publication and portions of her dissertation. Her academic style contrasts sharply with her colloquial speech as presented within the narrative. Again this is part of her
bicompetency (Henare-Solomon, 2006), the ability to switch between worlds and encompass a variety of spoken and written forums.

Within her collage she used mainly cultural and family symbols, and Bobbie confirms the collage represented her life and that everything is based around her family and her people. It is clear that she feels great responsibility to her community and any skills she has are utilised to improve issues within the Maori community. The original collage was much clearer; I have blurred her photographs to protect the identities of her sons and husband. I have also blurred parts of the text that could reveal her true identity.

Bobbie used the most interesting technique when it came to the value activity. She appeared to select cards randomly, and yet if we discussed a related concept – that card would be the next one she turned over. For instance; for the card ‘leader’ she mentioned something about ‘respect’, and that was the next card she chose. When discussing ‘caring’ she mentioned ‘considerate’, and again that was the next card she chose. She continued to do this throughout the activity, yet all the cards were face down, there was no way to select the typed word. Her intuition was both delightful and uncanny. Bobbie was not the least perturbed by it, she was concentrating on creating her pattern (Photograph Appendix A42). She put each card as she had finished with it into a row, then she started to build the rows side by side to create an intricate pattern of colour. Initially I though she was only concentrating on the colour but then she said “Leisure – it can go right by Angry, because when you get really angry, you need to go and have a leisurely day at the opshops.” It was only then I realised the position of the words themselves were as much a part of the pattern as the colours. She had grouped them into concepts, but not those that were alike; each word was complimented by its partner.

Bobbie also complained when about two thirds through the activity that she was running out of cards to fit the pattern, and when she finished there was one card short of making a rectangular shape Appendix A42. She was most perturbed by this, even tried to push them over to get rid of the space. This perfectionism in wanting to
complete the pattern is at odds with the rest of her demeanour, she seems quite laid back and unconcerned about many issues, yet this clearly bothered her a great deal.

Within the value activity she responded in terms of community values rather than individual, although she did discuss those as well but only in the sense that an individual could support the family or community through their own sense of value. As an example she stated she was only ‘ambitious’ for her people, not herself. Bobbie was the most immersed in her own culture, and always a delight to meet for any kind of discussion. As she says within her ‘story’ our talk was sweet and we both left our discussions refreshed.
Brenda was unable to confine herself to a single collage. The image on the previous page was actually A3 size and reduced for presentation as this title page. Her second collage was also A3 size and constructed after she begged me to let her complete another collage because she could not fit anymore images on the first one. Not content with the two A3 presentations, her final collage was constructed as A4 because she could not let go of the last pictures she had collected and felt they were essential to her story. In accordance with her wishes these collages are also presented.

Brenda Collage 2:
8.1.6.1 Brenda’s ‘found narrative’

I am a good listener, I like to laugh, I have commonsense. This is very important, not many people have that, I like cuddles and affection. I think that just about covers it. My piano teacher described me as gifted. I neglected it for a number of years. And I don’t have many regrets, but I have that regret, because I did neglect it. Because she actually said to me ‘you are perfect’ because I should have kept it up and because I didn’t keep it up, I haven’t had that stimulus over the years and I have kind of lost it. It is interesting because I am losing my hearing, so eventually I just don’t know. But with singing, I had five weeks of vocal training before I sang at my wedding, and my vocal teacher said that if I had taken it up earlier, like as a kid, it was brilliant, you would have made it in the industry, that’s what she said. But I’m not going to try out for idol or something because could not handle being famous, I could not handle being in the spotlight like that, having other people rule my life, because that is what happens, they tell you what to do, it is not really your career then, not really your life, you lose control. That’s what it is, I have to have control.

I have been married three years and one month in four days but have no children. We are business owners in finance; I have previously been in Teaching, vet nursing, and childcare. My highest qualification is a Bachelor of Honours. I did advanced English in high school, and the rest of it, I don’t know if I would class it as anything out of the ordinary, it was just normal at school. I was always in the choir. I was just a part of this choir, we sang at the opera house, but I can’t remember how selective it was. Ancient History I topped the district; Martial Arts 2nd in Australia at a tournament; Pool [referring to game like snooker] I won a trophy at a tournament. I scored 170 on an I.Q. test, but 160 is average, so not really gifted. Actually, this is really strange, I came 3rd out of 70 something people in Year 10 for maths. English has always been my strength, and over the years…You know how before they would say that people who are good at English are so so at Maths, right and vice versa. Well they have come up with the fact that you can be good at both areas, whereas when I was at school you could only be really good in one area.
I have one half-sister and two half-brothers, but I am the youngest, technically only child. Because my sister is from my mum’s first marriage and my brothers are from my dad’s first marriage. My sister is 18 years older than me, and my brothers, they are forty year old twins. One is overseas. I don’t really talk about them, there is nothing much to say. I was pretty solitary, not just in the sense I was an only child. I grew up on a farm, my parents were always working and I was always spending time with the animals, I didn’t really get a chance to know my parents, so I don’t think I was close to them at all.

My dad, I don’t really see him anymore, I didn’t see him for about five to six years, for a long time, and now I haven’t seen him in a couple of years, again. With my mum, yeah I think we have gotten a bit closer over the years. I think we got closer again when I moved out. Because we weren’t in each other’s faces all the time, because we used to get the shits with each other. Yes, because she was just always there. My mother is very motherly, OK, and when I say motherly, she is very protective, she is very, make sure you lock the door, make sure you do this, lock the door I’m going now, you don’t have to come outside with me. You know always wants to kiss me on the forehead, things like that, she hasn’t really adapted to being a friend of mine, like a friend and a mother, she is just being a mother, she hasn’t been able to let go of the fact that I am her youngest child, never, and I mean protective when we were living together, it has always been like that, because she didn’t agree with some of the things I was doing, but that comes back to her being motherly.

I was educated in Australia predominantly, but when I was five I lived overseas for six months in Czechoslovakia, Czech republic and I had the option, I remember this, I had the option of going to school there or not, and I went there, I think I lasted two weeks and I didn’t like it so I said I’m not going back. I still remember the doors and, a few other things. Well in Australia you don’t get it so much where you sit at your own little table by yourself. Back then all the tables were like that, you didn’t have groups or anything like that. I am probably talking now from a teacher’s perspective because I would never group a classroom like that, but I don’t know if that bothered
me at the time. I didn’t like that, walking in probably too structured, I don’t remember what else exactly I didn’t like, because I was only five, but I just didn’t like that. So then I started school in Australia speaking no English. So I learnt English in school.

I nearly got kicked out, my mum told me, and I said what! What do you mean I nearly got kicked out, and she said ‘you weren’t listening’ and I said ‘right’ [sarcastically]…. and she said well you couldn’t speak English and they thought you weren’t listening so they nearly kicked me out. Well my mother wasn’t that great at English either! And my sister didn’t come to Australia until she was 10 or 11, so she knew a bit more English and did most of the translating by then, but my mum’s English now is probably better than it ever has been or ever will get. But she did explain that ‘she is not understanding you’ because ‘hello’ she doesn’t speak English, but NESB wasn’t as big a topic then. My mum actually told me she had to try and convince them to leave me in the class. She said she had to somehow try to encourage them to keep me there, she really didn’t want me to get kicked out, all because I wasn’t listening, well OK, I wasn’t listening because I couldn’t understand you. Yes, but this is 25 years ago now.

I get confused, because I have seen so many pictures, I don’t know whether it is a memory I am actually having or if it is the photo and the possible actions I could have done based on that photo I am remembering. For example, my mum has absolutely no dress sense, someone should have sent her to Milan or Paris or something, to get some fashions sense or something. Because I used to have a skivvy, white skivvy with red tomatoes all over it. All it had was tomatoes, I hated that skivvy, in primary school I had jellybean shoes, now this is no good mate, not a fashion statement. And I remember looking at this photo from when I was little, I was probably about, I think I was three or four, I think I was four. And there was my curly hair and there’s my tomato bloody skivvy. And I remember thinking God I hate this skivvy, and I remember, this is the thing, I don’t know if it was an actual memory of what I did, or something I pictured that I could have done, running around in that skivvy.
I used to get teased because of the colour of my skin, because I was too white, I mean you can’t bloody win can you, you are either black and you’re a bloody nigger, or you’re white and you are snow white or casper, you can’t win! So I was teased because my skin, it was too white, I was teased because of my hair it was too fuzzy and curly, and I was teased because I used to wear my socks knee high because that is how I liked to wear them, so I was teased because of that. Because they thought I was a goody goody or goody two shoes, because if I wore my knee highs I was a goody goody. And I remember having, we used to play elastics at school. I wasn’t too bad at elastics, and then one day everyone forgot to bring their elastic, I was the only one who had brought the elastic to school all of a sudden I had best friends! I literally had a line of people wanting to jump the elastics, it was a line, and I found myself in control for a minute, and I remember that because I was going ‘yes you can play’ and ‘no you can’t’, ‘no, you’re not next’, ‘you’re next’ I remember directing people, so I had a bit of control then, and it comes down to me today wanting that control, so I’m not helpless or anything. So I remember that clearly. I had that in class, can you help me with this, can you help me with that, but at lunch time no, didn’t want a bar of me then, because what was I going to do for them at lunch time?

I had a good teacher in high school, she was Greek, she believed in me as a person, I remember I did a presentation once, mind you I am only 15 at the time and I got 10/10 for the presentation, and I will never forget her comment, she wrote ‘a born teacher, exclamation mark, exclamation mark’. I started another school in Year 7 and I sat in the library by myself, because I wasn’t that good at socializing, I think my social skills needed a lot of developing, and that stems I think from English being my second language, where I didn’t know how to approach people and with nearly being kicked out and everything and being accused of talking and getting the ruler, that sort of thing.

Even my wedding, there was so much stress leading up to it, how can I associate that with being happy. The day was quite good, but organizing the wedding, but on the day not only did I not get drunk at my own wedding, which I was hoping I would have a little more to drink than I did, I didn’t even go to the toilet the whole night,
and had only two or three glasses of scotch, and maybe one champagne, see
normally, see I wasn’t relaxed, I was happy but I was making sure everyone is OK
and everyone is alright, and then I had to bloody sing and I was so nervous with that,
and then I did sing and was even more nervous now it was over, and I can’t say that
that was the happiest because there were so many other factors, and I really can’t
think of even one time in my life where I can truly say was a happiest memory. I do
remember a lot but it was more negative than positive.

I remember sad times. I remember my parents fighting, I remember seeing my Dad
cry and I had never seen him cry before. I remember my abuse as a child, I
remember telling my Mum and her not believing me. It happened here [Australia].
My sister was abused as well, and my mum didn’t believe her, and my sister has
never ever forgiven her, whereas me, although I won’t ever forgive her, I can’t hold
it against her for the rest of my life, and I can’t let it rule my life. Whereas my sister
being a different person, has let it rule her life to the point where it has become self-
destructive. My sister has just never been able to move on, whereas I have to a
certain degree, I mean sometimes I still get my days where I am really depressed and
feel really bad and really down. But my husband has been a really good support in
that way, luckily, but it doesn’t rule my life. I think, sometimes I regret getting
married, and being with the same person since I was so young, because it has
stopped me from doing things in life, like, by now, I would’ve been probably in a, I
would’ve lived overseas for a while, done my travelling, you know, done so many
things but I haven’t been able to.

But I can pick my friends, and they have actually become more important to me than
my family has, because I have never seen the importance of the family unit because I
never had that, never had the importance of doing things as a family, never had the
Sunday gathering or outing…I’m going to be very different as a parent than what my
growing up was, have family things, very different. I do want balance, but what I
want and what I get are two different things I’m not balanced, I could do with a bit
more happiness too. But then when I’m with friends, sometimes there’s a lot of well
there’s a lot more humour, right, and you’re not required to be smart. And
Sometimes people will think if you’re entertaining in that way I think people might look at you and think to themselves ‘oh well she’s not really intelligent, she’s just you know average, or goofy, or whatever, right, but then they see you do something and they all, all of a sudden become analytical.

And I would say because, my mum, my parents were one of those people who would always say, ‘you have to get an education, it’s very important’. So it was always important, and my dad being a labourer didn’t have a lot of education but my mum had a lot of education, she’s really smart my mother, she worked as an engineer in Czechoslovakia, she can do scientific notation in her head, my mother. But my Dad, he’s not really intelligent, I don’t think. I know that’s interesting, but he’s not business minded, or cash minded, or…We had a good talk a couple of weeks ago me and my mother, and we got closer and I realized that she has hard life, she has had a tough life, and she is a strong woman to have been through everything she has been through. I see that, but my sister doesn’t see that, she resents her, resent the hell out of her.

Sometimes I just pretend. My first supervising teacher said to me ‘you have to be an actress’ and I’ve never forgotten it. I’m not pretending now, but sometimes I just can’t go out of the house because I just can’t pretend. I can’t pretend to be cheerful, that I can’t do, I am either cheerful and happy really, or down and shitty or something, but I can pretend to some extent so people can’t see how bad I am, but being cheerful, that I can’t do. Some days I do, but then, when my depression sets in, I don’t, oh no I don’t.

8.1.6.2 Interpreter’s response

Of all the participants Brenda worried me the most. Brenda was a conundrum, she was strong and yet immensely fragile all at the same time. Her allusion to ‘her depression’ understates how significantly this issue affects her life. Nor does she detail her distress at losing her hearing, which will destroy her precious singing voice. Brenda was not nominated as a gifted singer though; she was nominated as a
gifted teacher. But at this point in time she no longer teaches because of the political mind plays in the staff rooms. Her husband is immensely supportive, and she has constant counselling to address her depression, and at first meeting she seems outgoing and tenacious.

The way she selected her own pseudonym was quite amusing. After several attempts to find a name beginning with ‘Queen Lafitte’ and other discarded examples she decided to ask a nearby workman what his name was: He replied, “Brendan”. Good then I’m ‘Brenda! And I don’t like the name ‘Brenda’ either. There was a Brenda I went to school with and I hated Brenda’ (Brenda, 2006). This auspicious beginning set the tone for our ongoing relationship. Every session with Brenda was exhausting, because we were usually splitting our sides laughing by the end of each interview.

In one sense the humour and sarcasm appears to be a front, there is something so immensely fragile about Brenda when she is discussing her child abuse and relationship with her parents, that it simply makes your heart ache. And yet, the wit is razor sharp, and every question asked was parried and returned. She often argued that I was asking the questions inaccurately. For example, I asked her to describe her ‘self’, and she said she ‘was a good listener who liked to laugh’, and then said I should have asked her to describe her appearance – unless I truly wanted a description of ‘self’! She continued to ‘split hairs’ over various statements, questions and discussions throughout our exchanges. Within the value study Brenda said ‘citizen’s arrest’ for citizen, and then debated the concept of a citizen. When asked via email whether she believed in ‘Angels’, her response to a typographical error was brilliant; “Well, I’ve never heard of guardian ANGLES – I can’t remember the last time an obtuse angle tried to help me out in a bad situation!”

Her response to the value activity was also fascinating; she deliberately picked the card in a deliberate colour order – Purple, Orange, Green, Yellow, Red, and Pink. She then repeated this throughout the entire activity. Brenda said she was not fastidious, pedantic, or in any way fussy, and yet constantly fiddled with her collage placement, and the card stacks to make them neat/perfect, and appeared to be totally
unconscious of this. The perfectionism evident in the construction of the collages is
gifted trait (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) and resulted in her completing three,
and being totally unable to choose which one to use, which is why all three collages
have been presented here.

There are elements of European culture present in her collages, and a great love of
animals, along with several icons from popular culture. Brenda does not seem as
bound by her cultural origins as some of the other participants. But much of the text
relates to gender issues, and issues of self-control, quitting smoking, losing weight
and restricting alcohol. These are issues which will be discussed in more detail in
Chapter Nine.
8.2.7 THE DETERMINED ONE – ZAYNAB
8.1.7.1 Zaynab’s ‘found narrative’

I am a middle aged mother of several children, which is my greatest achievement to date, mother of several and teacher. I am a school principal at the moment, but I want to move into academia, reading, writing and speaking. I’ve been described as being good at being stubborn and I’m determined. I completed an I.Q. test but they wouldn’t let me know the results of it.

A lot of people find it very hard to understand me, so therefore they can’t put me in a box to say that I’m good at it. In terms of what drives me, and why I do the things that I do, I’m a bit of an enigma to most people, they sort of stop, and when they hear what I’m doing, anything about my life, you see them quizzically looking at you trying to work you out. Because you don’t fit a category; I mean you’re a Muslim, you’re a convert, you’re a mother with a lot of kids, you’re a teacher, you’re a principal – you don’t fit any category that they know of, and they have a lot of difficulties. So the answer is no not gifted but weird. Gifted usually comes in the area of academic brilliance.

So I feel that I have a gift, but whether that gift is something which is a combination of things that have happened, or whether it’s something which is a privilege rather than an innate ability. I try and explain to my kids why I’m not going to be a normal mum, or a normal grandmother and why I believe that they shouldn’t be normal kids. I don’t think that I’m gifted but I may have a collection of things that are useful at the time that other people don’t have. I dabbled in everything, but I wasn’t brilliant at anything, and I in fact when I was in year seven, I was a very disturbed kid at school, very, very disturbed.

I was put out to boarding school when I was five. My parents were going through a divorce in New Guinea. I think it was probably illegal. Cause I was the only one at that age. I was five; you know I was five and a half, so you know I was the only one that age. The nearest to my age was in year three so about two years older. It’s funny
they all knew how to read and write and I was still learning the alphabet. And also I missed my family terribly, absolutely terribly, being in boarding school I remember the horror of hearing planes go overhead and waiting for my parents. I could hear the droning of the planes and it was just that sort of mental connection, to going away, to seeing them.

I remember standing in front of the cupboard watching her [mother] hose the garden down stairs, and the tears rolling down my face and packing because she told me I had to leave. I know I was very distraught. I was in boarding school here, but my parents were in New Guinea. So I had to fly there on my own. I was handed over to a stewardess or something, got these little packets on the plane. The horrible things you get at a boarding school, being in a class where you can’t do the work, having people show you round and the actual boarding life, and having to eat kidney and throwing up and not being able to have ice cream if you threw up and it was only once a week, and people telling you off for doing things and a bit of abuse that I suffered there from the students, the older ones, which was sexual and none of my family knows about it. It is something people don’t want to know about. I felt a lot of very hard times in those early years, from both my mother and the school, the boarding school and the teachers, shocking times, just one whole nightmare.

And I continued on with the nightmare until I was fifteen, it was actually every day I was coming home very distressed, everyday till I became a born again Christian. I gave my life to God when I was fifteen, and I feel he did many things to save me, so the gift that I have is that he reached into my life and, I don’t normally go this spiritual, he reached into my life, so I feel my life has is a gift, and everything that’s happened to me is a gift, and so therefore I have to use whatever he’s given me, in return.

From seven I lived with my mother, we moved when I was eight and moved to Sydney, and then it was just her and I together, and I tried to recoup those missing years, and tried to catch up, but I was a very distraught child and I don’t think
anyone ever realised because I was on the outside very happy and determined to be positive, but at the same time trying to convince everyone I was worthwhile. I often say to my kids because of what happened when I was young I was trying to prove myself until I was 40. And I had done so much I didn’t have to prove myself anymore but I had got in the habit of doing so many things just to prove that I could do it.

When I was at the boarding school I got isolated going home on the weekend, on the few weekends I was let out, then it was only me, I didn’t know anybody else. And when I was with my mum, again there was only me. My brother would come home from boarding school and we’d fight like cat and dog so I just pretend I was going out and looking after the animals or doing something, so I’d just go out and climb a tree and sit up there, it was beautiful.

I attended normal school from seven and stayed at school until I was 18 and did my HSC and then left home. I have never related to any teacher. I never seemed to, I honestly cannot remember a teacher who I felt approached me or understood me they just ignored me and I ignored them and I went about my business With school, I never fitted in, I never had close friends, ever. Then I lived in a boarding house while I did my university apprenticeship at Sydney uni and then went to Queensland. I wanted to be a marine biologist, so went to study Marine biology, because I loved science, I really loved science, and when I was there the lecturers were teaching us about pickled fish, and they couldn’t swim, I decided you have nothing to teach me so I left it, so ridiculous with how far out of date the lecturers were. I was educated here [Australia], except for Indonesia, where I got my initial training as a Muslim, but through a village person, the professor, the one in the village. Very good man, knew a lot, very humble person, he had the time for me and he gave it to me, which was great.

I used to do a lot of long distance swimming and I used to do scuba diving up on the Barrier Reef – before I became Muslim, after I became Muslim it was a lot harder.
I’ve done lots of things but I never got any recognition until just recently and then all the recognition started to come through. It’s crazy and one of the funny things is that whenever I get an award lately somebody, and I never have it in my CV, but somebody keeps on referring to my swimming. I think stop getting hung up on my lifesaving! But if you get a big head it is bad news, I hate getting a big head, and my husband is very good at making sure I lost it very quickly.

I was married in the early seventies to my first husband, then divorced in the early nineties, then I married again a few years later. My youngest son is from the last one, he is the only one with more than ten half brothers and sisters. My first husband was a Catholic, he became Muslim too, otherwise we wouldn’t have still been together, I converted in the mid-eighties, we had only been married a few years when I converted. And the interesting thing was my family was Anglican or Presbyterian or whatever. When I was bought up my mum used to go on about how these Catholics, they have overcrowded schools and they don’t bathe their children and how they are all dirty and unclean and everything else and so of course when I married, I married an Irish Catholic!

I left home at 18 and said she was a bad mother, which didn’t go down very well. It was probably about two years before we reconciled. I felt really bad about it afterward but I didn’t recant at all, I always stuck by the fact that the emotional support that I desperately needed, she had been unable to give me, and because of that I always felt she had been an insufficient mother, and I recognized the fact that she had dedicated all of her life, without marrying again and without doing anything to impeded her ability to look after me, but I didn’t need the physical side, I needed the emotional side and she was incapable of giving it. She destroyed me internally, totally challenged all my self confidence. I think it was that lack of emotion with her mother meant she didn’t have the skills. She didn’t know how to do it and she didn’t know it was needed. And she didn’t want to recognize the damage that had been done through the divorce and the boarding school; she didn’t want to know about it because she couldn’t deal with it.
I have one brother, two years younger, who I haven’t seen for two years now, we don’t cross paths unless I make the effort to go up and see him, or we meet occasionally at my stepmother’s, my father’s house. But his wife doesn’t really like me. That kind of culture, wealthy middle class, Anglo, doesn’t explain themselves, they just don’t make you feel particularly welcome, just turns away and doesn’t really see why anyone would have anything to do with ethnics, I am part of other, not part of us and she has never really engaged me in any conversation, it is as though I am distasteful to the family.

I don’t think I handle things as responsibly as I should, whether it’s my family or my kids think I’ve done a good job but responsibility carries all these issues about really, accountability and not taking so many risks. If we take a lot of risks, it’s not really responsible so I see risk taking as the opposite of responsibility. I don’t feel free until I can resign my job, don’t have the kids. I don’t know if I can ever be free really, because there are always your obligations – your husband.

But the relationship I’ve got now with my husband is very different. I’ve had to completely learn, I’ve sort of been through a few relationships, he is a completely different kind of person in culture, attitude, you know, the things that make the relationship, everything is completely different. He’s really very much a control freak and a typical Lebanese control freak, a typical Arab, and I just didn’t realise it but he was subtly rubbing my nose in it, asking if I could do it and then I realised that he was controlling me in a way I didn’t agree with and I didn’t accept it so I just kept on gradually resisting, resisting and then developing up the ability to be assertive and it took about 10 years to finally get to the point where you know, I could say what I thought and there would be the usual brouhaha but it would be reduced and I got to the point where I just emotionally cut off. But it’s unfortunately something that you’ve got to do because otherwise you live in fear or you get affected or you. So I just live for the sake of the peace in the relationship but I don’t have any, I have no emotional connection which is terrible – It’s terrible, but at least that way you are safe!
I love, I like growing flowers and gardening and I like to be creative in my dress, and in my writing and lots of ways, and I wanted to paint but I haven’t got to it yet. I’m trying to get to it… I’m going to come back and do that. And I love interacting with the kids, I love inspiring kids, I love achieving. I love the teaching. I had to learn how to enjoy things, I was too afraid to have pleasure. And I would find lessons as I go along, you have to make mistakes to be able to understand where you went wrong.

8.1.7.2 Interpreter’s response

Again the choice of pseudonym states much about the participant. Zaynab selected her name because she felt it had resonance. Zaynab is the name of one of the prophet’s wives, and in all areas Zaynab’s Muslim beliefs were an underlying thread. Her title, the determined one, is an attribute she gives herself, however she is a force to be reckoned with. Somewhere between an immeasurable force and an immovable object, Zaynab can move mountains, and has many times to support her Muslim community.

Within our interactions we had many theological discussions and each of us learnt something from the other without ever feeling the need to disagree. Intelligent and witty, conversations stretched both of us on an intellectual level. Throughout the interviews it was difficult to keep Zaynab on track; she often ran off at tangents and initiated other discussions, almost as if she were interviewing me. Quite peripheral issues became long tales, as within other interviews, but Zaynab did this the most.

The excerpt of her ‘found narrative’ does not provide a complete picture of this very determined woman, particularly as this was the only participant capable of actually shocking me. Much of Zaynab’s story has never been told before, such as her graphic discussion of prior drug use which will be discussed in Chapter Nine. Nor has she discussed her sexual abuse at boarding school with anyone else, particularly
not her family. I fully expected Zaynab to remove those references and discussion points when she ‘member checked’ the transcripts, and yet she did not.

After considering all that she had said in the interviews carefully, she asked me to explain the ethical guidelines of the study in great detail. She checked that every document I sent her was properly locked with a password, and every identifier was removed from the transcripts and constructed narrative. She explained her concerns:

> I don’t mind after I am dead if these things come out, and there are a lot of things that I think are really critical, but they involve people that are close to me and because you are still working with them or they don’t realise what they have done, and it is good to share it, but when you are alive it is so traumatic to have people read this is what you thought about such and such, and in fact it is very important, and I have often thought I would like to write a lot and have it there for people to read after I am dead (Zaynab, 2006).

This to me was a clear message, make your ethics tight, ensure anonymity and confidentiality, because this very brave woman was sharing her secrets with me and that was a risk for her. Another crucial point to consider was that, as with some of the other participants, Zaynab was very well known in her community and placed in a position of considerable trust. For members of her community to find this very staid and well respected Muslim woman had a past that involved some promiscuity and significant drug use would utterly destroy her reputation.

Because of this, dates are quite vague within Zaynab’s narrative and discussion. The number of children she has, their ages, the exact dates she was married and her true current career choice have been subtly altered. This does not detract from the essence of the story, there are no actual lies presented within but Zaynab needed protection within the study to ensure her brutal honesty did not backfire.

Zaynab is a busy woman; she has several children and significant responsibilities. She displays the multipotentiality as described by Kerr (1994), however she seems also to be affected by the ‘boredom-challenge-frustration continuum’ (Kerr, 1994), and as such constantly fills her time with numerous important tasks. Therefore her
considerable effort to find the time to participate in the study is noteworthy. Zaynab never rushed the process, although I sometimes had to wait whilst she tended to a child, or answered a telephone call from a colleague. Zaynab’s collage is a hand drawn sketch rather than an actual collage, and it is presented as an actual timeline of her life. There are cultural icons present, and text to explain the meaning behind each symbol. Zaynab was quite proud of her collage, and had obviously put considerable effort into its completion. Because of its built in timeline we were able to use it as a guide to illustrate errors within her timeline when we reviewed this prior to constructing the ‘found narrative’.
8.2.8 THE DREAMING ONE – TIFFANY
8.1.8.1 Tiffany’s ‘found narrative’

I am open, honest, to a degree, friendly, think way too much, really think way too much. Love my books, love culture, love art, so interested in people, I just find people interesting and think everyone has a story. I honestly think I am one of those ordinary run of the mill people. Everyone has done so much with their lives, traveled and done so much, mine is so not interesting, I haven’t done anything, not gone everywhere and I don’t think I am ever going to cure cancer. All my life people have thought I was interesting because I talked a lot, I read a lot, knew stuff about stuff. I don’t get it though; it’s not hard to read a book. And I have this friend that I went to school with and he is very much like me and we tell jokes, and someone was telling me off for reading Oedipus and they said ‘well that is their complex’ and I just killed myself laughing, and everyone went ‘what do you mean’ and they just didn’t get it and it just makes me feel stupid then because everyone else didn’t get the joke.

For instance if you watch Frasier, and there is really highbrow humour in there and you watch it with people and they don’t get the joke. Well people treat you like your trying to be too smart, and I hate that. Like I am being pretentious or something, and I have to dumb myself down just to get along with people. In the early years with my husband I found when I get angry, that’s when all my reading comes out and he would sit there and we would end up laughing because he would say, ‘I have no idea what you are yelling at me about’ because he wouldn’t understand it. After the first two sentences he tunes off because he doesn’t understand what I am saying.

And people think that I am weird or kooky, I don’t know how to explain it, because I will tell jokes and they are about something I have read, or something I just understand, and I think it is really funny and people just look at me and I think how can you not find it funny. There are mainstream jokes that I tell that I think are funny and I completely understand why people don’t get them. Especially people with money, they have privilege and money, I had friends whose parents are doctors or lawyers, and they had everything. Like I was really annoyed when a friend when to Paris and she was standing under in this photo and she said we went to this thing,
and it was the Arc de Triomphe, and I think how do you not know this, you were standing there, you have privilege you have money, how can you not know this, but they don’t care. And I get it from my own family, of you know Tiffany, thinks she is better than the rest. It just aggravates me.

I am married with three children. I was a waitress, and a cleaner I worked in an old people’s home, cleaning up shit from the floor. That old people smell. I liked it when it was clean. It was boring. And I guess that’s why I didn’t like it, not because it was yuck but because it was boring, I was just so bored. You do the same thing everyday and your brain starts to close down.

In the first place we lived with Nan for a time, she always smelt like moth balls. We bumped around to family to family and country towns and were always moving. When I was young we went to live with my grandfather and he molested me, and I have felt for a long time that I feel the root of my problems come from that time, all my problems come from my childhood. And it was all the stuff imbedded in me, fear confusion, etc these are all the memories I have of the first twenty years, and just that road of trying to get past it. When I woke up one day when I was nineteen and saw myself in the mirror and realised I was going to die or end up in jail and I moved to another state and quit drugs, well all except pot, and that is why down here I have my independence and started to get myself back together again.

I have two half sisters and a half brother. I don’t see my brother because his mother doesn’t like him to be in contact with ‘Black bitches’. He is my father’s child. My dad has another daughter, and we are not very alike, she doesn’t have custody of her children, and it just annoys me, she just can’t get her life together, she has kids, she is over in Perth. And I have my mother’s other daughter but we aren’t much alike either. Isn’t it funny, that the one who had the hardest life actually got themselves together and the others who had it easier just can’t get it together.

My biological dad he’s fully white Australian. They came out on the first fleet. He never lived with us, Mum got pregnant when she was sixteen and had me when she
was seventeen and he wasn’t part of the picture. My Dad, he’s been my stepfather since I was four and I class him as my absolute father. I only call him stepfather just so you know what I’m talking about. I call him my father cause I think it takes more than sperm; he’s done the hard yards. I didn’t have a dad, and because our family has so many females my feel it was just always women, women looking after women, and doing all the stuff that men would do cause they weren’t there.

With Mum it was either beat the shit out of you or cuddle you. One extreme to the other. With Dad I was very close to him, but still had the anger because he wasn’t stopping what she was doing. As a child you can’t connect that and I am close to him now and with Mum I force myself to be close. Because she is the only Mum I will ever have and I have seen enough people where they are not close to their parents and live to regret it. And I think it is also a mental thing too, where I want to prove I am over it and I can get on with it and not have to live through it. Like a challenge to myself. Do you know what I mean?

At 14 they took her parental rights from her [mother]. I went to the school and told them what was happening but they didn’t want to be involved. I would have been about 12, and only because I started going to other friends’ houses and started to see that what was happening at home wasn’t necessarily happening in other people’s house. I think when you get a bit older you start to see it, and other parents and the school didn’t want to get involved. I ran away once and they brought me back again. Then when I was 14 we had this big fight because I took 50 cents our of the tin to catch the bus because it was raining, and it was like when you give birth, that sudden rage and clarity.

And I remember having this fight and she went to hit me and I remember pushing her and I felt like years older, because I knocked her down, and I told her you will never put your hands on me again, and then I ran because I knew she was going to get me. And next to the flat there was a vacant lot and she was screaming at me, and swearing, and it felt like hours, but only really a few seconds, and I looked at her and
looked away and looked back at her and then I just ran. Off you go girl and it was liberating.

I was on the streets about four weeks, but I knew when all my friends’ parents worked, so I would shower at their houses and stuff. Then I was placed in a refuge, and my friends and their parents were really good and gave me clothes and makeup and stuff. But then the roof leaked and we moved to another refuge and then someone stole the stuff while I was away. Then the guy who ran the place got a bit friendly, I was sleeping on the lounge, he picked my hand up and put it on his penis, and I did the whole I am stirring in my sleep thing and pulled my hand back and then got up and ran away. Then I told D.O.C.S [Department of Community Services] I couldn’t stay there so they put me in a foster home. And then made me a state ward and I was there for two and a half years.

It was just mind blowing. Here I was a girl that just moved from the country, and then in the city lived in the flats, we had nothing and it was just mind blowing, I thought everyone just ate sausages and mashed potato every night. And to go there where they had a pool and an upstairs and a downstairs, and a good front room, and people lived like this? And their kitchen was all tiled and there were no cockroaches. And they had books. People encouraged you to study, they thought that what you did in life was get ahead and do something for yourself, their main ambition in life was not to get knocked up and get the pension. It was mind blowing, there was this whole other world I had never seen. My foster mum would take me to the art gallery and then we would have lunch in a restaurant and discuss the work with me. At the dining table we would talk about politics, and art, rather than people fighting about whether someone farted in bed. I don’t mean to sound like a snob. It was the first time in my life I felt I fitted in somewhere. If I talked about books at home Mum would be ‘Oh you think you are so good’. And my foster Mum if we went to a wedding, she would buy me something and say you need to look after you décolletage and taught me how to look after yourself, and wear high heels and look present yourself in a certain way. It was like going to another country.
They had three children, but they were each married before and had four children each and their partners ran off together, so they got together and had three more. It was huge you should have seen Christmas. They used to do short term foster only, but years later I found out they thought I had a lot of promise, so they wanted to keep me and make sure I actually had a life. I talk to her [foster mother] every mother’s day and talk to her about stuff about every 1 or 2 months. But I didn’t stay there. It was my past coming back, and I fell in love and then I got into the pot. But then I fell in love and he got me into needles. And then I moved out and my foster mum just lost it, you aren’t going to go anywhere with this guy, you aren’t going to be able to go to uni and we will support you and pay for it, you can have a great life, what are you doing? And I think I had to go through all of it to deal with my past, I think I had to deal with those demons that still were biting at me, I just had to go through that and come through the other side. I can’t let anyone rescue me, I have to do it myself, I just went through a bad period where I just didn’t like who I was, and there was so much expectation on me, and I had never had that before, and when you don’t have expectation you can stuff up your life and no-one is going to care, but when everyone is rooting for you and saying you can do this and you can do that, you are so scared of success, you just go nuh, and I was so scared that even if I tried I would fail, so I just stuffed it up, and oh well I stuffed it and there is nothing you can do now.

The school that I went to when I was in the foster home was a selective high school and I had to pass an exam to get into there, and this only came about because I was a state ward, and every six months I had to have an IQ test, and on the basis of that they wanted me to get a scholarship. The last one I got was an I.Q. about 137. I was expected to go to uni because I was good at school and I think because of that I fought against it. You know, wanted to be myself rather than what everyone else thought I should be. It was only when I got my first camera and at the age of twenty-two that I realised what I wanted to do. I would love to go to uni, but it was great when I was twenty I knew everything and now at thirty I feel I don’t know shit!

I did drama, and was quite good at sports, I wasn’t good at team sports, I would rather do something where I could only blame myself, because if I have to blame
you, you will be in shit mate if you let me down. I was age champion at school and I won the city to surf three times. I loved my running and besides it was a good way to get out of the house, I would say I had to train for a cross country, so it got me out of the house. And running is when I am clear, I don’t think, it is like doing an emotional dump. Just the movement calms me. I did well in maths, that sort of thing, maths competitions where I made the top 10 percent, the only thing I kept was my dancing stuff I won a few trophies that sort of thing. The last certificate I got was from a charity where I had tutored a refugee in English and got her to the point where she could attend English classes. And not only that I made a new friend and learnt some of her language, so I got more out of it.

The first couple of years of my twenties was all about love and my husband and building my family and we have my children, but I also had a termination and I named that baby J.J., and he is part of the family too. I am a Christian, and when I became a Christian at twenty-two I really started to look at myself as a person. Since then my past has been let go, and when I become a Christian and I kind of gave it up to God, and all that black crap that I carried around for years I cried it all out and I finally learnt you have to forgive people, not for them, but for me. If an Aboriginal does find faith, then they’re very faithful. I just don’t understand why people have such big faith issues, like I said to my husband I said you have faith everyday. I said you have faith that if you were on a plane that the pilot’s not drunk. You’ve got faith that when you buy food that no-one’s out the back spitting on it. Pretty much my whole twenties has been about my family, that is why it is so simple, because for ten years it has been mostly about the family. I just concentrated on them. Just about them, underneath that is all that it was.

I think I am in this stage of life when it is not about me at the moment, so I think my time is coming. It’s like this beacon of light, my time is coming. I think that is happening right now, I am going through a stage right now where instead of being what everyone expects of me for the last ten years, I am starting to put my foot down and say no I am OK to be who I am, and I think that is age too.
8.1.8.2 Interpreter’s response

Tiffany’s choice of name was insightful. She chose a name she had used when playing make believe as a child, but also because it was the most un-Aboriginal name she could think of. Tiffany was recommended to participate as a gifted photographer, and I wish it were possible to share some of her work within this section, in particular a poignant piece depicting her newborn baby’s hand touching her husband’s rough callused trademan’s hand. But, as she has won a number of competitions, the photographs would be too identifying of the artist.

Interviewing Tiffany was interesting as she had a young baby and for many of our sessions was breastfeeding. Consequently we were constantly interrupted by the baby and the telephone was always ringing so it was often difficult to get back to the thread of the conversation. Nevertheless Tiffany generated the most data. There are several tapes and over 150 pages of transcripts in addition to many emails and several telephone conversations.

One of the reasons for these lengthy conversations was the constant debate over the meaning of words. For instance within the value card activity Tiffany picked the cards randomly with no colour influence but disputed the meaning of several words, said excellence was over rated; integrity was rubbish and had no real definition because it was idealistic not reality; and she thought ethics was something only University students would debate. Tiffany wants security, more for her children than herself but is not interested in prestige or material wealth.

Tiffany was titled the ‘Dreaming one’ because of her dreams for the future, not her Aboriginal background. She is constantly planning to pursue her photography in a variety of ways, has opened several small businesses and had them fold just as quickly. She moves house, and even moves interstate and then back again constantly. Always searching for something better, something more, and yet never apparently finding it.
Tiffany’s ‘collage’ was another drawing, and she apparently worked through several drafts before showing me this one. Again it was a timeline of her life, and the explanation of the collage was the clearest basis of her ‘found narrative’. It seemed she needed the visual prompt in order to clarify her thoughts.

Tiffany and I also indulged in many theological debates although she is quite firm in her Christianity, which confirms her own comment that an Aboriginal once they find faith are very faithful. It is also clear that she has had a difficult life and she cites many incidents of being othered and subject to prejudice which will be discussed in Chapter Nine. However interviewing Tiffany also raised some significant ethical issues as her marriage was breaking up throughout this period.

Although her husband had given full permission for any comment Tiffany stated about him to be used within this study, these comments and statements had to be heavily edited in order to protect both their privacies. Tiffany was not bitter about the break up but quite often would be interviewed directly after an argument or confrontation with her husband, which did tend to colour her responses, so these data needed to be dealt with sensitively.
8.2.9  THE YOUNG ONE – ALEX
8.1.9.1 Alex’s ‘found narrative’

I am 22 years old, single and have no children. I'm proud to be Australian, but I don't think that I'm doing anything extra for the country. I think I'm a cheerful person. I'm not funny but I like to make people cheerful. I would like to be funny, but I just don't think I am. It's a good characteristic to be funny. To make other people feel joyous.

I am not generally smart; I am smart in my key areas. I've got various awards from school - Dux Award in Year 7 and History and a mathematics medal. I do a mixture, in uni I got various awards, distinction and high distinctions, and various martial art awards. I think gifted is like ability you are given, it is natural ability, you don’t have to try. I am the opposite, I feel like I am not gifted so I work my [backside] off. I’d be pleased to be called gifted, but never attended an OC class or selective high schools, or had an IQ test.

I came to Australia from Fiji, from Suva, when I was 2 ½ years old, my brother and sister were born here in Australia. I am the oldest and close to both parents but closer to my mum. I have been back to Fiji three times but have no recollection of being there, nothing was familiar.

My saddest memory is of my parents fighting, they fight quite a bit, they are still together but fight over family issues. Family is really important to me. I never want the family to separate. I was offered the chance to work in America but would not go, it doesn’t matter how much money, it is extremely important, and now my family is getting bigger as well. My Father's a panel beater, I do help him around with odd jobs. We'd do back yard jobs and sometimes I’d go to his work and help him out. Actually I love cars and that's what I wanted to do, but he told me no way, he didn’t want my hands to get dirty.

I feel I’m pretty successful now actually, like to get my job it was hard work, it was out of 110 people....there was just one position and three interviews. It was marks and experience, ‘cause I worked in an engineering company in the past. Yes, marks was extremely important. I did the extra, extra yard I went and learnt totally about
the company like I learnt about the history so any questions they asked I knew the answers, without hesitating. In that field you need to learn about... there's heaps actually to know about, I came in prepared, I studied long. I am a range of frequency design engineer, Project Manager Position, basically a Telecommunications engineer, it's more design work, the technicians go out and put it together. We design test and measure accruements, radar systems, etc. Actually in Queensland, I was at an airline and was offered another job, but firstly it is in Queensland and I am not going to move to Queensland. But they matched the pay and everything and I came back and told my boss and he said please don’t go, don’t go. But I wouldn’t do it anyway, it just comes down to loyalty, and I'm learning a lot and my boss is going out of his way, spending his lunch breaks helping me out.

I'm humble in my job, actually I do a lot of client visits as well, I have to go interstate quite a bit and I find I'm being humble and it works in my favour, because the people I deal with are like the same age as my parents, and even when they are like people my age at least and I'm being humble...Even though when I think they are wrong I wouldn’t… there are ways of telling without them feeling...

It's all changed now, like my car is my prestige and I want a Beamer now and I went and bought a flashy suit …Yes that's right, my corporate image is taking over. That's why I want a $100,000.00 beamer. I want to be rich. I feel like there's a mixture, you can have too much money and not enough happiness. I want that balance and I don't have that balance at the moment actually, I'm chasing money quite a bit at the moment. I think I need to relax a bit, because I work two jobs. What do you do with all this money and life is short. I think I could have more balance in my life. Like relationship and work, like right now it's a bit tricky. Like when I was at uni, I was trying to make time and now work has come along and... But now it's hard because you have to wake up in time you have to get there in time and because I go interstate quite a bit so it’s hard to keep that balance right. There's not enough hours in the day. I come home from work, I go to the gym, come back home, talk to my girlfriend, go to sleep. It's like a routine.
I know what I want to do. Open my own engineering firm. Yes I've planned it out, but I feel you need plenty of experience in that business to know the do's and don'ts and tricks of the trade. I reckon in ten years time I'll open my own engineering company and have people work for me and relax. I think if I put the hard yards in now it'll pay dividends later.

If I could change anything in my life I would go to a different high school. I'd try harder; I would have studied harder in high school. Actually it was the same for year 7 to 12, in uni was when I started debating my study pattern. In high school I was not very motivated, If I could go back I would study harder and go to a better university. Besides first semester when I failed because I was lazy and didn’t go to class and I would hang around the bar, after that I never set foot in the bar again, I just studied and studied. And always got through due to my effort into it, and I would think I should get a Distinction and only got a pass. Right now I'm very proud that I finished university. I'm proud that I'm an engineer. I'm proud that I'm with my girlfriend, that I found the right person and there is always that 'what if' I hadn't got into that university, would I have met her? I wouldn't change anything to be honest. I've had good experience.

8.1.9.2 Interpreter’s response

Alex is the youngest of the research partners and actually said he had ‘no story to tell’ when first contacted, saying, ‘It won’t take long, I haven’t done anything yet’. Yet Alex at 22 years of age, fresh out of the University, is a highly sought after Telecommunications engineer and the nominee was quite impressed with his abilities and dedication. Specifically the nominee said, ‘Watch this space’; and that Alex had enormous potential, far beyond his own expectations.

Alex chose his pseudonym by using the name of a person he admires, however the name appears mainstream in contrast to his own cultural background. His concentration at the moment is split between establishing his career and establishing a home and family with his long time girlfriend. After years of negotiation between
their families they are finally engaged to be married, although Alex must convert to her religion, Christian Orthodox, otherwise she will be shunned by her Egyptian family and community. Fortunately Alex’s parents have agreed to his conversion from the Hindu faith, and his wider community will not ostracise the pair, otherwise these two would be forced to either separate or endure their life together without any family or community support. The compromise has been embraced by the girl’s family as well. They happily don Indian style clothing for celebrations and both sides have learnt to prepare each other’s traditional food and observe respective customs in each other’s homes. I was privileged to be invited to their engagement ceremony where Egyptian and Indian cultures were combined. His Egyptian girlfriend and her sisters learnt traditional Hindu dances to perform at the ceremony, and Alex took part in a traditional Arabic dance as well. Perhaps this meshing of cultures is only really possible in a multicultural country like Australia, as each would have had difficulty in their original cultures/countries in marrying out of their faith/culture.

Alex’s greatest concern is to quickly establish a home to provide safe haven for his younger brother and sister due to his parents’ conflict. He feels responsible for ensuring his siblings are secure and this too was a condition of the marriage. Fortunately the Egyptian culture also reveres family, so his new bride will welcome any and all of his family into their home when required.

Alex is young and idealistic, he sees the future as something that can be created with hard work and refuses to think about adversity disrupting his plans. Although this could be an issue when faced with difficulties in the future, Alex is quite resilient having endured a childhood fraught with the difficulties of family disharmony and much cultural discrimination throughout his brief life. This may be a factor in his insistence that he will not complete further study; the role of student must have been difficult when faced with the other conflicts. In spite of this viewpoint Alex may well change his mind and enrol in a higher degree at some stage as he is ambitious and intends to be competitive in his chosen field, therefore further education may be necessary.
Alex, although educated entirely in Australia, still has some grammatical issues within his speech patterns that highlight English is his second language. Examples in his story are the frequent use of ‘was’ for ‘were’ and ‘is’ for ‘are’, but these small issues do not detract from the essence of his story. Alex is a delightful young man, courteous and respectful with a keen sense of humour. His contribution to the study has involved some difficulty for him, particularly in terms of committing his time, which is scarce.

Despite his own opinion that he is ‘not funny’, we were frequently laughing together during the interviews and activities, and I hope I have the opportunity to maintain some contact and see how far he has climbed in the next decade. At this stage Alex is not terribly concerned for his anonymity as he has no public image to protect, however, in years to come when he becomes as successful as he dreams to be, he may pause to reconsider the information he has shared as a partner in this research. Nevertheless Alex feels he has learnt something about himself, specifically in terms of his own ethical opinions and conflicting religious viewpoints during our discussions within the value activity.

The value cards were picked randomly with no apparent colour influence. Initially Alex could not see the point of the activity, and then he worked through it quite well and specifically commented that he had learnt something about himself and his sense of ethics. His responses to the cards concerning prestige, power, wealth, advancement and ambition, appear to be related to the need to lift him higher in the social order than his parents, something they have actively encouraged him to do. It would be interesting to repeat this activity in a decade or two to see if his responses have changed.

Alex’s collage is quite simply constructed. He explained that it consists of images that represent his lifestyle and current interests. In particular “the ‘Mobile Phone’ was chosen as it symbolises telecommunications … it is the field in which I work and where my interest lies. Plus the mobile phone is utilized every night to talk with
my fiancée” (Alex, 2006). The carrot was chosen to represent a healthy life; the ‘adidas’ spray represented his concern for cleanliness; and the ‘Bend it like Beckham’ represents both his love of sport and the clash between his Indian heritage and mainstream expectations. His collage was a blend of popular culture and the lifestyle of generation Y, but still included his cultural heritage.

When compared to the gifted literature it is apparent that Alex was not identified as gifted at school, and as discussed in Chapter Nine he argues he is not at all gifted, yet is clearly brilliant in his field. There appears no evidence of imposter syndrome (Wells, 2006) in his statement. It is simply that he believes that a gifted person would not need to work as hard as he has; therefore his achievements are due to effort rather than some innate gift.
THE ACCEPTING ONE – SON

This is the Laos Cultural Center. It was built with the donation of the whole Laos community. It is a place of gathering, worship, and a strong spirit of community. I’ve been involved in this project.
8.1.10.1 Son’s ‘found narrative’

I’m from Laos. I have been married about thirty years, I have one girl, thirty-two, she’s finishing her uni this year. In my family I’m the eldest brother and then, I’ve got five younger sisters and five younger brothers. I am Catholic, but my grandfather used to be a Buddhist monk. Now, I just attend the temple.

I am doing community worker. I’ve been here for seventeen years working within the Laos community and it has been different groups of people in the community children, parents, elderly, people with disabilities, problem gambling, alcohol, age care, all types of things in the community – preparing exactly how to build the community, build with all the problems we are getting, with the whole what’s happening with the community because the people coming from Laos, when they get here they speak very little English and very little skills, displaced, left home now because of the fear of prosecution, in need of the immunity so I come here to help them and I can help, I am approachable and I can help people.

I’m not very talented or gifted, nothing particularly gifted, just average. It bothers me a bit because to be gifted – you have to be a bit in the higher…my knowledge should be higher so I can perform much better, faster or different or different from people, a bit different because of your knowledge or intelligence or whatever. Some people, they are really gifted; they go to special school with special teachers.

I used to study law when I was in Laos, Public law, Public administration because as you know people like that they dream that one day they are going to be a politician. So into public administration because of the Royal Institute of Law and Public administration of Laos. I learned English in Laos for one hour a week. My HSC in Laos and after that my diploma in Laos, after that I went to law and got my dissertation as lay teacher.

I left Laos in 1974 and at the time the communist party had just started to take control over the country and then, before I left Laos I needed the signature from the
previous government and the communist government so I needed two signatures just to get out. And then after that I went to Scotland to do my master’s degree in law still. I did the course for three years because the first year you have to study Scottish law because it is different. After that I hung around in London for three years because I don’t know what to do or where to go because I can’t practise law. I can’t because as you know when I did, in Laos, when I did French in Laos, because I was told I can’t go back to practising law doing thing that was in one to the ministries. And I got my degree in Scotland but the first degree was the Laos and I can’t do anything because as you know a master’s degree is just to study a few subjects. One of the subjects I wanted to specialise on was in the first degree so to practise law I would have to start all over again.

My wife, my fiancée at the time, she fled Laos to France and then I left England to go to France and then the same thing as here, when I went there I started to work for a refugee relief fund because people came from Sri Lanka, from Iran, from Indochinese countries you know, like Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia and also African countries and then the same thing as here, when I went there I started to work for a refugee relief fund. I was nearly ten years in France.

After that my brother and sisters, they just came here for their studies. My father used to be in a camp, like a prison, and like a detention camp, and after he was released from the camps he fled the country as well, then my parents they were sponsored by my sister and brother here. I came for holidays from France and then, I was on my own, not on my own but I was the only one from the family in France and then my parents say, my family say, why don’t you come to join the family here and I thought well, why not and then I went back to France and applied for visa, and asked my wife, because my wife – she got her parents in France. They stayed there because in Laos we used French for our studies and work and everything and my father-in-law he used to work for the government, as the tax officer or some high level position he had and so he had to speak French, he spoke French fluently. So I came here for holidays and then after, I went back to France
and then I got a job. I wasn’t much coming here because I said Ok that’s life and that’s quite alright and in Europe you can travel around, at the time we were young, you know.

When I was a child I was in a Catholic boarding school in that country because my father went to war to fight at the front. My father was in the army and then my family got a few people who are doctors in the army so they treat people and it’s quite tragic. My family, they got an engineer too. Building roads and so on in Birok Province because my father was a commander in the area, so many things happen there. Our country was at war at the time and when you want to go to travel or literally need a plane, or when the troops at the front need supplies in the area, my father just ring and so they send trains or planes and then you fly to the frontier.

It was war but we lived far away from the fighting. We had quarters in the city where my father was working so doctors and all the hospitals and all of those things were relatively safe because they only fight when the bombs or helicopters come. But sometimes on holidays usually my mother went with my father from Monday to Friday. But I got my grand-mother and my aunty, extended family. My grandmother, I used to remember one of the things with my grandmother, used to go to church early in the morning with her otherwise there would be trouble. She was very important to me, she was very, very nice, and one of my aunt’s too, she was very, very nice, very careful.

I remember all my friends at school and what we did together at school, us together at school. And also at the boarding school we got to play at some times and I liked some kind of food that my mother knows well and she used to sneak because they used to, we had no bathroom or anything like, we got two big rivers in front of our school and we would go and wash our clothing there and have a shower or bath there, yes in the river, and my grandmother used to come and bring me some pudding – good food. Sometimes I just, instead of staying where we washed our clothes or take a bath I would just take me back to my house to get some food before
I come back. At times when we were not busy we were allowed to go out in a big yard and my house was not far from the school.

That Catholic school, it is very hard, and very tough, with all those Catholic priests at that time, and the food was very bad and the discipline was very strict and we got one month holiday and during that time we met my family, and also at school when we finish our exams, that is the best part. You are happy because you pass, and people had to, you know, you were forced to work hard. They were all very, very tough. The priest, he was approachable. He knows how to teach. They were strict. They wanted us to follow them all the time to do this, do that and follow to them. And also when we sit for exams with all the schools, and we had to be top of the list, and we were, and we were very good at sport and compete with another Catholic school.

We didn’t have any really good playground so we had to play with nature, at that time. Trees and in the mud, we don’t have any jet ski and so on, just play. In our country we have a monsoon season, a lot of water, so we used to go and help people growing their rice. And all the boys would get on a piece of wood and the boys would pull, some friends would pull the board and we would try tobogganing, and the water is just this level [indicated knee], so it was fun.

Saddest, sometimes, when we lost some friends or some friends had to leave school because they can’t continue their studies because of family problems and so on. The poverty as well, some, if their parents die, sometimes they had to leave the school to go work. I think I could have worked harder at school. At boarding school we worked hard because we were forced to do, and then once after, when we were not forced to get more things done in life.

I think the achievement that I did at school, because not many people have done what I have done, I am quite proud of myself, as a person who has achieved something and to use it to help the community. I work just with Laos community now. I feel I
have wasted a lot of time because of the political situation in Laos, I spent a lot of time and energy, spending money and going around, and trying to move around and then getting stuck because I had the wrong bit of paper but still have the language skills to do other things.

I think my career, Instead of doing law, I think I would stick with one country, and maybe be a doctor or engineer. Maybe I can help people, and use my knowledge to help the country, the economy, the community. I didn’t do enough and try and study here, when I came to Australia, just did a diploma in social science, welfare studies.

8.1.10.2 Interpreter’s response

Son was quite surprised to be recommended for the study, but accepted it as he seemed to accept everything that came into and through his life, which is why he was titled the ‘accepting one’. He was recommended as a brilliant worker and consummate problem solver who had worked tirelessly for the community. In the initial stages of setting up the centre he did everything, cooked, cleaned, raised money and counseled anyone who needed assistance. Yet he seems completely unaware of the respect he has earnt in the community. There is something deeply spiritual about this man. He is so very calm in the face of any disaster, which may be a legacy of surviving a childhood in a war torn country. After surviving that experience very little could be comparable.

He is approximately mid to late fifties, but I never did work out exactly how old he was. He is softly spoken and impeccably groomed. Son does not seem to have a heavy accent in person; however the transcription was very difficult. Apart from his very soft voice, the accent and alternative grammar made it very difficult to guess any word that was not clear.

Son approached the value card activity and collage activity with simplicity; he simply completed them without fuss. His collage is all about his community, because the community is centred on the temple and the community centre. This is the centre of his world as well. His response to the value cards reflected those that supported
his community, and supported his community work, a deeply caring man, he has not taken holidays in several years. Son has little faith in his own abilities, and if you point out a strength or particular talent he will disagree that there is anything the least bit special or extraordinary about anything that he does. Again this seems to be a cultural mindset. He is humble and shares all credit with the community rather than claim any for himself.

Son encountered major difficulty with the Characteristic survey (Macy, 1996) and had to ask me to interpret every question. The grammar was plainly too difficult for him, the sentences did not make sense to him, and this greatly effected his ability to complete the survey (excerpt in Appendix A14).

This Chapter presented ‘found narratives’ and the individual collages of the participants with some insight into our interactions. Each of the participants has their own perspective of their culture and background and this has been presented in their own voice. The next chapter will present all their voices and perspectives on a range of topics beginning with their view of giftedness, whether they need to hide or demonstrate their giftedness, leadership qualities and moral sensibilities. Many of these participants display resilience in the face of adversity that is extraordinary. For some it is their spiritual intelligence that has helped them endure successfully and this too will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 9

COLLOQUY:

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GIFTED

Illustration 28 – A research Journey through metaphoric Imagery (Gruppetta, 2006b)
As the participants reside in ‘Gadi Mirrobooka’, meaning ‘under the Southern Cross’ (McKay, 2006), these are the stars most commonly recognised by all. However, this metaphor also signifies the participants’ feeling of always being watched, observed in all they do, literally ‘someone looking over my shoulder’. The stars also refer to the findings regarding the participants’ search for higher meaning, a meaning often sought in the skies, heavens or wider universe. It again signifies the universal striving to reach a greater understanding of phenomenon. Yet on the Australian flag the ‘Southern Cross’ omits the eyes of Mirrobooka from the Dreaming stories in the Eastern States, and displays only five of the seven sisters from the Dreaming story known across most of Australia that is representative of this constellation (Gabriella Possum, 2004).

The other symbol to the right, above the raven, is of a comet. Its presence in the painting has multiple meanings. Firstly it is an example of the peripheral trivia that one can collect in the course of a research journey, for a comet in the sky in the year of my birth has little meaning, although within some cultures it would be considered a significant omen. Secondly ‘sungrazer’ comets “brighten rapidly as they approach the sun and disappear as they are evaporated by solar radiation” (NASA, 1998). Therefore it serves as a reminder to those who try to blaze too brightly, and fly too close to the sun like Icarus, eventually they will be burned. Lastly, as comets are periodical rather than everyday events it reminds us that:

To every thing there is a season,
A time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, a time to die,…
A time to weep, and a time to laugh,…
A time to get, and a time to lose,…
(Book of Ecclesiastes cited in Dillon & Dillon, 1998)

Throughout the research journey the participants recorded these types of epiphanies within the narratives of their lives, and shared tears and laughter with the researcher in the process.
9.1 EXPLANATION OF PRESENTATION

The participants have never met for ethical reasons, and yet it is possible to synthesise the conversation they might have had if they had gathered together to ‘yarn’ about the topics raised during the course of the study. Imagine the participants gathered around a table drinking tea and exchanging ideas. Within my mind’s eye I have recreated this hypothetical situation and will introduce each section of this chapter with a ‘found conversation’ between the participants. The conversation has been created from each participant’s responses to each theme, sharing their comments and anecdotes.

As with real conversations within gatherings of people, in the beginning, when you first introduce yourself to another, there is reluctance, and the conversation is basic and sometimes stilted. As you get to know one another there is more sharing as commonalities are noted and accepted. As the participants move through each theme some will contribute more to the discussion than others as only some topics are pertinent to them. Each of the participants has an opportunity to contribute to each topic/theme and express their views without losing anonymity.

Pictured as a group, sitting around a table conversing the responses become a conversation rather than chunks of raw data. The ‘conversation’ will be followed by a more conventional discussion of the findings, and while that occurs I visualise the participants freezing in time until asked the next topic of conversation is introduced to the colloquy.
Illustration 29 - This collage is a play on the big fish small pond syndrome, and continues the idea introduced earlier of the gifted as ‘other’ with a need for their own separate pond. It also confirms the notion of living in a goldfish bowl, where all actions are observed. It was constructed within Photoshop using a variety of images pasted together. The title of this chapter comes from the participants themselves; many described themselves as ‘weird’ rather than gifted.
9.2.1 DEFINING GIFTEDNESS

In visualizing this conversation between participants I see them walking into the room, sitting down, and then introducing themselves to one another. Each is asked to describe themselves as a way of introducing themselves and breaking the ice:

Researcher: How would you describe yourself?

Harriet: Tall with dark hair. In many ways I am a fairly typical product of Sydney, middle class, long off shore Roman Catholic. I grew up in Sydney but have been living overseas with my family for nine years now, and have studied and worked in a variety of contexts, I have worked in the arts, sciences and humanities.

Esi: Middle aged, middle fat, middle ordinary, middle height, middle colour, boring! I am a scholar, there is no question about it. I can’t fit any more books in my house, I shop around second hand book shops, and I find fascinating detail in the most amazing gunk. I am more observer than watcher. I blend. And I have developed the skill of blending, you learn a lot if you just blend.

Zaynab: Middle aged mother of several. I’ve been described as being good at being stubborn. I don’t fit a category. I am a Muslim, I’m a convert, a mother with a lot of kids, a teacher, I don’t fit any category.

Bobbie: I’m a Maori woman from New Zealand. I am married, and have four sons, I migrated to Australia going on 16 years ago. I’m a social worker by trade, in a paid capacity for 14 years and volunteer capacity for my community for all those years I’ve been here.

Brenda: A good listener. I like to laugh. I have commonsense. I like cuddles and affection.

Son: I’m from Laos. I’ve been here for seventeen years working within the Laos community and it has been groups of people in the community…they left Laos because of the fear of prosecution, are here because of the immunity, so I come here to help them and I can help, I am approachable and I can help people.

Alex: Funny, smart, very sporty, fun loving and sporty.

Mark: I would say 65 year old north European born outgoing businessman.

Tiffany: Open, honest, to a degree, friendly, think way too much, really think way too much. Love my books, love culture, love art, so interested in people, I just find people interesting and think everyone has a story. I honestly think I am one of those ordinary run of the mill people.

Maree: Average looking, not beautiful. Fairly honest, righteous, and I hate injustice.

In each of their descriptions none of the participants mentioned giftedness or even great achievement. Only three of the participants used physical characteristics, although four mentioned their age and four mentioned their place of birth. Three of
the participants mentioned religious beliefs but only three mentioned their family and/or children. It is clear that being a gifted adult is not a concept these participants apply to themselves. The majority see themselves as ordinary people with common characteristics, nothing extraordinary about any of them at all, which makes their responses to being asked whether they have been described as gifted or talented in the past all the more interesting.

Harriet acknowledged she had been identified as gifted but did not describe herself that way, although her I.Q. score was over 135. Tiffany scored slightly higher with an I.Q. of 137, and Esi did score highly on an I.Q. test, but didn’t know the exact score. Brenda scored quite highly with an I.Q. of 170, which would make her a candidate for MENSA (Denko, 1997), but she thought the average score was around 160, so did not perceive herself as gifted. Mark, Bobbie, Son and Alex had never been tested but these four participants had the most difficulty with the questions on the characteristic survey (Macy, 1996) so it is unlikely an I.Q. score would have been truly representative due to the inherent cultural weighting (Howe, 1997).

All the participants were reluctant to describe themselves as gifted, preferring the term intelligent or just being seen as ‘smart’. Some of the participants were slightly flattered by the nomination but all but Harriet were equally embarrassed by the label, it made them uncomfortable to be described in this manner. Equally it was perceived by all that giftedness was something else, something that could not possibly ascribe to them. You needed to be able to ‘cure cancer’ (Tiffany, 2006) or ‘attend a special school with special teachers’ (Son, 2006). All thought you needed to do well academically and that an I.Q. score was all important in defining giftedness. Tiffany’s response, when asked if she minded being called gifted, indicated another viewpoint: “No darling! I have been called much worse in my life I can tell you! No not at all, this is one of the better ones” (Tiffany, 2006). Although a sarcastic response, there was a subtle association to a label of giftedness being an insult!
In terms of defining giftedness within the various cultural contexts some of the responses were fascinating. A representative of the Muslim community described a gifted Muslim as one who was either a great artist, or as the person who could recite the Koran most beautifully (Little, 2007). Zaynab could recite the Koran beautifully, but was actually nominated for her leadership qualities and tireless work for the community rather than any proficiency in recital.

Leadership qualities were described as part of giftedness within the Maori community, linking to Bevan Brown, et al (2008) concept of ‘mana’. And both Maori and Aboriginal Elders described a gifted individual as someone who was ‘wise’ but were unable to explain how such wisdom would manifest. Bobbie was nominated as a person who possessed this elusive characteristic but additionally as a great social worker and leader who had given much to the Maori community. She is also seen as a high achiever because she was enrolled in a PhD. Bobbie’s explanation of how young children were selected as gifted within the Maori community was quite enlightening.

But in the Maori community, it was the job of the elders to teach the children, so what they did was they watched the kids and certain kids who, they would call them precocious. Or stood out for certain reasons, they would watch them. You know they say that they were only little, but they could see these things. Yeah they’d know, it’s almost like a child was different, so what they would do, was the old people would take that child with them. And teach them, and you don’t know what’s happening, but they would they would take that child and then teach them and let them flow. And what would usually happen was that child would either become a minister of the church, or they would become a leader and they were taught the old, old way (Bobbie, 2006).

As far as I can ascertain nothing in the literature mentions this practice, yet Bobbie was raised by her grandmother and taught the ‘old ways’ because of her perceived giftedness, her abilities were needed by her community, therefore she had to be taught the old ways to ensure cultural knowledge was preserved for future generations.

From the Aboriginal community Tiffany was not nominated for her wisdom but rather for her artistic skills in photography. Photography is not mentioned in Gibson and Vialle’s (2007) summary of Aboriginal giftedness, nor does any kind of artistic
ability among Aboriginal people rate highly in any of their research on giftedness. However, the traits consistent with the Aboriginal perceptions of ‘cleverness’ (Gibson, 1997, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007), such as imagination, creativity, insight, memory, communication, etc were included as descriptors by the person nominated Tiffany to be a participant in the study.

Within the Laos Buddhist Community leadership was also prized, although recognized in a different form. Leadership included working tirelessly for the community, and ensuring community values were reinforced. Therefore Son was nominated as he not only worked tirelessly for the community, he also provided a strong role model who was most concerned with preserving the culture and the community. These nominations based on leadership qualities contrast with the literature. Leadership rates highly in many countries but is not perceived to be a gifted trait (Stone, 2002).

Within the Hindu Fijian Indian community hard work was most esteemed, particularly if that hard work allowed you to achieve more than your parents. This point is consistent with the literature on cultural definitions of giftedness, hard work is considered a gifted trait in many countries (Lee & Chen, 1994, cited in Stone, 2002). Alex was nominated as gifted because he had worked hard to achieve a high position in the engineering field at such a young age.

Alex, although part of the Fijian Indian community, disputed the concept of giftedness being related to ‘hard work’. Within his perception of giftedness academic achievement should come easily, without any need to work hard or study continuously:

I think gifted is like ability you are given, it is natural ability, you don’t have to try. I am the opposite, I feel like I am not gifted so I work my arse off (Alex, 2006).

This perception of everything coming easily to the gifted is again part of the mythology (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).
External perceptions of a culture also feed the mythology surrounding giftedness. Two of the participants, Esi and Zaynab, insisted I should interview a Jewish person, as both apparently believed the Jewish community to be the best educated. This raises yet another view of giftedness which relates to academic achievement, but being well educated is not necessarily synonymous with giftedness. Their shared belief that a high level of education displayed a tendency for giftedness relates to the mythology surrounding giftedness, specifically that some cultures or races are more inclined to be high achievers in certain areas:

I kind of find that a lot of the Jewish that I talk to they speak faster than I do. They’re mentally ahead of where I’m at and I like to engage mentally with people. I think genetically everybody has their different strengths and a lot of the Jewish people that I know they have this ability to multitask in their brainwaves…Like Asians they don’t say much but they can think ahead mathematically in huge bounds. Which is why they are good a programming, because they can keep it all in there, but it seems to be with the Jewish, their brains seem to fire really, really fast (Zaynab, 2006).

Again this implies that certain groups have certain talents, and this is part of the mythology of giftedness defined by the Commonwealth of Australia (2001) Senate Report.

Both Esi and Mark were nominated for their communication skills. Esi was nominated as a person gifted in cross cultural communication, whilst Mark was nominated as a business leader, but also because of his interpersonal skills. It was acknowledged by the person who nominated Mark that his talent for communication underpinned his success in business. In both these nominations a Japanese view of giftedness, where the most gifted adult would be judged by their ability to relate to people (Esi, 2006), therefore an ‘Interpersonal intelligence’ (Gardner, 1999) rather than an academic proficiency, was the basis for the criteria. This contradicts Stone’s (2002) finding that creativity was the most revered trait in Japan.

Harriet was the closest to a traditional identification of giftedness, although female. She had a high I.Q., had completed a number of degrees, was extraordinarily talented at mathematics and in musical areas, and was now pursuing theology. Harriet was also the only one of the participants besides myself that had been identified as gifted
at a young age, all the rest of the participants were recognised as gifted only in adulthood.

Although none of the participants really wanted to be labeled as gifted it was apparent from the first meeting that all were highly intelligent and this presented some challenges within the interview forums. There was a perceptible inner analysis of each interview question, and usually a pause before answering, at least in the initial stages before trust was built in the researcher participant relationship. Harriet explained this phenomenon most succinctly:

> Through all of this I feel there are about seventeen layers of self-analysis going on, as I think about what would I like it to be, what is it really, what is it on a good day, what is it on a bad day? What answer would you like it to be? What is structuring all this? (Harriet, 2006)

It was quite clear that there many levels of metacognition underlying the answers presented by most of the participants. This relates to Denko’s (1995) comment concerning his participants assuming he could see the connections between questions and responses when he actually could “not bridge the hiatus” (Denko, 1995, p.13). Fortunately I was able to follow most of their intuitive leaps but it was a challenge throughout interactions with the participants. Many watched for my reaction to their responses as well, which meant I had to be extremely careful not to betray any surprise, shock or excitement when presented with something unexpected. As each of the participants described themselves as ‘different’ and four of them described themselves as ‘weird’, it also appeared many were waiting for my reaction to anything that betrayed that difference. As observer I was also the observed and all of us were masking ourselves until trust was established.

### 9.2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTEDNESS

Many of the participants demonstrated several of the gifted characteristics outlined in the Commonwealth of Australia (2001, Figure 5, p?). Specifically - most learnt to read before school age; perceived ideas and concepts at more abstract and complex levels; were passionately interested in specific topics; enjoyed challenges and
intellectual activities; exhibited metacognitive understandings; had rapid insight into cause-effect relationships and asked many provocative questions; displayed a great deal of curiosity about many things; generated a large number of ideas and solutions to problems and questions; were high-risk takers; were alert, had long attention spans, and a vivid imagination (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, Figure 5, p.?).

All were able to cooperate on many levels of concentration simultaneously (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, Figure 5, p.?), but Brenda displayed this most clearly by completing her collages simultaneously with completing the value activity. The majority did not appear to be ‘introverted’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, Figure 5, p.?) with the possible exception of Harriet. Their ‘emotional intensity’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, Figure 5, p.?) was clearly apparent although this relates more to Dabrowski’s overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Tolan, 199; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008; Mendaglio, 2008, Figure 6, p?) and Jacobsen’s (1999) ‘too too liabilities’.

Specifically these participants demonstrated the entire range of Intellectual and Emotional overexcitabilities, Harriet demonstrated the ‘rapid speech’ listed in Psychomotor Intensity, but all experienced the ‘sleeplessness’ and insomnia associated with not being able to shut down their minds at the end of the day. All were capable of ‘Imaginational intensity’ (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Tolan, 199; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008; Mendaglio, 2008, Figure 6, p?) and demonstrated detailed visualisation; most ‘day dreamed’ and engaged in ‘magical thinking’ although that appeared to be related to their spirituality which will be discussed later.

Over half of the participants reported some ‘Sensual overexcitability’ (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Tolan, 199; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008, Figure 6), specifically being sensitive to smells and taste, and having tactile sensitivity to the feel of some material on the skin and tags within clothing. Nearly all had removed the tags from their clothes or constantly scratched at or moved the tags on clothing they were wearing. Six of the participants reported that woollen
material itched unbearably so they did not wear it and four intensely disliked the touch of silk on their skin, stating that it actually made them shudder to touch it. Harriet was extremely sensitive to noise, and Tiffany in particular reported sensitivity to the new type of traffic lights where light emitting diodes (LED) had replaced regular bulbs. Although this could be an issue caused by her epilepsy, two of the other participants mentioned that these lights hurt their eyes and they had to avoid looking at them directly.

The most significant part of these findings is that Freeman’s (2001) contention that gifted adults only display gifted characteristics because they were labeled as gifted as children is completed refuted. Only Harriet, Tiffany and myself were tested and identified as gifted as children. Esi was told she was highly intelligent at nineteen, and Brenda did score highly on an I.Q. test but still thought she was in the average ranges, therefore the rest of the participants had no idea they were gifted in any way, and yet still exhibit many of the characteristics (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Tolan, 1999; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008; Mendaglio, 2008, Figure 6) and ‘too too liabilities’ (Jacobsen, 1999) noted in the gifted literature. It should be noted that the participants only discussed these traits and overexcitabilities after trust had been established, initially they were masking both their abilities and any characteristics that they perceived as at all ‘weird’.
9.3 THE GREAT PRETENDER

Illustration 30 – Masquerade collection
This collage is simply a collection of masks. Those on the blue background were some of my own collection of porcelain clown masks, and three belong to my son, one Aboriginal, one African and one from Hawaii. The rest are collected from the web (reference list provided p.) and include masks from every country and culture that my participants represent. There are Maori masks and Japanese masks, Buddhist masks and Hindu masks, masks from Czechoslovakia and Germany. The rest of the masks are drama masks from the classic happy/sad duo to those used by the Cirque de Soleil. The concept of the mask is an old tradition and used in most cultures and histories and many performances. It is also the way we shield ourselves from the world.
9.3.1 THE NEED TO MASK

Some of the participants provided specific examples of why they felt different, or had noticed when others were unable to understand their conversations and in particular their sense of humour. Tiffany and Harriet provided the clearest examples thus this ‘found conversation’ would be significant to them:

Tiffany: People think that I am weird or kooky; I don’t know how to explain it, because I will tell jokes and they are about something I have read, or something I just understand, and I think it is really funny and people just look at me and I think how can you not find it funny…And I get it from my own family, of you know Tiffany, thinks she is better than the rest. It just aggravates me… Like I am being pretentious or something, and I have to dumb myself down just to get along with people.

Harriet: Sometimes a joke just goes over people’s heads other times they are just really bad jokes to begin with, and even I think they are bad jokes when I reflect on them, or people not understanding my sense of humour.

Tiffany: In the early years with my husband I found when I get angry, that’s when all my reading comes out and he would sit there and we would end up laughing because he would say ‘I have no idea what you are yelling at me about’ because he wouldn’t understand it. After the first two sentences he tunes off because he doesn’t understand what I am saying

Harriet: I think another thing that made me more different at school, than being gifted, I was a goody goody, being fairly well behaved. So that sort of changed how things functioned for me socially. The time when it was unpleasant was Year seven, which I think is a really difficult year, particularly in a girl’s school, when people are trying to work out who they are. And there was somebody who repeatedly stole exercise books of mine and tests and tore them up, threw them away and that sort of things, but meaning to be nasty, but maybe to get the answers as well, but stealing the test and then ripping it up would have to be just nasty.

These examples display the constant battle gifted adults have to find people they can behave naturally with, Tiffany even finds her own husband does not understand most of her conversation, and Harriet was the subject of envy. When trying to establish trust with the participants was also apparent that most of the participants carry some legacy from their childhood and societal interactions with other people:

Harriet: It was one of the things in reflecting whether I wanted to be involved in this is that the study is both broad and deep, I’m just a little bit scared about saying certain things, but I am extremely unlikely to tell you about it.

Brenda: There are also some things that you would never say to anyone else, but you would find it suitable to tell to just one person, because you know that it is not going to affect anything, and they are not going to look at you differently, and it is going to...not make you feel better that they know, because you might still feel an idiot that they
know, but it is just out there...see I am not too trusting, I am not really a trusting person

Alex: I always hold that tiny bit back, there are some people I share stuff with and some people I just don't know...It comes back to trust once again and who are you going to trust with certain information.

This difficulty in establishing trust with another, the need to always hold something back was highlighted as each participant discussed their relationships with other people. Son and Mark both had long term friendships they had maintained from their boarding school days but very few friends in either their workplace or local community. Although Zaynab, Tiffany, Brenda and Alex had a wide circle of acquaintances both said they had very few close friends. Harriet had only one close friend but was quite close to her mother and husband, whereas Zaynab, Tiffany and Harriet were all experiencing difficulties within their relationships to their husbands. This concurs with Wilson’s (1994) findings that many gifted women had difficulty finding the right partner or spouse. Esi, surprisingly, had very few friends and her main relationships were dependant on her interaction with her children. She had dated many men since her divorce but had not entered into any long term relationships, although she discovered through her collage work that she would like to find a life partner.

Esi’s gift for blending into other cultural groups and situation appears to be superficial in some ways. She is accepted by many groups and can interact with several languages and intimate knowledge of customs, and yet she has very few true friends. This implies that she also holds something of herself back within these interactions. She may blend in and participate in activities but once she leaves the group she will have no further interaction with them until the next time her skills are needed. There may be another reason for this contrast in behaviour; it is quite possible that Esi perceives her skills in cross-cultural interaction as a type of ‘work’ and chooses not to take her work home with her after her commitment to that particular group has ceased.

In terms of these gifted adults’ interactions with others one of the most significant findings was in response to the value card that read ‘Team Player’:
Bobbie: I reckon I am a good team player…Only if the team is on the same bloody page as me!

Brenda: Team player, yeah I’m a team player…but it depends what drugs I’m on!

Harriet: I hated doing group things at school. I work well with one or two other people. Once it gets larger than that, it is not exactly that I lose control, it is just there is no control over what is happening very much and some people don’t pull their weight or some people just don’t understand what is going on. Why do I have to do it this way? I don’t think I am as easily friendly as some people are.

Although both Bobbie and Brenda answered sarcastically it was clear the majority of the participants did not like working in a team or group of any kind. Most of them said it was because they could work faster alone and they felt they were slowed or stifled creatively within a group environment. Many also mentioned the difficulty of hiding certain character traits when with more than one or two people, the more people in the group the more difficult it was to mask your ‘weirdness’ (Tiffany, 2006). Son and Mark did not appear to have any issues with group or team work and both stated they were able to work effectively within a team environment.

Many of these gifted adults had several certificates and/or awards that they had achieved, some at National and International levels, and yet almost of all them refused to display them. Harriet and Mark filed theirs in a bottom drawer unless obliged to display them for a special event or interview, and Brenda, Bobbie and Tiffany had no idea where any of their awards were. The only one who displayed her certificates was Zaynab, and she only put hers on display to encourage her own children to display their awards and certificates. None of the participants were particularly keen to discuss their major achievements and it is obvious that many were quite embarrassed they had received any accolade at all.

All these participants masked their abilities or character traits to some degree, particularly with people they did not know well or with people external to their own cultural context. It is clear that each of these gifted adults see themselves as in some way different or ‘other’ to the rest of the population, however in some cases this sense of otherness may be acerbated by their cultural background.
9.3.2 DUALLY OTHERED BY THE DEFICIT VIEW

As the ‘found conversation’ below demonstrates many of the participants gave examples of times they were ‘othered’ because of their cultural background or appearance. For those that were already othered because of their giftedness this meant they were dually othered. In the previous section they mentioned being treated as ‘other’ because they were displaying a degree of intelligence that might make others feel inferior. Then they were othered for not behaving in a manner culturally acceptable to the dominant culture, or because the colour of their skin, or manner of their dress was different:

Tiffany: I have the clearest memory of going into a shop with my mother when I was a little girl and the shop guy was talking to me, asking me what I wanted, how could he help, and completely ignoring my mother. And eventually I figured out it was because she was black, but because I was fair he was going to serve me but he wouldn’t serve her.

Esi: People have asked me can I speak English because I was with a bunch of Japs [sic], or people have abused me in the street because I was with a bunch of Vietnamese, people have abused me because ‘what are you doing going out with those slants’. People have refused entrance into some places because I was with a bunch of Koreans, until I signed my name as coming from the ethnic affairs commission, then there was a bit of a dramatic change. And of course all Asians are the same so you get anti-Chinese feeling expressed to you too.

Bobbie: I’ll give you another example and this links straight into what we are talking about the example, I can, I can acquire funding over a telephone. Okay, the moment they see me, their mouth just about drops on the ground because I’m black! Yet, I can do a deal for them almost to sign the paper over the telephone because I can talk their lingo I can pull up policies, I can do anything over the telephone the moment they see me, they’re in shock. Because, oh are you? Yeah that’s me! Because I know that I have come to understand and realize…Well look the bottom line is we’ve already done the done deal. But if I’m pursing something that is funding orientated, important as that, I do it all over the telephone. That guarantees we’re a step away from signing. If I was to do it front on, I’ve done it the other way, it took three years to get it home, it took them three years to listen to who I was and to hear my expertise before they did it, because they just stopped at my face! And so that pisses me off! That’s what makes me really pissed off!

Zaynab: That kind of culture doesn’t explain themselves, they just don’t make you feel particularly welcome, just turn away…Wealthy middle class, Anglo, from [affluent] area and doesn’t really see why anyone would have anything to do with ethnics, I am part of other, not part of us, and she has never really engaged me in any conversation, it is as though I am distasteful to the family. Oh well, that is her….the rest of the family sort of got used to me.

Esi: People have told me to go back from where I come from because I was exhibiting unAustralian body language. I got in a queue and shoved up against someone. I wasn’t making an Advance, but got told ‘go back where you come from’, and I said
‘Wollongong or North Ryde?’...And I usually turn up about ten minutes early, it is a Japanese thing, punctuality, they have got to be on time. I mean this is a country that works it out; they save a lot of time, because nobody spends time waiting. I arrive about ten minutes early and I can calm down after the drive, go to the bathroom, find the office, then have another five minutes. And I think it was that, just turning up five minutes early and I said ‘It is a Japanese habit’, ‘well you want to get out of that, you were there too long, you are back now, change back’.

Brenda: I started school in Australia speaking no English. So I learnt English in school and I nearly got kicked out, because, my mum told me… ‘you weren’t listening’ and I said ‘right’.... and she said ‘well you couldn’t speak English and they thought you weren’t listening’ so they nearly kicked me out...My mother wasn’t that great at English either! But she did explain that she is not understanding you because ‘hello’ she doesn’t speak English, but NESB wasn’t as big a topic then. My mum actually told me she had to try and convince them to leave me in the class….she really didn’t want me to get kicked out, all because I wasn’t listening, well OK, I wasn’t listening because I couldn’t understand you!

Esi: It is a bad thing, within Anglo Saxon dominant society in Australia there is pressure to not use another language, and it is only by having another language that you realize that that happens.

This discussion raises a few interesting points. In terms of our allegedly ‘multicultural’ society within Australia there are still incidents of prejudice. Zaynab provided the clearest example of this:

There’s that bullying, that racism, unfortunately I think some of our communities are very much into racism and it just kills me how they do that. How they can turn…the Lebanese against the Muslims, blacks and some of the Pakistani community and these are olive skinned Lebanese. Isn’t it shameful what these parents do to the kids…. “But don’t you understand – they’re black…” “What do you mean, they’re black, they’re just a darker shade of olive than you are, you’re brown” (Zaynab, 2006).

Many of the participants discussed similar topics, some by personal experience and others because of media coverage, all were appalled at incidents of racism in Australia.

Prior assumptions colour viewpoints in the most surprising ways. When I asked Bobbie why she thought it mattered if the person obtaining the funding was ‘black’ she said “because they assume a ‘black person’ will steal it, or misuse it, or that is it simply impossible you could be that well educated” (Bobbie, 2006). Bobbie also reported that the problems she encountered as a school student are still manifesting:
I would go into English and all my English academic classes and breeze them and I would write articles and stories, and they would say ‘did you write this’ as if I was stupid or someone else wrote it and I stole it or something...That still happens today posh people who don’t know me don’t believe I’ve written some things like reports, articles, etc (Bobbie, 2009).

This type of attitude reflects the deficit viewpoint common throughout Australian schools (Brown, 2004; Delpit, 1988; Gibson & Vialle, 2007; Gruppetta, 2003b); however it also highlights that the issue is broader than the school system. The deficit viewpoint is a societal view that is reflected within school, not a view caused by the school system. Nevertheless, the school system is the only place to address the problem and then gradually educate each generation in order to improve the wider societal view.

The deficit viewpoint has some benefits if you are gifted, and many of the participants explained this concept quite clearly. If it is generally assumed that you could not possibly be intelligent because you are ‘other’, then it makes it much easier to hide your gift. As no-one expects you to be at all gifted, if you do forget to mask your abilities it is assumed to be a fluke, a momentary flash of genius, therefore you are not expected to repeat it. Although Esi disputed this concept, apparently it only works for her if people do not know of her Japanese heritage. As one of the myths of giftedness relates high achievement to those of Asian background (Kitano & DiJiosia, 2002), and particularly the Japanese (Lynne, 2006), Esi finds that people expect her to be smarter if they know of her ties to that culture.

9.2.3 MANIFESTATIONS OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME

All the participants display some signs of Imposter Syndrome (Harvey & Katz, 1985; Jacobsen, 1999; Kerr, 1994; Wells, 2006; Wilson, 1994) with the exception of Harriet. Bobbie, Esi, Zaynab, Mark and Son all expressed remorse and some guilt because they did not achieve more in their school days. Many admitted to deliberately underachieving, with both Bobbie and Son admitting to skipping classes frequently. In each of these cases it was clear that underachievement was linked to improving their social interactions with the other students (Csikszentmihalyi, et al. 1993; Gross, 1989; Subotnik, 1997). Although in some cases it was due to boredom

Many confirmed they were ‘closet learners’ (Kerr, 1991, cited in Colangelo, et al. 2004) and taught themselves at home or developed their talents in contexts external to the school system. Tiffany and Brenda did achieve quite well at school but both downplayed their abilities.

Attributes of Imposter syndrome were evident within most of the participants as children. Those that hid their giftedness in order to fit in socially comply with Jacobsen’s (1999) viewpoint and are imposters in the sense they were pretending not to be gifted in any way. As adults Brenda, Mark, Esi manifest the truest form of imposter syndrome (Kerr, 1994; Wilson, 1994), each are sure that ‘luck’ was a significant factor in their current career path and all have betrayed some concern that they are not really entitled to their success. Alex currently contends that hard work won his current position but may manifest more signs of imposter syndrome as his career unfolds.

Bobbie has a completely different view of this phenomenon:

> There’s this whakatauki or proverb that might explain it better. And the one that we all are taught as young, as babies, and the one that we’re taught to never forget is that the kumara, the sweet potato, never says how sweet it is. So whenever there is time for you to be spoken of highly, you don’t, you know. I don’t know whether that’s to remind you to be humble or to know your place but even today that’s a real strong proverb in our community (Bobbie, 2006).

This concurs with McKenzie’s (2001) finding of ‘whakaiti’, meaning to be humble and not stand out in a crowd, which influences many Maori children to disguise their abilities. Bobbie sees no reason to ‘toot her own horn’ but will display her considerable talent in a range of areas when her community is in need. Tiffany may also be influenced by a similar cultural imperative as Aboriginal children avoid being the centre of attention, or displaying higher abilities than their peers due to a concept of ‘shame’ (Gibson & Vialle, 2007). Although Tiffany’s career is just beginning so she is yet to be in position where imposter syndrome would manifest, she already denies her giftedness.
Therein we come to the intimate conflict within many of these gifted adults, despite their need to hide their gifts, their own emotional intensity and high sense of injustice (Piechowski, 1999) often means they are forced to stand up for their beliefs and argue issues of unfairness on behalf of an individual or their community. This forces them into a leadership role which then places them under the scrutiny of others and they are no longer able to mask many of their abilities. In fact they must reverse the situation and prove their ability to operate within Western cultural guidelines in order to meet the needs of the situation.

In this sense they reach toward Wells (2006) final questions on Imposter syndrome “Was she an imposter because she walked in worlds that did not honour and value each other?” (p.2). Wells (2006) speaks of walking in different worlds being fraught with tensions, and this relates to the concept of giftedness described by Fesl (1993, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007). The most gifted Aboriginal is considered to be one who is “two ways strong” (Fesl, 1993, cited in Gibson & Vialle, 2007, p.221) and able to straddle both the contemporary world and their Aboriginality (Gibson & Vialle, 2007). Henare-Solomona (2004) refers to this concept as bi-competency, particularly within the Maori community, where an individual must be competent in both Maori and Western cultures in order to achieve.

A significant finding of this study is that all of the participants have found ways to straddle both worlds, they are competent in contemporary Western society as well as their own culture. In this sense these adults are truly gifted.
9.4  MORAL LEADERSHIP

Illustration 31 - This collage is a creation using the portraits of Noble peace prize winners, although it should be acknowledged that Einstein, although a militant pacifist in later life was awarded the Noble prize for physics not peace. The central theme is the certificate awarded and the actual medal, with the proverbial tall poppies highlighting because all the participants felt the highest accomplishment to strive for would be the peace prize, or other citizenship type award, rather than an academic award. Their heroes are great social changers, not those with great scientific accomplishments, second choice would be writers; poets, novelists and similar type authors (including songwriters). These are the words most valued, rather than academic authors.
9.4.1 THE NEED TO LEAD

The majority of the participants have been thrust into a role of leadership in some way or another most of their lives. For some it began in their school days where they stood up for other children or to a teacher who they felt was not behaving appropriately. These examples will be discussed in the next section as they relate specifically to moral and empathic intelligence. It is important to note that many of the instances of leadership mentioned below are triggered by instances of morality or empathy, but they are also triggered by a reaction to prejudice, racism and the deficit view. Therefore these examples have been gathered together in a separate section to bridge the two themes.

It is apparent in each of these cases that some kind of catalyst was a necessary element for developing a talent for leadership. Gagne (1991) contends that motivation is an intrapersonal catalyst which is a necessary element in the development of talent. Tannebaum (1983) concurs and states that giftedness is shown “in response to pressure or even oppressiveness in their environment” (Tannebaum, 1983, p.87). For Mark it was his reaction to a past injustice that demonstrated his leadership ability at a young age:

In Germany still today, at age 16, the schools make an enormous effort to explain the holocaust, how could it come to it, and they give you very detailed materials on it including films, I mean real films. Actual footage, so it’s quite tough. And our class was extremely upset about all this, as the others would have been too….But we actually were very lucky class we were all very close, we were really great mates and we decided we had to do something, we all had these horrible discussions with our parents because we knew that our parents were mature when all this happened so the first reactions is to accuse your parents. So we had those discussions. And then we decided we do something, we wrote a letter which we all signed to the Israeli ambassador in Germany, that we wanted to work in a Kibbutz during our long summer holidays. Apparently it was the first time that kids did that, you know a school student did that, so within a fortnight we were not only invited the German government sponsored the flight!... So were put into a Kibbutz, Kibbutz about 10 kilometers behind Haifa which was an orange plantation. Now as you know we all walked in there with a serious face and with a mission, we had a real mission. So we all think back to Israel with this great sense of that time, and, and that clearly was an incredible experience. Luckily I had later a project in Israel and it was organized that I had to plant trees, which is a sort of honour in Israel you know, as a foreigner to plant trees. And so that was definitely something you know.
Although Mark contends it was a shared decision between all his classmates, he was clearly the leader in writing the letter that all the other students signed and sent it to the Israeli Ambassador. Specifically his statement that it was the first time ‘a school student did that’ (Mark, 2006) rather than ‘school students’ was the clue that triggered deeper questioning about this event. Mark was accompanied by the other students but he was clearly the instigator, and it was his idea.

The other participants find themselves thrust into a leadership role in various ways as this ‘found conversation’ demonstrates:

Zaynab: I’m only a teacher by default. I just wanted to set up a school…and I knew what I wanted to do for my kids and then I found that I had to be a teacher and…I thought I was just going to set up a school, then I found that I was actually going to be a teacher because I couldn’t afford a teacher, and found that enjoyed it and the kids enjoyed it and I had quite a few successes.

Bobbie: I’ll give you another example. Last month I put together a leader leadership forum for two days. I handpicked 15 people that were predominantly high leaders in the NSW Maori community, so we all brought them together. Basically I set an agenda and what I wanted them to do was talk about their area and then to propose what they saw as what leadership should be in NSW. What happened was they all acknowledged me as the leader. I realized that what they were actually doing was, yes we are leaders, but what has been shown to us here today, is that it took a real leader to bring us all together, because no way in all these years, that they can get all the Maori leaders from all the different churches and all group in the room together, and throughout the last seven years I’ve gone to different leaders and I’d say ‘oh, do think we can have a gathering over here’?, and they laugh at me and say ‘whoof, you gotta be magic to get all these people in the same room they don’t even like each other!’… Well we can’t do anything decent until we get all these key people together, so it happened. But here I am putting them all together with my pen and my little scribe gear ready to write down all the ideas about leadership and then they all turned around to me and said well you’re the leader because you got all these people together. I just keep getting myself stuck in these situations, because it just, you know, I feel I need to do a lot of things that need to be done and nobody can see it as plain as I can. Its frustrating sometimes I wish people will understand what I’m on about, some say to me I’m far too ahead of my time that’s a challenge too.

Zaynab: I’m finding more and more times when I’m exercising leadership. Last week surprisingly it was at the Imam’s conference. I sort of forced my way in there. So they kicked me out… and I kept on insisting, and consequently the guy let me in at the last minute, and when I got in there… they’re Imams…usually they don’t respond well to women but I was very polite and I did everything in the right way in the way. I did things but I said my mind on a few things that they were talking about. Sort of critical, friendly advice and they took it on board. I couldn’t believe it …then on the last day they actually invited me up to finalize the wording on the final format … I was really pleasantly surprised because normally they didn’t respond to women well to women and a lot of unfortunate women who were good but just didn’t have all the bits that would get the little respect for them for having a chat to the Imams. They didn’t really understand the situation. They were a bit rude. When you think about
them, they’re Imams. You want to respect them, you want to show them respect and when I put my hand up at the back of the hall on the last day trying to help them put together a sentence I could hear a whisper through the entire hall. I thought it showed that I’m ready to move into a leadership role which I’ve never been given before I was always excluded from – deliberately. So, it’s interesting the way things are going to go in the near future. Where will it lead in the future? That’s the thing.

Son: Ah, Social Justice, I applaud social justice, I have been working with others to achieve that for a while now... but it is thanks to my good health I work so hard for the community, I have not taken a sick day in 20 years... I did the cleaning, I did the cooking, I did the management. I did everything for the centre before here, a lot of things...I nearly collapsed. Considerate, not of myself, more of others. I try to achieve a lot of things, and to be able to help people, to try and find ways to help people. My most meaningful problem-solving is when I am working on social problems; I try to tackle their situations, when they are stuck, so solving problems. Responsibility, yes, a lot of responsibility, it is important, and for the work here, essential, that ethics guide me.

In each of these examples Bobbie, Zaynab and Son are inspired by their communities. Each has moved into a leadership role in order to improve conditions within or for their communities and it is that community need that has become the catalyst. However there are consequences for leadership as Zaynab and Bobbie discuss below:

Zaynab: You’ve got a lot of people...it’s like they depended on me for periods of time, but then they didn’t maintain those strong relationships because I was only there for them, then they didn’t need me. And if I did need them, I didn’t know how to express that, so I had this vast array of people who know me by face or by name or whatever... and now that I’ve sort of become a tall poppy... that sort of thing... but I don’t really have anybody who I can say really understands me or I can actually go to when I have a problem.

Bobbie: It's a tough job being a leader if you are a real leader. But you know as an indigenous woman there are so many roles that we are expected to pick up. Not just in terms of responsibility, but also in terms of our own I think conscience. You know, caring, that motherly instincts that you know kids are being hurt. And you know like I have a real strong sense of responsibility for all children, not just mine. I have a strong sense of responsibility for, for younger women... especially, if they haven’t, in any way shape or form, had the opportunities to learn certain things about growing up, I feel a real sense of responsibility.

Responsibility is a key value that is held by these participants, they feel responsible for social justice issues, and responsibility for trying to address these issues. Despite their own isolation because of their leadership roles they still make this choice and try and change societal issues. This extends into other areas that challenge political and legal fields. For Harriet the issue of tightened security following the 9/11 attack
is of great concern and she is actively trying to change some of the anti-terrorist laws in the U.S.A. because they are causing harm to others:

There should be more Peace in the world; people don’t work at it hard enough. [In reference to 9/11 aftermath]. The whole thing has been really unpleasant, actually much, much worse than unpleasant. It is fairly liberal where I live, so people are scratching their heads thinking how many other parts of America can think as they do. I am horrified by things like Guantanamo Bay and the abuses and torture and things like that. I don’t feel particularly alarmed for myself though, it is probably more dangerous to cross the road (Harriet, 2006).

This is a universal theme amongst the participants, that there should be no more war, no atrocities committed against people of any race, colour or creed. Some of them belong to activist groups that campaign against such atrocities, others sign petitions or donate money, but all are concerned with the state of the world. Harriet’s lack of concern for herself agrees with Piirto’s (2003) finding that gifted adolescents were less alarmed for their own personal safety following 9/11 than other students. But the gifted, both adults and children, can doubt the integrity of those in charge and challenge the world as it is (Tolan, 1998).

Son had a different range of concerns; he was more focused on protecting his own community and was particularly disturbed by the effects of the workplace laws introduced by the Howard Government:

The law may be underpinning it, but it is not fair sometimes. The new law, workplace laws, at the moment they are legal, but they are not right, not fair. You have to follow the law but sometimes you have to push it. If you deprive them of their rights, deprive their holidays, whatever their entitlements, it is not right. They expect what they used to have before but they don’t get it (Son, 2006).

As these new laws affected the people in his community greatly, Son felt obliged to help them negotiate with employers to ensure they kept their entitlements. For some of the people in his community this was difficult as their command of English often put them at a disadvantage. Son’s intensive knowledge of the law gave him unique skills to address this problem. whereas Bobbie felt she had a range of skills due to her upbringing in the ‘old ways’ but also felt that she needed to gain more skills in order to assist her community. She enrolled in a PhD so others would take her seriously and she could provide the skills required by her cultural group:
They say ‘oh, why are you doing this doctorate?’ I said ‘because most research is done because of a need’… And they go ‘Oh, wow. Do you have to be brainy to do that?’ You don’t have to be brainy to respond to a need (Bobbie, 2006).

Bobbie sees her community role as “To go in there and fix up things that nobody else dared to go in to” (Bobbie, 2006) and she believes she has been given the tools to do this through her grandmother’s early training in the traditional ways of the Maori people. In this sense Bobbie is not only a leader but a moral leader, as are most of the other leaders gathered here. Each is responding to a need, and for most of them it is a moral imperative that has elicited this response to a situation.

Pagnin and Adnreani (2000) argue that all moral decisions are situational and the only real moral decisions are made in response to a real situation rather than a hypothetical dilemma. As Newell (2003) advised, these gifted adults can be judged as moral leaders because the evidence is presented ‘in deed rather than word’. Although many of the participants have explained their sense of moral value and which values are most important to them in the following section, it is these real situations where they have risen to the challenge and unmasked their gifts in order to help others that really display their high levels of moral intelligence. As Tolan (1998) contends the gifted, with their high moral sense, can lead to a moral evolution for humanity.

This raises some questions in terms of this internalising, or “intrapersonal catalyst” (Gagne, 1991, p. 71) that triggers the leadership response in these gifted adults. The majority of these examples demonstrate these participants are fighting for the rights of the ‘other’ – is this because they themselves are the ‘other’? Are you more likely to reach the higher stages of morality if you yourself are othered or oppressed in some way? Is there a cultural link within these participants’ backgrounds that teaches them to fight for a communal cause rather than an individual justice? Or are all these situational responses linked to Tannebaum’s (1983, p.88) “chance factor”? Did these participants find their “hidden talents” (Gagne, 1991, p.73) only in responding to a chance occurrence? These are not questions that can be answered within this study, but this is an area where further research is required.
9.5 AS I WEEP FOR THE WORLD

Illustration 32 - This collage was created in Adobe illustrator by cutting and pasting scanned pictures from magazines and newspapers (reference list provided p.). The pictures portray 9/11 and the Iraqi war, famine in Africa, Vietnam war, Australian bushfires, Bali bombing and the Tsunami. The tears were added with paintbrush to signify the tears shed by all, but especially the empathy felt by the participants for the current state of the world. The small poppies picture from Flanders field was added to the bottom corner as red poppies are often used on Remembrance Day, they grow on the graves because they flourish in abundance when the ground has been disturbed. Yet the gifted are portrayed by poppies too.
9.5.1 MORAL INTELLIGENCE

Within the literature there is some difficulty in clearly delineating between moral intelligence and empathic intelligence. In differentiating between the two I have separated these two areas into separate categories, at least as far as the examples provided by these participants are concerned. Many participants express a high level of moral intelligence and this is expressed in various ways. The results of the value card activity demonstrate that all of the participants believed these values to be the most important: Ethics; Equality; Family Friends; Honesty; Independence; Knowledge; Responsibility; Tolerance; and Trust, but Education and Social Justice was agreed to be most important value by all. Harriet summarised the view of Education held by most of the participants:

I think education is important for a form of freedom, gives you ways to reflect on where you are in the world, how you are different… I mean how you differ from other people, how anybody differs from other people. It gives certain kinds of freedom, because it opens up a lot of boundaries. It is also important economically to have a wider range of employment opportunities, which allows you to move in somewhat different social circles, which gives you lots of directions and opportunities (Harriet).

The second most important group of values were Kindness; Concern for Others; Competency; Caring; Integrity; Order; Peace; Security and Self-Respect. Happiness and Pleasure scored highly as well but in terms of knowing they should have it, even if most of them did not feel they were able to experience true happiness or had time for pleasure in their lives.

Being a Hard Worker; Humble and being Nice to others also rated quite highly with eight of the participants agreeing these were essential qualities. Moral Fulfillment; Personal Success and Freedom were also agreed to be important by eight of the participants. Only six of the participants thought that Respect; Wisdom; being Considerate; and Brave were important. Five of the participants thought that Leisure was important, but again as something they should have, not something they did have. Just five of the participants wanted to be Leaders or have Wealth. The participants who discussed ‘Wealth’ agreed that in order to change the world or assist disadvantaged groups you required a great deal of personal wealth, or at least
enough to be comfortable and taken seriously by society in order to assist others that were less fortunate.

Three of the participants wanted Power, but only Mark and Zaynab wanted power over others:

Power gives me a rush… decision-making power. You know you’re carrying it. You know… if you go this way or you go that way, there are big ramifications and it’s all resting on you. It’s sort of validates you and gives you a big head. But I get freaked out by it too (Zaynab, 2006).

Again the participants spoke about responsibility, and that with any sort of power comes great responsibility, which is why the majority did not want power, they each felt they had enough responsibility in their lives already.

Alex was the lone participant concerned about Prestige, the rest of the participants said they could not be bothered with buying the right car or wearing the right clothing, or living in particular areas or pursuing a particular lifestyle as it was simply too time consuming. Lack of time was a common theme, nine of the participants said they were Stressful and never found time to relax. Four of the participants said they possessed Good Health, and another four said they were not sure it applied to them but most agreed when working for others they quite often ignored their own health (Table of Values, Appendix A40).

All debated quite enthusiastically the values that were most important and pertinent to them, and for each phase of the value activity the participants provided anecdotes that illustrate their morality. Many of these examples came from their school days and usually concerned a teacher or other students being ‘unfair’:

Harriet: There was a kid in infants’ school, who was unmercifully teased, because he was different. Slightly ethnically different basically, and then protective parents who surrounded him with a whole lot of aspects of his life that were different from other people and little kids don’t like that. And I was the only one who used to, like, be with him. When we got to the really blunt bit, we had at this stage something like 15 boys and 15 girls, and four benches in a square for lunch, and two boys and two girls benches was the norm, but whichever one he sat on no-body else wanted to sit on, so people would run to claim the other benches, so either the boys would be squashed one day or the girls would be squashed another day. I would actually go and sit next to him and I wasn’t ostracized or anything at that stage, all the energy was going into him. That didn’t have a negative impact on me; if it had I may not have the courage to keep on doing that.
Brenda: I remember this kid, he was a bit of a ratbag, and this mean teacher made him wet his pants, because he was saying he wanted to go to the toilet, and he said no, and so he wet his pants standing at the teacher’s desk there and then, because he could not hold it and he was holding himself and ‘I’ve really got to go’, and the teacher said no, and he wet himself there and then. Do you know how humiliating, this was in front of the whole class, that was in year four. And I have always wanted to write him [the teacher] a letter, and one day I will get around to it, I forget for a while and then I remember that I want to write to him to tell him how mean and unfair he was.

Harriet: Sometimes, over my school years where I felt the teachers had behaved unfairly. It is one of those things where you know about justice, because you recognize the injustice. And in the big scheme of things they weren’t terribly major issues of course, but if you are in imbedded in the middle of them they are. So incredible frustration with those sorts of things, and one of them was a teacher I didn’t know, and one was a teacher I did know and liked, which is doubly upsetting if it somebody you respect.

Brenda: Yes, it is all about fairness. And then I remember Mr B (name withheld), and I remember he was a mean teacher, he was one of those that would get right up to your nose and scream in your face, and we were lining up, and I wasn’t supposed to talk, and he yelled, marched right up to me in the line and grabbed me, grabbed both here (indicated arms) and shook me, and pushed me around, really hard, really pushed me and shook me around, and I thought you have no right to do that. There was no natural justice, none of that, no explanation and I had to go sit I the corner after that.

Harriet: I remember one who was kind of nasty. Nasty to everybody. I thought it made her, well maybe I can’t be objective about it. But I just thought it was beyond ‘I don’t like her’. She was very unpleasant and made life unpleasant for people and I just thought she couldn’t look after people very effectively.

Brenda: Miss (Name withheld) was really nice, that was when I was in infants, but I don’t know exactly what year. And I remember my mum was really late to pick me up, and I don’t know how long it was, but it was heaps after school was finished and Miss (name withheld) was nearly wetting her pants, she was busting to go to the toilet but she was waiting with me at the front of the school, she would not leave me alone until my mother came…and you could tell, like crossing the legs and jumping, you could tell she was just about to wet herself. And I thought that was just really nice of her.

Numerous other examples were supplied by most of the participants, most involved teachers that were ‘not fair’ or unjust. These examples have been stored in their memories for precisely that reason; it challenged the essence of their morality. The few examples of teachers, who had been particularly kind or helpful, such as Brenda’s anecdote above, were used to illustrate a moral exemplar.

These examples also prove that their sense of moral value, their moral intelligence, was quite pronounced even when they were young providing evidence to support the claims of Lovecky (1997) and Silverman (1994, cited in Piirto, 1999). It also sheds some light on their difficulty interacting with others socially when younger. Freeman’s (2001) contention that the gifted are conflicted by their own high moral
ideals when these are not perceived or enacted by others around them is consistent with the examples provided by these gifted adults. Whether they are operating in the higher moral realms, at least according to Kohlberg’s (1984) standards is difficult to judge. Certainly the examples provided by Brenda and Harriet appear to challenge the status quo that students should simply obey teachers, or be subjected to a teacher’s higher authority. Zayab had another issue, rather than rescue another child she felt the need to rescue the mice in the science laboratory:

I was just so upset with what she did, she had a horrible experiment which was putting all the mice in a cage and she wanted to prove that with over population people get stressed and so if she deliberately over populated them they would kill their young and eat them…so I rescued some of them, and I would go around school with these lab white mice in my clothing… and I’d be sitting with this chemistry teacher…in the front, right in the front row looking at her, and these little mice would, you know pop out and…squeak, squeak, squeak, and she’d say “what was that? Is something going on?” I’d just pick them up…I’d just carry them around as pets during the day. I’d have them in my pockets and I’d take them home, you know I couldn’t leave them in a back alley or put them back in the science lab. I was trying to relieve them from the horror of it (Zaynab, 2006).

Zaynab has absolutely no recall of the next part of the story, and no idea what happened when she took the mice home, she just remembers that she had to rescue them, regardless of the consequences.

The participants also provided various examples of their current sense of morality. Some were actively volunteering their time whilst others were donating to various worthwhile causes, or thought they should do this:

Tiffany: I am reading with African refugees. There is a charity where I have tutored a refugee in English and got her to the point where she could attend English classes. And not only that I made a new friend and learnt some of her language, so I got more out of it.

Esi: In the last 2 years I have done some work, I don’t get much, I would like more, as a tutor at an Aboriginal education centre, because I think that is the way I can do my bit in reconciliation and that’s useful, it puts me in contact with some people. It is limited, and I have volunteered for other things, but I feel I need to do something, to put something back.

Bobbie: Yeah, like all my community work, I go out there I do it out of my own wallet, you know I drive up to Newcastle and have meetings I go down city, some one has just suicided and there’s a family that needs some sort of counseling. I go out and do it in the middle of the night, can be for three or four weeks at a time I go down and do it, and it all comes, someone’s gotta pay for the petrol, and for me, given that I have this position that I have these things by putting it back into the community I feel okay about it. Who couldn’t work in the community and not be caring? Caring for community and others, considerate. Well that’s all, that’s the same hey.
Harriet: Social Justice is quite important. I make some financial contributions to organizations that deal with this sort of thing, but don’t do a whole lot more. Oh I kind of do, I educate people who are going into ministry so hopefully they will do something about it too. Sort of a 2nd hand contribution, but I think it is important.

Alex: I'm the type that I really want to donate like if someone came to the door yeah like one off donations and things. I think I should do the forty hour famines and pay $40.00 a month, my mom does that. Maybe I'm greedy, I don't know. I always think I should when I see those ads...[starving children on television]. If it's tax deductible why doesn't the government make everybody pay or donate... or why don't they donate...or some sort of thing.

Mark also donates extensively to charities and is on a number of boards to raise money for particular causes. Brenda actively supports several animal welfare and rights groups, both financially and through volunteer and activist activities. As these examples indicate Zaynab, Bobbie and Son prefer to support their own local communities, but the essence is the same, all feel a moral duty to assist humanity.

But there are other dimensions of morality. The participants all felt a strong sense of ethics and integrity and could explain situations where they had felt compelled to act on their ethical viewpoint. Mark provided an example:

Actually, I am brave, because you have frequently situations where you hurt yourself by sticking to your view, and I was actually once fired from my company and for 18 months I was out in the wetlands. So I simply waited all the time, didn’t say a word, waited, and then they came and wanted me back. There was a problem with ethics that I raised and then I believe that the managing director, he feared that the banks would have put me on the main board and drop him. Which actually I would not have done, because I wanted to stay here, I did not want to go back to Hamburg and be on a board where you live with friction all the time, I don’t want to, I hate friction (Mark, 2006).

The details of the ethical situation cannot be published due to privacy issues, however eventually the company discovered that Mark was quite correct in his ethical standpoint and reinstated him but he had to endure 18 months of doing odd jobs and struggling to keep his family going. The interesting point is that Mark knew this, he knew before he raised the issue that they would probably fire him – and he raised the issue anyway. His ethical principles were so high he felt he had no choice; he had to raise the issue regardless of the long term consequences. Freeman (2001) contends that in some societies such morality is a form of giftedness, yet this attribute is rarely recognised in children in Western societies. With these participants
there is a further dimension; beyond their moral intelligence is their empathic intelligence.

9.5.2 EMPATHIC INTELLIGENCE

It is apparent within these examples that the empathy felt for another preserved the memory of the event. Harriet remembered feeling empathy for a student teacher:

I remember a teacher that I felt very sorry for, we had a teacher come in, this was probably in 6th class, and the poor young woman, I felt really sorry for her at the time. Actually everybody did because it was just so awful. She was teaching along about I don’t know ‘Hayden’ or something, and she suddenly looked at the normal teacher and she burst into tears and said ‘I can’t remember’. She was trying to remember these facts she was going to tell us and it just all went suddenly out of her head, and she totally lost it, poor girl. And I mean student teachers usually get a really rough time from the class, because they can tell they can’t control them properly, but this was just so awful that everybody felt sorry for her (Harriet, 2006).

Harriet felt this memory was significant because students so rarely felt sorry for a teacher, another student perhaps but not a teacher. Yet, she still felt the empathy for this student teacher and explained that it was simply that this girl was so devastated, she had been trying so hard and was simply so distressed that Harriet felt like crying along with her.

There are other extremes of empathic intelligence, where a participant felt a situation so deeply that they felt they had to intervene but the perspective of the situation was not welcome. Zaynab’s example below highlights this type of situation:

It might be the way I deliver it because I remember once, a long time ago, a friend had a family catastrophe, she had a child that died. Twins, you know, one had a hole in the heart and the other survived and I made a comment to her which I just felt that I had to do, because from the child’s point of view, and it was probably advice that should be given by the doctor but I just felt it was wrong and she had taken the child and she hadn’t breast fed it and she didn’t develop that bond so it was easier for her to lose the child when she was told the child was going to die… and so she didn’t really bond with the child…but I thought that that was wrong for the child because in that short life the child had, that child didn’t have anything else except for a mother who had been told to sign off on it and I thought it was wrong (Zaynab, 2006).

The consequences were profound but at the time Zaynab was lost in her empathy for the baby and was unable to extend that empathy to the mother’s situation. In explaining her view of the event Zaynab explains her point of view and the consequences:
I just felt it was my duty as a person, if I think something’s wrong, I have to say ‘look, take it or leave it – I’ve just got to tell you what I think’ I mean, do what you like with it. But she didn’t talk to me for quite a while after that but, I knew she was really going through stress after the little baby dying, I said look, you know, I’ve really found that vitamin B helps so I dropped a bottle of vitamin B tabs off in her letterbox and she never forgot it…she always remembered that I gave her those Vitamin B tablets, it really helped her and I thought…obviously I did something that was good but she didn’t get back to me and I didn’t get back to her, I thought look she’s upset with me I’ll just let her go. And we didn’t really talk for about 10 years and then we sort of picked up again. So I’m thinking maybe it’s just the way she is when she gets criticism (Zaynab, 2006).

Zaynab clearly wanted to help this woman, but somehow was ‘out of synch’ (Gross, 1989) with an appropriate way to handle the situation. The most remarkable comment is the last line “maybe it’s just the way she is when she gets criticism” (Zaynab, 2006). When reflecting on the experience Zaynab still has profound empathy for the baby and very little for the mother. She felt the mother had not fulfilled her role and the baby had suffered for it, therefore she had every right to criticise the mother’s behaviour. Obviously the mother did not share her view. The fact that her friend did not speak to her for over ten years because of her perceived lack of sympathy was a significant consequence of Zaynab speaking her mind.

Again this highlights Freeman’s (2001) contention that the gifted are conflicted by their own high moral ideals when these are not perceived or enacted by others around them. Zaynab felt so strongly that the mother should bond with the baby that she ignored the mother’s struggle to cope with the situation.

It is apparent that the gifted adults within this study have alternative perspectives on some issues and many have chosen to follow different pathways. Sometimes the choice is theirs and they allow their moral imperatives to guide them. Sometimes the choices are made for them.
9.6 THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Illustration 33 - This one was created with photo shop using a single photo of a pathway through trees, taken by my own digital camera. Once mirrored and melted and with judicious cut and pasting, resizing and perspectives tools, an interesting choice of pathways is presented – alternative roads to the single road presented to most.
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
To where it bent in the undergrowth…  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - -  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.  

(The Road Not Taken, Robert Frost)

Men’s curiosity searches past and future  
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint - -  

T.S. Elliot, From The Dry Salvage. (cited in MacKay & McKiernan, 2004)

9.6.1 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

The expected pathway for most adults is to enter into college or university after completing school. Harriet, Mark, Son and Alex did exactly that, they each completed the required number of years for schooling and then entered into university to obtain a degree. Although Alex followed the standard pathway exactly, Mark had some interruptions to his University studies:

I was actually accepted by the company for an apprenticeship. You can of course go via university and then into a profession but you would find it very hard you know. I mean because they know you haven’t done the apprenticeship, so you are not really one of them you know. So I did first my apprenticeship it’s a two year thing and then uni and then the start of the career. And the apprenticeship was great fun, because I loved it. Then I studied at Munich University, then Paris and then Hamburg, and I finished commerce and political science with both degrees. In Europe it’s actually quite normal, you do not necessarily stay in one university unless you are in a real hurry. I had great times during university but you have to do all the basic tests and then you can go on with your studies, and then you have the final exams which are horrible in Germany and I became pale and thin (Mark, 2006).

Mark’s education pathway was apparently fairly standard in Europe at that time and his move to Australia was more beneficial than a hindrance to his career pathway. He married in his twenties and made a home here in Australia, so the road he followed was not as difficult as some but he still had to change countries and learn how to live in Australia:

When you leave your own country, and I didn’t leave Germany, I actually came here to do a specific job for three years and go back. However, I came here and almost instantly liked it so much that I made up my mind I wanted to stay here. Then had to work on establishing reasons why I should stay here. And Australia when I came here nobody really had sort of, really read about Australia, so I had to, I wouldn’t say defend myself but I had to, sort of, reason with myself you know why would I like it so much (Mark, 2006).
Son had more difficulty, although he completed his education in Laos he was thwarted in his choice of career through the effects of being displaced by war in his country:

I did my HSC in Laos and after that my diploma in Laos, after that I went to study law when I was in Laos, Public law, and got my dissertation as lay teacher. I left Laos in 1974 and at the time the communist party had just started to take control over the country… And then after that I went to Scotland to do my master’s degree in law still. I did the course for three years because the first year you have to study Scottish law because it is different. After that I hung around in London for three years because I don’t know what to do or where to go because I can’t go back to practicing law. I got my degree in Scotland but the first degree was in Laos and I can’t do anything because as you know a master’s degree is just to study a few subjects. One of the subjects I wanted to specialise on was in the first degree so to practice law I would have to start all over again. Then I left England to go to France and then the same thing as here, when I went there I started to work for a refugee relief fund because people came from Sri Lanka, from Iran, from Indochinese countries you know, like Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia and also African countries and then the same thing as here, when I went there I started to work for a refugee relief fund. I was nearly ten years in France (Son, 2006).

Although Son then migrated to Australia to be reunited with his parents and numerous siblings he felt he was unable to study further:

I work just with Laos community now. I feel I have wasted a lot of time because of the political situation in Laos, I spent a lot of time and energy, spending money and going around, and trying to move around and then getting stuck because I had the wrong bit of paper but still have the language skills to do other things. I think my career, instead of doing law, I think I would stick with one country, and maybe be a doctor or engineer. Maybe I can help people, and use my knowledge to help the country, the economy, the community. I didn’t do enough and try and study here, when I came to Australia, just did a diploma in social science, welfare studies.

Son’s change of career path was motivated by his need to assist his community. Something he feels great empathy toward because many people from his country have been as misplaced and thwarted within their career paths as he.

Esi, Bobbie, Zaynab and Tiffany have all interrupted their educational and career paths by marrying and having children at a reasonably young age. Brenda has yet to have children but pursued a range of career paths before returning to University study. Harriet pursued an education and became established within her career path prior to having children but she showed the same tendency to multi-potentiality (Kerr, 1994) as the other gifted women.
Harriet has completed Master’s degrees in both mathematical and music areas, and is currently pursuing a PhD in theology. She lived in the U.S.A. for a number of years but travelled extensively between commitments to various colleges, working in the arts, sciences and humanities. Initially Harriet thought to pursue a career in music, followed by a career in mathematics, and then pursued a variety of academic areas before deciding on theology. Although technically she has always been pursuing an academic career the multiple subject areas are not typical. Generally an academic gains a single degree in one topic area, followed by a Master’s or in some cases a PhD in a similar area, or at least something related to it, in order to obtain a specialisation in one or two subjects areas.

Brenda trained as a veterinary nurse after leaving school, after a number of years, even while still pursuing this career path she completed a Bachelor of Education in order to become a primary teacher. For a few years she taught in primary schools whilst working as a veterinary nurse on the weekends. After deciding the politics of the school system were not to her liking she moved into the finance industry and has been quite successful.

When Esi completed her Leaving Certificate her parents though her too young for University, although she wanted to study biology. For the next three years she worked in a job her parents selected for her and attended a technical college four nights a week. She rebelled at nineteen and left home and got married. Eventually I rebelled and left home at 19 and went to live in Sydney by myself. For the next six years she worked in a district hospital as a pathology technician then and studied science, chemistry and physics. The technical job extended into areas of hematology, biochemistry, and bacteriology and Esi quite enjoyed this career but was unable to continue once she had children. For several years she stayed at home ‘the satisfied homemaker’ until her divorce forced her back into the workforce.

Esi then began teaching Japanese and got a job in Adult Migrant Education. During that time she learnt a special methodology, which led to a job in Japan for three months. When she returned to Australia she worked in secondary schools teaching
Japanese and discovered she had a knack for computer work that led her to working for the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) for a number of years. After that she was accepted into a Japanese University as a guest researcher, and followed that with working in Korea for a year, teaching languages. In the ensuing years Esi has worked in the U.S.A., travelled throughout Europe and several African countries. Several passports supply testimony to how extensively she has travelled. In recent years, although she will take any work offered she tends to work in areas that either support the teaching of languages or physics.

Bobbie has also pursued a range of careers at twelve she worked in the dairy after school, and became manager within a year. At fifteen she ran a takeaway shop for an aunt, and at sixteen went to work in a butter factory. After a month she was moved into the laboratory testing the butter and the milk and stayed there for a few years before deciding to try shearing. For the next three years she shore sheep, until she fell pregnant at twenty-one. By her own admission she drank and smoked drugs quite heavily for the next three years before deciding to clean up for her son’s sake. Bobbie then had another three children while volunteering for community work and then moved to Australia where she decided to obtain a degree. Bobbie has three Bachelor of Arts degrees and a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree and is currently completing a PhD.

Zaynab also left a significant gap between her schooling and her University education. She also spent some time with hallucinatory drugs and then got married and had several children. After she divorced her first husband and converted to Islam she found her calling and began to work for the Islamic community in a range of areas. She assisting in setting up schools and women’s groups and then completed a Bachelor of Education in order to teach in the schools she set up. She has remarried and is currently completing a Masters Degree in educational Administration.

Tiffany completed her Higher School Certificate and then spent several years living the life of a drug addict before cleaning herself up and having children. She married
the father of her children only recently, and is now going through a quite nasty
divorce. Although she tried to become the ‘satisfied homemaker (Kerr, 1994) she
found she was bored and dissatisfied. The family moved frequently and she ran a
family business for some time and also tried farming for a few years. In recent years
she has found her passion in photography and is in the process of setting up her own
business.

Within each of the participants’ lives there have been external factors, such as war,
marriage, childbirth, and relocation that have influenced their career choices. In
reality all agree that they have very often made a career choice simply because
somebody asked them if they wanted to try something rather than consciously
looking for another career pathway. Within most of their life paths, particularly with
Harriet, Brenda, Esi and Bobbie there has been clear evidence of their
multipotentiality (Kerr, 1994). Each of these participants has switched careers
frequently and appeared to be equally successful in every field.

It should also be noted that both Mark and Tiffany were great long distance runners
and both could have pursued a sporting career in their younger days. Zaynab was a
long distance swimmer and won many medals in her hey day. And Bobbie played
competition grade netball, representing her country. Each of these participants saw
their physical prowess as a release rather than a career option, but the potential was
still there.

In understanding the great range of talents presented by the participants it is clear
they are gifted, and each have been recognised as such against their own cultural
standards (Gruber, et a. 1996). Rather than merely possessing a talent in one or two
fields of human performance (Gagne, 1985) they each posses a raft of talents in a
number of areas. Therefore they meet the criteria of giftedness by displaying above
average competence in more than one domain of ability (Gagne, 1985). As talent
unfolds over a lifetime (Landvogt, 1998) these gifted adults have many opportunities
to excel in other areas in the future.
9.7  SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME

Illustration 34 - This picture is a merge of three photos taken by myself on a trip to Freemantle in 2006. Each were changed to ‘oil painting’, and the opacity of the tree was changed to give it less substance. The isolated beach at sunset is the main theme with a small arrangement of rock/coral in the bottom right hand corner, trimmed and shaped from a much larger piece taken due to its interesting textures and shapes. The distant tree in the far top left corner was in fact a much larger ‘sentinel’ tree, also trimmed and placed to signify the distant yearning for home, so far away for most of the participants, unless they created their own homes. In talking about their homes and their childhoods each participant mentioned a tree of some description, the tree they climbed or sat under as a child, the tree outside their window, the trees of their homeland. The sentinel tree is also an idea I have about the common appearance of one lone tree in Australian parks and paddocks. The tree is usually the last of its kind, a remnant of a time when they were numerous. Yet this single tree must hold down the soil, stabilize the water table, fight salinity, provide shade, windbreak and shelter, and in general maintain its duty as sentinel for a time long ago lost. Although people can be sentinels too, and maintain the cultures and communities around them.
9.7.1 LONGING FOR HOME

The title of this section of the chapter is taken from a song by Ronan Keating titled ‘Far Away’ and the sentiment is that of anyone longing for their homeland.

According to Bobbie it is very similar to a song sung in her homeland:

This particular waiata (song) sounds like a well known piece that many of our Maori people sing. I don't know if it’s the same one but I can say that if these English words were translated to Maori you would have the same or similar song that we all sing when we are away from NZ (Bobbie, email, 2007).

For many of the participants Australia is not their native land. Mark, Son, Esi, Bobbie, Brenda, Zaynab and Alex were all born overseas. The reverse is true for Harriet; she was born here but resides in another country. Tiffany as an Aboriginal woman is native to this country, but dwells in the city a long way from the land of her ancestry. So all experience some longing for a home they are unable to reach.

Within their collage work Bobbie, Esi and Brenda used cultural symbols to represent their homelands.

Bobbie’s collage displayed much of her culture with some significant links to her homeland. Bobbie and her family have been in Australia for some time now and she is quite worried that her sons will lose some of their cultural heritage but because one of them has a medical condition they must remain in Australia for the time being.

When her eldest son turned twenty-one her mother rang and asked whether they should start his Maori carving because traditionally each boy should have one at that age. Because it would be difficult to bring the wood carving to Australia they decided that instead of a carving he would have Ta Moko (a tattoo):

So what happened is, for his 21st he had his carving on him, it took about, a few days, and it’s so pretty, its really pretty and what it is is his story and he told his story to the artist and the artist from the same tribe as us and the artist took this and put it in. The most important thing to a Maori is the mountain, that’s the mountain, that symbol represents the mountain, the second most important thing is the water, that symbol represents the water, because you know it’s like the curl of the wave. The rest has to do with our ancestry, whakapapa (Genealogy). Who your ancestors are and who your children will belong to (Bobbie, 2006).
In explaining these symbols Bobbie referred to her own tattoos, her chin Moko and another bracelet tattoo around her wrist. The chin tattoo is prestigious is it only given to someone of important birth or one who has become important to their tribe, and represents her matriarchal lineage, whereas the wrist tattoo is for her lineage and represents her ancestors, her tribe and her children. She feels an intimate connection to the land of her birth and will return one day to make a garden as her grandmother did.

Zaynab referred only to the trees in New Guinea because that is what she remembers from her childhood:

I remember things about New Guinea, which is the earliest I can remember, we went to New Guinea when I was about two. I was always up a tree, any tree I could get my legs up into… I climbed a tree… Because it was it’s peaceful… it’s the peace and tranquility, with the birds and the leaves, you’re away from everything. I’d sit on the roof sometimes at home when the trees were too bare and I’d always climb the trees at my grandparents house and nearly fell out a few times and freaked myself out… but I’d just sit up there… I don’t know what I’d do but I’d just sit up there and think and dream.

Zaynab feels a connection to New Guinea but has not returned recently due to the dangers of travelling there, but she also experiences a longing for the first place she can remember. She also speaks of a garden, although she wants to plant sweet peas because that is what she remembers her grandmother planting long ago.

Tiffany again referred to a tree, the tree with the tyre swing that is represented in her collage. She attributes it to happy times in her childhood but also remembers it as the only thing she could see when her grandfather molested her. So the tree holds both the positive and negative memories of her home.

Mark found that once he left Germany after a certain period of time he missed his homeland:

I think when you go away from your own country where you have your family and all your friends, you emotionally you actually get closer to your original country, and you certainly think far more about it and, I mean I suddenly started buying books about Germany especially picture books and so on and I liked to have these books and read far more about politics in Germany and so on and so on (Mark, 2006).
The longer Mark stayed in Australia the more he found he needed to see German art, and hear German opera and music, although he does not remember have any interest in these things when he was in Germany. Esi too found an interest in Japanese symbols, puppetry, music, drama and statuary that she sees as a link to her homeland and culture, but like Mark she frequently travels back to her place of birth for business and education purposes.

Neither Son nor Alex have visited their homeland since they left it. Son still has memories of difficult times that make it difficult for him, and he is unsure if it is safe to visit the country, even after all this time, because he has so much difficulty getting out in the first place. Son has immersed himself in the Laos culture in Australia and substitutes this cultural experience for his own. Alex sees no reason to travel back to a country he barely remembers but again his culture and religion has established its own enclave within Australia, so he can experience the best of both worlds.

All the participants do miss their birthplaces, and although all are bicompetent, and have found ways to straddle Western cultural expectations while maintaining their own ancestral cultures, all feel some element of difficulty in living in a alien world at some time.

9.7.2 CULTURAL STRESS

In recognising that some of the participants display symptoms of cultural stress, it is once again necessary to note that they are often dually othered; Firstly for their giftedness and secondly for their different cultural background. As documented these participants have some issues with trusting others and are “suspicious of others motives” (Lovat, et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001). Many complain they feel they are constantly being watched and therefore feel vulnerable (Lovat, et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001). Some are also inclined to display elements of Compulsive Obsessive Behaviour (Lovat, et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001). These symptoms of cultural stress also relate to giftedness traits, so it is difficult to demarcate the two areas based on the data collected within this study.
However there is one example supplied by Esi that clearly defines her rejection by the dominant culture (Lovat, et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001). This particular discussion concerned the supervisor appointed to guide Esi throughout her Masters study. Unfortunately it was clear to Esi from the beginning that this person had some serious issues with overseas students and cross cultural studies. Within this example it is clear that Esi feels rejected:

For me the University had become one person and that’s the most important thing it must not be, you chuck in a huge organization because of one person. For almost a year I didn’t write anything! I thought what is the point, if it is all going to be wrong? She seems to think I must write exactly her thesis and she has no cultural understanding. She refuses to allow me to use Japanese styles or understandings but the research is Japanese. I don have to do everything to her Western expectation. That is what has been tried on, and then my work has been sneered! There is no room for sneering, and sneering for being Japanese, excuse me? (Esi, 2006)

The supervisor refused to allow Esi to complete any of the thesis in Japanese, although the topic was researched in Japan and was to be marked and published in Japan, and Esi would supply an English version of everything. When the supervisor suggested she might not supply an accurate translation Esi offered to pay for a translator of her supervisor’s choice to translate everything. The supervisor refused and the aftermath of this particular confrontation was shattering for Esi. She felt completely betrayed and that the essence of her cultural self had been rejected, to the point she had stopped attending University all together.

In this instance Esi had been effectively silenced Schneider (2000) by restricting her choice of topic, language and terminology. To a certain extent Esi felt paralysed (Lovat, et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001) and unable to work out a solution to the problem. This is one of the most significant symptoms of cultural stress, to be paralysed (Lovat, et al, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Ward, et al. 2001) by the inability to express oneself, and for all her vast experience in a variety of countries and cultures, and despite her high level of intelligence Esi was unable to find a way out of this situation. Part of the problem may stem from some of her childhood trauma and many of these participants had endured some very difficult times.
9.8 SURVIVING THE ABYSS

Illustration 35 – The Abyss. This picture used a single picture of an ice abyss obtained from the Internet. The picture was first dragged using the perspective tool to increase the depth of the abyss, then changed to ‘oil painting’, then lighting changed to ‘cool’, and finally added ‘frost’ to blur and add depth.
Of all the chapters, this one proved to be the most difficult to write, the most challenging to relate, analyse and contemplate. There were elements of the participants’ lives that were not pretty. These were their dark places, their tragic beginnings, their trials, their sadness and dark times to endure. When reflecting on their lives I was faced with my own darkness, forced to examine places I did not wish to dwell, memories I had buried long ago. In this area I am reinforcing the vulnerability of the observer (Behar, 1996) feeling the empathy (Church, 1995), placing myself, my very core, at risk in order to relay these aspects of the participants lives. Nevertheless these elements have to be included, without darkness there can be no light. On the whole the participants were quite positive about their lives, and their stories were mostly enlightening and uplifting, but they endured much to get there and this too must be acknowledged.

By preference none of the participants care to dwell here, they stayed only briefly in their dark places, yet they were surprisingly honest about these elements of their lives. I also became quite concerned about the well-being of some of the participants, in relaying these events they were forced to once again reach into a darkness they thought long gone, long buried and unable to hurt them. For at least one participant I was the first person ever told the story, the first to listen and that in itself places considerable responsibility on the listener. There can be no hint of judgement, no display of shock, nothing that will cause this person more pain and anguish. More importantly the vulnerability of the participant must be acknowledged and protected by the listener. There were tears and tissues and overwhelming honesty, but as these participants did not dwell on their darkness neither shall I.

The discussion of these issues arose mostly in relation to the explanation of the collages, or was triggered by one of the value cards. This area of conversation was not actively sought but relates overall to the question concerning their ‘saddest memories’, even though sadness does not accurately depict the range of emotional responses included in this section. As with all stories, a tale was begun must be heard to the end, and there was no way to halt the flow without causing further harm to these participants. So all was faithfully recorded and transcribed, with full
expectation the participants would request this area be removed after the member checking. To their credit, not one participant requested these elements be removed or modified in any way.

These conversations concern only some of the participants, and each has given their permission for these frank discussions of the darker elements of their lives to be included. I appreciate their honesty and courage in including these elements of their lives, and acknowledge that they are much braver than I.

9.8.1 CONVERSATIONS OF SURVIVAL

In visualizing this conversation between participants I see them sitting in a circle, heads almost bowed, with very little eye contact. Each listens respectfully and patiently to the other’s story of their childhood and relates it to their own experience. Listening is empathic but there is no judgement, just a sharing of past difficulties in a commonality of understanding:

Brenda: I remember sad times. I remember my parents fighting, I remember seeing my Dad cry and I had never seen him cry before. I remember my abuse as a child; I remember telling my Mum and her not believing me.

Zaynab: Well people wouldn’t believe you, especially when you are a child [like me] regarded as being a troublemaker and a liar, then no one is going to believe you and how are you going to identify them. It is something people don’t want to know about. I felt a lot of very hard times in those early years, from both my mother and the school, the boarding school and the teachers, shocking times, just one whole nightmare.

Tiffany: When I was young we went to live with my grandfather and he molested me, and I have felt for a long time that I feel the root of my problems come from that time, all my problems come from my childhood, all the stuff imbedded in me, fear confusion, etc, and all that black crap that I carried around for years I cried it all out and I finally learnt you have to forgive people, not for them, but for me.

Brenda: I was more outgoing as a child. I’m not like I was back then, I am a changed person, but I don’t let it rule my life, I don’t let it affect everything that I do. Some days I do, but then, when my depression sets in, I don’t, oh no I don’t. I can’t pretend. Sometimes I’m not pretending now, but sometimes I just can’t go out of the house because I just can’t pretend. It’s hard because it’s just… oh well its over now, move along type attitude, but I don’t let it affect everything that I do.

Zaynab: The horrible things you get at a boarding school, the actual boarding life…and a bit of abuse that I suffered there from the students, the older ones, which was sexual and none of my family knows about it…and that brings back very strong smells and it is a constant in the back of your mind, especially in a physical relationship
and it is hard to divorce that totally, you block it out but it is always just there…and you can’t talk to anyone about it.

Esi: I didn’t talk to my mum much. Well also she had a favourite, out of five kids she had a favourite, and it wasn’t me, [It was] the boy who bought the party line, that was manipulatable [sic]. The one who believed what mother said. Well there have been problems like that forever and it isolates that one from the siblings as well.

Tiffany: With Mum it was either beat the shit out of you or cuddle you, one extreme to the other.

Zaynab: I never had a good relationship with my mother…I always stuck by the fact that the emotional support that I desperately needed, she [her mother] had been unable to give me. I think it was that lack of emotion with her mother meant she didn’t have the skills.

Tiffany: When I was 14 they took her [mother’s] parental rights from her and made me a ward of the state. I went to the school when I was 12 and told them what was happening but they didn’t want to be involved, other parents knew but they didn’t want to be involved either. I was placed in a refuge, and my friends and their parents were really good and gave me clothes and makeup and stuff. But then the roof leaked and we moved to another refuge and then someone stole the stuff while I was away. Then the guy who ran the place got a bit friendly, I was sleeping on the lounge, he picked my hand up and put it on his penis, and I did the whole I am stirring in my sleep thing and pulled my hand back and then got up and ran away. Then I told [government department official] I couldn’t stay there so they put me in a foster home. And then made me a state ward and I was there for 2 ½ years.

Esi: I grew up in quite a dysfunctional family, as most of us do. There is a definition of a dysfunctional family. Do you know what it is? Any family with more than one person in it!

Tiffany: I have two half sisters and a half brother. I don’t see my brother because his mother doesn’t like him to be in contact with ‘Black bitches’.

Esi: I realized after a while that I was the smartest one [in her family], and it transpired after a while that that was true. But also I was one of the quietest ones, and I had these two big brothers that were domineering, so two domineering parents and two dominating elder brothers, and bitchy younger sister and trouble-making younger brother, and you just learnt to hang in with them, because there is no where else to go.

Bobbie: The whole generation of people like me, who have been raised by their grandparents or their aunts or you know older people, and we never really have been told why and so, you know not very many of us actually verbalise that loud, but we think it. Because I certainly have, and I’ve spoken to other people who’ve been raised the same and we sort of have these discussions and we say well why do you think, and they’ll say ‘I don’t know’, and you know it’s sort of like that taboo thing, that you don’t talk about it, you just sort of accept it.

Zaynab: I continued on with the nightmare until I, it was actually every day, I was coming home very distressed. I tried to recoup those missing years, and tried to catch up, but I was a very distraught child and I don’t think anyone ever realised because I was on the outside very happy and determined to be positive, but at the same time trying to convince everyone I was worthwhile. I was trying to prove myself until I was 40. And I had done so much I didn’t have to prove myself anymore but I had got in the habit of doing so many things just to prove that I could do it.
In relaying their stories, some tales were more intense than others and some participants are more affected than others by events of their past. Many surprised themselves by how disturbed they were by events of long ago. The level of metacognition amongst this group was another facet of the discussion; Zaynab linked her relationship to her mother to her mother’s relationship with her maternal grandmother. In doing so, she did not excuse what she saw as her mother’s inadequacy, but she did know there was a cause for the problem, and understood what the cause was, at least intellectually if not emotionally.

The participants’ responses to this part of our discussions were interesting. None asked for this section to be deleted, although as noted within her narrative Zaynab requested reassurance of her anonymity. Neither Bobbie nor Tiffany were worried about their anonymity or any part of their story being published. Bobbie treated her entire life as an open book and thought her experiences would serve as an example to others to avoid these areas. Tiffany’s experience as a ward of the state meant all these facets of her life were already a matter of public record. Her difficult childhood had been examined in court in front of many; therefore there was no reason to worry about any of these aspects of her life being shared with others now.

Brenda was the most disturbed by these discussions, and it is clear she is still greatly affected by aspects of the abuse that occurred in her childhood. When asked to write her own story she said she could not “because she would have to kill herself afterward” (Brenda, 2007). Brenda has twice attempted suicide via an overdose of prescription medication and periodically suffers from severe clinical depression which requires medication and constant treatment. She also struggles with alcohol abuse. Zaynab and Tiffany have also received counseling for the sexual abuse suffered in childhood, but as will be discussed in the next section, they found more strength from their religious beliefs than benefit from counseling. It was also apparent that Brenda was not alone in seeking assistance from substances, as some of the other participants also experimented with drug use:
9.8.2 DRUG EXPERIMENTATION

Tiffany:  It was my past coming back, and Oh well I fell in love and then I got into the pot. Everyone smoked pot, you went to a party and everyone had pot and then other drugs were around and I was a bit of an instigator, talking my friends to pop pills with me. But then I fell in love and he got me into needles.

Zaynab:  But when I was smoking dope in Queensland…it unlocked parts of my mind that are familiar but I couldn’t place in context they just flashed before me. It unlocked parts of your mind that meant you had images flashing past, because I had magic mushrooms as well and it was amazing the things that your mind can recreate but you couldn’t place it in context. They [the drugs] were very, very useful in my development. It showed me that reality, took me right outside of reality, and showed me reality is not as we see it, reality is completely different, and broadened my ability to accept and see things from a different perspective, which if I hadn’t done that I wouldn’t have seen before, it just rocks your sense of, I think I already had a broad view of things.

Bobbie: I never really had any hobbies, like normal hobbies. I used to play a lot of sport and then, I suppose my hobbies were smoking pot and mingling with friends in the old days when I was younger. Smoking pot, enjoying coffee, making hash cookies with other women. I grew up with it. I don't know if you know anything about Maori's culture, where I come from on the north island, pot was basically like a bartering tool. We were born into pot.

Esi:  I have done some pretty dumb things. I don’t see that I need to have done all the self-destructive things that I did. But it wouldn’t be worth the bother of going back to change it, because I would have done just another set of self-destructive things. Let’s just leave it at that, that will do. I often think that is why I think I get along reasonably well with the younger people...I can relate my past experience. Sometimes I am proud of myself. I stopped doing the self-destructive!

Esi allusion to 'self destructive behaviour' was brief but she declined to elaborate, so the form of this self destruction, whether it was drug abuse, suicidal tendencies or something else cannot be clearly ascertained. As stated Brenda has previously tried to commit suicide on more than one occasion, but Tiffany also discussed the ‘suicide pact’ (Tiffany, 2007) she had with a boyfriend as a teenager. Zaynab hinted at suicidal tendencies within her youth but again did not elaborate, whereas the thought never appears to have crossed Bobbie’s mind at all.

The drug addiction and experimentation was a total surprise when interviewing, particularly when Zaynab started talking about ‘magic mushies’ [psilocybin mushrooms] and the hallucination they brought being beneficial. Only Denko (1997) has discussed this facet of gifted individuals, a tendency to drink, smoke or experiment with illegal and often dangerous substances. Usually it is assumed the
more intelligent you are the less likely you are to do the self destructive or unhealthy. There have been some studies on the benefits of magic mushrooms. Griffiths, Richards, McCann and Jesse (2006) found that Psilocybin, the main substance that causes hallucinations in these mushrooms can cause mystical type experiences that have personal and spiritual significance. Moreno, Delgado and Gelenberg (2009) also found that Psilocybin can assist in controlling the effects of Obsessive Compulsive disorder.

All of the female participants in the study smoked at one time or another, although most had quit the habit at the time of the study. Only Tiffany still smoked, both cigarettes and marihuana. None of the males in the study ever smoked, but two of them consumed alcohol frequently. All of the females in the study barring Harriet had been heavy drinkers in the past but most had either given up or cut down. Zaynab and Bobbie were completely abstinent, but Tiffany only gave it up because it interfered with her epilepsy medication.

To some extent the smokers agreed that they found smoking of benefit in assisting to cut down their hypersensitivity to scents. In particular Brenda lamented the recovery of her sense of smell because it now meant she was assailed with body odours and other unpleasant aromas that had been somewhat muted before. Again this is consistent with Dabrowski’s Overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Tolan, 199; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008; Mendaglio, 2008, Figure 6).

9.8.3 FAMILY ISSUES

Mark, Son and Alex have not been included within the survival conversation as they did not discuss any darker aspects of their lives in great detail although they alluded to difficulties. Mark lost his father at a very young age and attended a boarding school for boys, separating him from his mother and sisters. He quite often stated that it did not affect him, yet he referred to two male teachers he was particularly close to:
In higher school, he was my science teacher and also my sports teacher, and he was a very strong personality was particularly demanding of me and not really with the others. It was the first time that somebody was sort of strict with me, and he actually improved me, and I appreciated that. I actually quite liked the fact that there was somebody so interested in me, because I didn’t have a father you know, and because he was, I knew that he was actually very warm, positive with me, and I realized that he was tough with me because he liked me or because there was some warmth, some something you know...And that happened again, I mean this was the first level of boarding school and then I moved from one place to another one, and again there was a similar teacher. He was also a sports teacher but he taught history, sports and German, and both by the way were also my house masters. I was in their respective houses, and they were responsible for me for all the other things and they took particularly tough care of me and I actually adored them both (Mark, 2006).

In later years he spoke of being close to mentors throughout his career, and maintaining the friendships he had made at boarding school, indicating that fellow students had become “like brothers” (Mark, 2006). Again he referred to his closeness to his father-in-law and how fortunate he had been to get along with his wife’s father. Throughout this theme, there was an underlying and perceptible element of seeking to fill the place lost by his father’s early demise.

Alex also alluded to some difficulties in childhood, his earliest memories include: “My parents fighting, they fight quite a bit, but they are still together. [They fight over] family issues” (Alex, 2006). During the phase of the interview he declined to discuss this area further but later mentioned it again during the value card activity, specifically in relation to the ‘family’ card: “family is really important to me. I never want the family to separate. I feel I am responsible for my brothers and sisters” (Alex, 2006). Alex declined to elaborate on these issues but is about to be married and throughout his discussion of his future plans there is a clear sense of his own need to provide an alternative environment to his siblings, a sanctuary where they can go when the fighting at home becomes unbearable. This idea is a complete contrast with his previous statement of never wanting the family to separate, but supports the sense of responsibility he feels toward his siblings.

Son briefly discusses the difficulties of living in a war torn country but said:

[It was] not very hard, it was war, but we lived far away from it. Not very far but about four days out from the city where my father was working so where all the doctors and all the hospitals and all of those things were, they would only fight when the bombs or helicopters came near (Son, 2006).
His succinct discussion of his childhood in a war torn country is disconcertingly matter of fact. It was simply his experience of childhood, although he tells one chilling example of having to leap into a ditch on the side of the road when he and his siblings were about to be hit by rapid gunfire from an aeroplane overhead. Son’s examples are lively and humorous rather than tales of terror, therefore the tone of the survival conversation would have been changed by his input. He once refers to the injuries and suffering of others in his country as ‘tragic’ but then moved on. This was simply his childhood. He accepts all trials in life as a part of his existence, there is no need to dwell on these areas.

Like some of the other participants Son also attended a boarding school and was isolated from his family:

> When I was a child I was in a Catholic boarding school in that country because my father went to war. [I went home ] for holidays, yes. But sometimes on holidays sometimes my mother…usually my mother went with my father from Monday to Friday. But I got my grand-mother and my aunty. My brothers and sisters, they were quite young, they stayed with my grandmother (Son, 2007).

Although Son was from a Buddhist family the safest place for him to be was in a Catholic Boarding school, and eventually his siblings joined him there. The other phases of his life that may have caused him any trauma were again glossed over:

> At the time the communist party had just started to take control over the country. So when I left Laos I needed the signature from the previous government and the communist government so I needed two signatures just to get out after the communists took over. My wife, my fiancée at the time, she fled Laos to France and then I left England to go to France and stayed nearly ten years. After that I spent about three and a half years in Scotland doing my studies, because I was told I can’t go back to practising law, so to practise law I would have to start all over again, after that I hung around in London for three years, and then I came to Australia (Son, 2007).

As retold in this excerpt, Son has spent much of his life displaced from his home country and his family. He also had to deal with the trauma of his father’s imprisonment:

> My father was a commander in the area and they imprisoned him for a while and after he was released from the camps he fled the country as well. Then my parents they were sponsored [to Australia] by my sister and brother here (Son, 2007).
Despite these hardships Son accepts these difficulties as a part of his life and does not supply much detail. They are simply things that happened, they are over, and do not seem to affect his overall demeanour or well being. This acceptance of fate is in sharp contrast with some of the other participants who still struggle to come to terms with the darker aspects of their lives.

In complete contrast to all of the other participants is Harriet. Although she relates some minor incidents from school, and refers to an early memory on a plane that disturbs her she cannot remember why this memory is so disturbing. She did mention that her father died when she was a young adult, but otherwise seems to have a reasonably happy childhood, and with no siblings, she never felt displaced from others in her family. Her response to being asked about ‘saddest memories’ was that it “was a bad question” (Harriet, 2006), rather than supply an actual answer. Harriet’s response to a later question would indicate it is not that there were no sad, bad or difficult memories but that she chose not to share them. When asked if there was anything in her life that she regretted she replied:

Oh yes, but I am extremely unlikely to tell you about it. It was one of the things in reflecting whether I wanted to be involved in this is that the study is both broad and deep, I’m just a little bit scared about saying certain things. It would be fair to say some sort of ethical principles I have really learned about the hard way by violating them, but I don’t think there are any that had dreadful consequences or made a huge difference in my life, but the fact that I still remember about them, and feel guilty about them and don’t even want to tell you about them, would indicate...[that they affected her profoundly] and in balance I regret that I did them (Harriet, 2006).

Thus Harriet’s reserve makes it difficult to ascertain whether there were areas she needed to overcome throughout her life.

Kerr (1994) discusses the “psychological adjustment” (p.169) required of gifted women in order to adapt to their changing life circumstances. She found they significant shared experiences, such as: periods of time alone, voracious reading, absence or death of a parent and the taking of responsibility for oneself (Kerr, 1994). Both Harriet and Mark experienced the death of a parent quite early in their lifetimes, although Harriet does not consider this an issue. Mark, Zaynab and Son all attended boarding schools and were therefore separated from their parents at a young
age. Zaynab and Brenda were the children of divorced parents, whereas both Bobbie and Tiffany were removed from their parents. Each has had periods of time spent alone; and all but Harriet were forced to take responsibility for themselves early in life. Moreover, Zaynab, Tiffany and Brenda were often placed in a position where they had to “mother their mothers” (Wilson, 1994), increasing their level of responsibility. Wilson (1994) found the level of maturity amongst gifted women forced into this position because their mothers were incapacitated, incapable or inadequate was significant in later life. Quite often these women became leaders because they had been forced into a parenting role when younger, and had in fact learnt to parent themselves (Wilson, 1994).

Resilience as an important factor for gifted women (Cuffaro, 2002), but it would be equally important for gifted men. Emotional intelligence, both intrapersonal and interpersonal is necessary to build resilience to the challenges of life, and the gifted are capable of feeling complex emotions at a young age (Cuffaro, 2002). Many gifted women use their faith and/or spirituality as a protective factor, and many believe the challenges they were facing served a higher purpose (Cuffaro, 2002). This too was consistent with the experiences of most of the gifted adults in this study.
9.9 THE SEARCH FOR MEANING:

Illustration 36 – Spiritual Intelligence. This picture is simply a picture of a black hole obtained from the web and changed to ‘acrylic’ painting. Rather than use an icon or symbol that portrayed any one individual belief system, this picture depicts the ‘mystery’ of the universe, all that we still do not know and the often held view that some ‘higher’ power, usually beyond this world, exists.
9.9.1 RELIGIOUS SUPPORT

Throughout this research one of the most interesting elements has been the intense theological type discussions with participants. Surprisingly, despite her doctoral work in theology, Harriet declined to address any of the discussion concerning religious beliefs or spiritual intelligence. She simply stated that she is a practising Roman Catholic and her beliefs are consistent with those of that religion. Mark too declined to participate in this part of the discussion and said his beliefs were his own but he also said that religion was a sensitive topic in his country, due to the history of the Holocaust, so he preferred to avoid the topic altogether. Neither Mark or Harriet were subjected to the traumas some of the other participants faced as discussed in the previous section, although both lost a parent at a young age. However it is clear that for some of the other participants their faith literally saved their sanity, if not their lives.

Both Zaynab and Tiffany were saved by Chrisitanity:

Tiffany: I am a Christian, and when I became a Christian at twenty-two I really started to look at myself as a person. Since then my past has been let go, and when I become a Christian and I kind of gave it up to God, and all that black crap that I carried around for years I cried it all out and I finally learnt you have to forgive people, not for them, but for me. If an Aboriginal does find faith, then they’re very faithful.

Zaynab: And I continued on with the nightmare until I was fifteen, it was actually every day I was coming home very distressed, everyday till I became a born again Christian. I gave my life to God when I was fifteen, and I feel he did many things to save me, so the gift that I have is that he reached into my life and, I don’t normally go this spiritual, he reached into my life, so I feel my life has is a gift, and everything that’s happened to me is a gift, and so therefore I have to use whatever he’s given me, in return.

Both were traumatised by sexual abuse when younger and both experimented with illegal drugs and alcohol. Both were inclined to promiscuity in their youth, prior to meeting their respective husbands. Yet Tiffany no longer attends prayer groups or any kind of religious gathering and Zaynab has since converted to Islam.

Tiffany still practices Christianity but in her own way, she contends that all ground is sanctified and her own home is as good a place as any to speak to God. In this sense she has attained a higher level of religiousity in having a direct mediated relationship
with God (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001) but she has yet to realise the highest levels where the ultimate being inhabits each moment (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001) or the self is realised and grounded with oneness with God (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001).

Possibly the most profound point that Tiffany made was in discussion of the symbols of Christianity, she does not believe in wearing or displaying the crucifix and stated: ‘My grandmother was murdered, she was stabbed to death but you don’t see me wearing a dagger around my neck to commemorate the event!’ (Tiffany, 2006). No doubt this point has been made in various forms by others, but it struck me as an extremely valid point of view and I have not been able to sight a crucifix since without remembering her comment.

Zaynab’s conversion from Christianity to Islam took place during her first marriage and she received her initial training in Islam in Indonesia through ‘a village person, a very good man, who knew a lot but was a humble person’ (Zaynab, 2006). She explains her reason for converting thusly:

Because Islam sees themselves as a continuation of Judaism and Christianity, just a continuation, except for Muslims it started with Adam, and it is just that Jesus was a Jew and we believe everything that he said, except that he was the son of God, it is basically the same story, it is just that we have the latest update, version 5.1 install now! There is not really a lot of difference between the spirituality I had as a Christian and the spirituality I have now, except that, it is more specific, a lot of the glitches have been removed and a lot of the uncertainties and the contradictions. As a Christian I would question is Jesus the son of God? Am I praying to Jesus? Or the holy spirit? Who am I really praying to? How does this work? And it was confusing, now all those issues in terms of the contradictory nature are all clarified. I know who I am praying to. The only difference with Islam is, no matter how much Bin Laden or anyone tries to corrupt it, you still have access to the original source, you don’t have access to the original Christian sources. You don’t know what was written in Aramic, you don’t know what Moses said to the Hebrew, you have a recollection of a recollection and it has been misinterpreted, but in the Koran you have got the original, I know you are interpreting it this way but this is the text, this is the original and I am interpreting it this way, you can’t tell me how to interpret it. With Islam, that information is available to everyone with only minimal learning, which is very empowering, but also very able to be misused in some ways because anyone can come in and start their own brand of Islam, which is what Bin Laden is doing, but anyway it is all politics (Zaynab, 2006)

During our numerous conversations Zaynab told me the story of Mecca, and how Hagar, second wife of Abraham, found water there by running between two hills and now hundreds of pilgrims now trace her footsteps every year. She also discussed the
Islamic concept of Hell, and that we all have to serve some time there because nobody is perfect, not even Mohammed. However she also explained that we are rewarded for the good deeds we do in life and that there is a balance when we die when all things are weighed and judged. And that those who are most pure will have their bodies protected in death in a similar manner to the Catholic belief that a saint’s body will not decay. The interesting part of this conversation was that although I knew all these things, I still wanted to hear Zaynab tell me, because she really could recite the Koran most beautifully, but more than that she could tell a story with such intensity and passion that her audience was simply captured by her words. The interesting thing is that her voice alone on the tape was not as effective, the effect was only apparent in person.

Again Zaynab has attained a higher level of religiousity in having a direct mediated relationship with God (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001) and she does appear to have reached a higher level where the ultimate being inhabits each moment (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001) and the self is realised and grounded with oneness with God (Nierenberg & Sheldon, 2001). This is evident in her calm explanation that if anyone wrongs her she has only to note that she will see them on the day that all are weighed and balanced and they will be punished for their crimes, and because she truly believes this, and that God is with her always, she is sustained by her religious convictions within her everyday life.

Son was not particularly religious and his beliefs were a contradiction of sorts. He was a both a Catholic and a Buddhist, as Bouma (2006) describes. But it should be noted that he only converted to Catholicism in order to attend the boarding school in Laos, however he is grateful to the Catholic Church for providing a sanctuary for him and his siblings in a war torn land. Therefore although he attends the Temple with the rest of his Laos community, he also attends a Catholic Church regularly. For Son Buddhism is more than a religion, it is part of his community, and his attendance supplies many cultural needs as well as spiritual needs.
Alex also sees his expression of faith within the Hindu religion as part of his cultural upbringing rather than a religious affiliation. However after years of negotiation he has finally been granted permission to wed his fiancée provided he converts to her religion and becomes Christian Orthodox. Although Alex is uncomfortable with some of the practices of her faith, such as confession, he is very much in love, and does not feel bound by his Hindu faith. Again he perceives her Church as simply an extension of her Egyptian community, and will attend her Church in order to ensure she is not ostracised by her faith for marrying an outsider. Fortunately Alex’s parents have agreed to his conversion from the Hindu faith, and his wider community will not ostracise the pair, otherwise these two would be forced to either separate or endure their life together without any family or community support.

Each of these participants drew strength from their religious beliefs or their religious communities and this has supported them throughout their most difficult times. But religion is only one element of spirituality experienced by the gifted adults within this study.

9.9.2 SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Although Brenda is an atheist and Esi is a ‘none’, both have elements of spirituality that underpin their sense of self.

Brenda contends she is an atheist and believes in no higher power or religion. She made this choice in her late teens when she went to a priest for answers and decided that he had none, at least none that made any sense to her at the time. In spite of this contention Brenda was quite happy to discuss spirituality, although in an abstract manner. Unexpectedly during the course of one of these conversations Brenda said that she was psychic and proceeded to relate several anecdotes of times she had predicted either tragedy or good fortune in the lives of those around her. Brenda does not attribute her abilities to any higher power, she sees it as an instinct that we all have and contends it is more developed in some people than others. At that time
she said I was ‘going to win lotto’ (Brenda, 2006) but she did not specify when. Thus far the event has not occurred, but perhaps in time.

Brenda is the most fragile of the participants and would possibly have benefitted from some supportive agency or belief, particularly in dealing with her childhood sexual abuse. Yet, despite her protests and contentions that there is no higher power there are signs that Brenda possesses a degree of spiritual intelligence. She acts from her own principles and deeply held beliefs; has used her adversity in a positive way; and has a holistic viewpoint that enables her to see the larger patterns within things (Zohar & Marshall, 2001). She actively celebrates diversity and values all people regardless of their differences; is deeply compassionate and empathic; and has an ability to reframe her view to see the wider context of a problem (Zohar & Marshall, 2001). Therefore she demonstrates seven of Zohar and Marshall’s (2001) twelve criteria for spiritual intelligence. Within Wigglesworth’s (2008) criteria she has reached the stage of Universal Awareness in all but one regard. While she does have an awareness of worldviews and interconnectedness, she would struggle with an awareness of spiritual laws (Wigglesworth, 2008).

Esi, in contrast is deeply spiritual, although she does not belong to any particular faith. She respects the Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and says that ‘Indigenous icons are very powerful in the Australian landscape because one of the powerful things is that it is there but not there’ (Esi, 2006). Esi displays a deep connection to whichever land she is on and her collage reflects this with representations from the Buddhist culture, Korea and Japan:

Which is another world and because of the problems with the Buddhist culture they were banned to the mountains and they are particularly beautiful. Geomacists are called into find the appropriate place to connect with the land….this is according to Feng Shui, which is the Chinese thing for the most suitable location, and when you get there you can see they are actually what they supposed to be, and you can feel, I don’t know if you can feel the energy or not, but the locations are magnificent…Underneath that are geezos [sic], and you will find them all around the place in Japan, their purpose is to safeguard the traveler. Usually somebody puts a clean bib on them now and then; usually they are at crossroads to safeguard the wary traveler (Esi, 2006).
For Esi, her interest in religious practices is aesthetic, she enjoys the beautiful artistry and ceremonies but her lack of faith in any one religion is more ideological:

Then there is Buddha which is really the dominant thing in Japan and it is none aggressive religion, which is a bit unusual in today’s world. And in the Christian religion….all religions to me are alright, but the way they are manipulated by the human race is not. And to me the one big negativity with the Christian religion is their obsession with being the ‘right’ one. And the need to convert people, and conversion is an act of aggression and what you call imperial colonization and all things like that, and it is an insult, it is arrogant, because you are assuming you know better (Esi, 2006).

In this sense Esi is able to maintain her deeply held connection to the land and the universe without practising any one religion; she enjoys the best of all of them and is as likely to attend a Buddhist Temple one week and a Jewish Synagogue on another. She has a commitment to her own spiritual growth (Wigglesworth, 2008); is spontaneous; compassionate; humble; and feels a sense of vocation, a need to give something back (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Esi is Self Aware; Holistic; and celebrates diversity with every breath that she takes; therefore she meets most of Zohar and Marshall’s (2000) criteria for spiritual intelligence and is working within the Higher Self/Ego Self Mastery level supplied by Wigglesworth (2008).

In contrast Mark who avoided all discussion of religion or spirituality maintained one single belief throughout his life story:

I’ve been a seriously lucky person, I truly believe I’m a very lucky person, but I’m not a gifted person. I had all sorts of, not just one or two, I had all sorts of things happening, which were highly positive for me. And for my career, for my life, for you know for everything (Mark, 2006).

Regardless of his beliefs Mark clearly believes that some external fate has guided his pathway through life and made sure that he had every opportunity to succeed. He chooses to refer to this external force as luck. Tannebaum (1983) would call it the ‘chance factor’ but in any case it is clear that although Mark does not meet any of the spiritual intelligence criteria, Mark believes he has had assistance in fulfilling his life’s purpose.

It is equally clear when discussing Spiritual Intelligence that Bobbie is a shining example of how this intelligence is manifested. Bobbie possesses the elusive ‘Mana’
qualities recorded by Bevan-Brown, et al (2008). She is also the living example of
the ‘service requirement’ (Bevan-Brown, et al. 2008) continually using her gifts and
giving of herself to serve others in her community.

Bobbie clearly believes that everything happens for a reason and she is guided by
wairua (or spirit) in everything she does. When one of her children was found to
have a brain tumour she was relieved to find it was benign, and understood when she
was told that he must remain in Australia for check up for at least five years that she
was meant to stay and help the community here rather than return to New Zealand.
She also believes that the guiding partnership is equal and if she asks the spirits for
help she will receive it:

If I needed to know the answer to something, I would find the right person that
would be able to give me a really good answer in order to clarify, answers that
were that were knowledgeable, that were clear. And I still do that now…what
happens is, I talk about, I have a third eye, and sometimes I can see things in my
head. I see pictures in my head. I see things in my mind. All of a sudden I see this
woman, she is an old Maori woman who has just come across here, and she has a
chin Moko. So I see her face, so I said to my husband I am going to see this person,
and he said ‘yeah?’ you are really going to see that lady?” And I said yeah, I think I
need to. I need to go and see her (Bobbie, 2006).

When she finds the people that she needs they do not all give her advice that she
wishes to hear, but she has now accepted it is the advice that she needs to hear and
will follow it, believing the wairua has guided her to that particular person in that
place and time.

Bobbie believes that her harmony with the intentions of the spirit comes from the old
teaching, from learning the old ways:

The language that I use comes from, it’s like a strong heart thing that you know,
and it’s that thing that what I call it is, I identify as, in the old days they gave you,
they taught you, that you have the light, that it’s a light. The wrong and the right.
When you are right the light will beam so much so that others will see it. When
you’re not, it’s dark and it won’t make sense. But when I think about it it’s so
right. With some the light is on and you’ll know, and you’ll know and you’ll and
they say in Maori that you’ll know other people with the light on because the talk
you have is sweet (Bobbie, 2006).
And anyone who meets her could not dispute the ‘light’ that shines from her. Bobbie expresses a profound wisdom whilst being one of the most natural people you will ever met. Her soul shines through her eyes and she is the manifestation of a spiritual awareness that others can only hope to achieve. She is clearly ‘Self Aware’; ‘vision-led; Holistic and ‘celebrates diversity’ (Zohar & Marshal, 2000). She is spontaneous, compassionate and able to reframe her viewpoint constantly (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Her sense of vocation is as evident as her humility, and she asks Fundamental ‘why’ questions, therefore meeting all of Zohar and Marshall’s (2000) twelve criteria for spiritual intelligence.

But where she really shines is in comparison to Wigglesworth’s (2008) criteria. Bobbie meets all the criteria in the highest level of Social Mastery/Spiritual Presence. She is a wise and effective spiritual teacher and mentor; a wise and effective change agent; she makes compassionate and wise decisions; has a calming and healing presence; and is constantly aligned with the ebb and flow of life (Wigglesworth, 2008). In all explanations of Spiritual Intelligence the descriptors are simply describing this truly awesome woman in accurate detail, in all things she is the poster child for spiritual intelligence. She is capable of insights that astound, and I still have not forgotten her uncanny ability to predict the words on the value cards before she had turned them over. Clearly some higher power speaks through Bobbie, and while I remain unable to clearly define spiritual intelligence in an academic manner, I know that this woman possesses it.

Throughout this Chapter there has been a clear relationship between each of the categories: Because these gifted adults believed they were weird not gifted, they needed to employ a ‘masquerade’ in order to mask their true selves. But this created a dilemma when it came to leadership, as becoming a leader meant you could no longer hide as effectively. Their inherent morality and empathic intelligence forces them to act, which relates back to the original leadership issue. Their own choices and external forces guide them down alternate career and life paths, which then leads to homesickness and being displaced from their own cultures. The Abyss is the tragedies they have endured and the depths to which some have sunk, with suicide,
drugs, and alcohol when trying to fit in with society or console themselves when they could not. Spirituality is how some cope with it all, and this has added to their resilience, and some found religion as a way to find their way home.

This Chapter has presented and synthesized the data against each of the themes. The next Chapter will conclude the findings of this study and provide recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 10
PERORATE

Illustration 37 – A research Journey through metaphorlc Imagery (Gruppetta, 2006b)

This dissertation shared one researcher’s journey through the ‘promise and perils’ (Slattery, 2001) of using metaphorlc imagery. Apart from providing welcome relief from the more tedious facets of research, it broadened the scope of investigation and allowed multiple facets of the research experience to be explored through the use of such metaphorlc imagery. Throughout this activity I have found that I suffer from an asynchrony of vision and talent. That which I can visualise inside the kaleidoscope myriad of images within my mind’s eye can never be achieved. My imagination over reaches my ability with image or words, I can never truly share the vision, only provide a glimpse into my own self reflective research practice and the reasoning behind the use of metaphorlc imagery to examine the research journey in greater depth. Within the final presentation the duality of perspectives and survival of trial by fire are represented once again by the main image.
10.1 CONCLUSION

There were several factors that arose out of this thesis. The most significant part of the finding of this thesis is that Freeman’s (2001) contention that gifted adults only display gifted characteristics because they were labelled as gifted as children is refuted. Only a small portion of the participants were identified as gifted in childhood and yet they all exhibit many of the characteristics (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1997; Tolan, 199; Daniels & Piechowski, 2008; Mendaglio, 2008, Figure 6, p?) and ‘too too liabilities’ (Jacobsen, 1999) noted in the gifted literature.

Another significant factor is the variety of ways giftedness has been defined by each culture. Several cultural groups recommended participants based on their interpersonal skills, particularly their leadership qualities. Within the literature leadership qualities have not been defined as a characteristic of giftedness, although interpersonal skills are acknowledged as one of Gardner’s (1999) Multiple Intelligences. The multitude of ways that giftedness can be defined within a culture increases the difficulty of finding a single method of defining giftedness. Sternberg’s ‘Rainbow Project’ (2007) has merit, but it is an impossible task to define and assess giftedness in the myriad of cultural contexts around the world. Broader definitions of giftedness would ensure that gifted people of all ages and backgrounds are identified and supported to use their gifts effectively.

The inherent cultural weighting of I.Q. tests has already been well recognised (Howe, 1997) and it is a finding of this study that characteristic surveys, such as the one used by Macy (1996) are equally culturally weighted. For English as Second Language users the vast differences in grammatical structure in languages other than English mean that those tested are unable to perceive the subtle nuances in meaning within the structure of any English based test. Therefore these tests cannot perceive gifted characteristics with any accuracy.
It is equally clear that the participants self-define giftedness in terms of academic achievement, specifically in terms of an I.Q. score. Their perceptions of giftedness have been defined by mainstream Western culture criteria rather than their own cultural perceptions, and each has been influenced by the mythology of gifted behaviour presented in the media (Cox, 2000). Therefore they resist the label of giftedness and hide their gifts and talents in order to avoid being seen as the ‘other’.

Many of these participants are already othered by their cultural differences and consequently are dually othered by their giftedness. Despite this another significant finding of this study is that all of the participants have found ways to straddle both worlds, they are competent in contemporary Western society as well as their own culture. In this sense these adults display complex giftedness. Nevertheless ‘Imposter Syndrome’ (Wells, 2006) is a significant factor in all their lives. Some feel an imposter due to the need to walk in worlds other than their own; some are imposters because they hide their giftedness and some do not believe in their own abilities and feel they have achieved high positions fraudulently.

In finding that these gifted adults are ‘other’ but also highly bi-competent my original analogy with a Siamese fighting fish (Gruppetta, 2006b) requires revising. A platypus would be a better metaphor. The platypus is neither fish nor fowl nor animal and in the traditional Aboriginal Dreaming story when asked to choose which group to affiliate with the platypus refuses to choose and instead agrees to be part of all (Koorang, 2006). These gifted adults have found ways to be an integral part of many cultural and academic worlds rather than isolate themselves; therefore likening gifted adults to the platypus is a better analogy.

However, it is also a finding of this study that the deficit view of minority groups severely affects the identification of giftedness in those who present as ‘other’ to the Anglo Saxon Christian middle-class culture. Although this enables the participants to hide their giftedness and therefore only be othered once for their cultural and/or religious differences, this is detrimental to assisting these students to fully realise their potential.
It is also a significant finding of this study that these gifted adults display high levels of moral and empathic intelligence and that these intelligences underpin the imperative that guides them to be of service to others. It is apparent that these gifted adults care deeply about others and the state of the world despite their own isolation from some aspects of humanity. This moral and empathic imperative ensures that they are not isolated from broader societal groups; rather they are required to extend their skills in order to be of service to others. This ‘service’ requirement is an integral part of defining Maori giftedness (Bevan-Brown et al, 2008) and would benefit the field if this characteristic of giftedness is included in the gifted literature.

It is not a finding of this study that gifted adults are more Emotionally Intelligent (Goleman, 1996). Many of the participants display resilience despite horrendous childhood circumstances, however some are still deeply troubled and have yet to find the intrapersonal intelligence to address these issues. In spite of this there are commonalities amongst the participants that confirm Cuffaro’s (2002) finding that early trauma contributes to realising giftedness in adulthood. The periods of time alone, absence or death of a parent and the taking of responsibility for oneself (Kerr, 1994) are consistent with the experiences of almost all the participants in this study.

Spiritual Intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2000) has not been clearly defined by this research. Although many of the participants display high levels of spiritual intelligence, it has been developed through their cultural, religious or community contexts rather than as an inherent element of giftedness. It is confirmed by this study that religious belief and support from religious communities is a significant factor in achieving resilience (Cuffaro, 2002) in gifted adults. Much more research is needed on Spiritual Intelligence, as the value of developing spiritual intelligence to sustain emotional stability and cope with the tragedies of life is apparent.
10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

My recommendations arising from this doctoral study are threefold: further research, educational and contribution to the literature on giftedness.

Further research recommendations:

a) Research must be conducted into establishing a culturally inclusive method of identifying gifted characteristics. An activity similar to the value card activity used in this study could be used as a basis for this identification; however the activity would have to be thoroughly investigated to ensure no cultural weighting influenced identification.

b) There needs to be more research done on the definition of giftedness within Aboriginal culture. This should be equivalent with the type of research conducted by Bevan-Brown et al., 2008) Although there are difficulties within an Australian setting due to the vast range of Aboriginal language groups within Australia, more research needs to be conducted in order to improve educational outcomes for gifted Aboriginal students.

c) More research also needs to be conducted into the moral and empathic imperative that elicits the leadership response in gifted individuals. Many of these gifted adults were also motivated by their own cultural background, fighting for the rights of the ‘other’ because they were themselves ‘other’. This raises a question for further investigation - Are you more likely to reach the higher stages of morality and empathic intelligence if you yourself are othered or oppressed in some way?

d) More research is again required in investigating whether there is an underlying cultural premise within some cultural or religious communities that encourages their members to address social issues to define whether it is an inherent individual attribute or a product of communal practice.
Educational recommendations:

e) Gifted students should be recognised as being as ‘other’ as any other minority group and strategies should be incorporated into classroom practice that increase social skills and acceptance. Gifted students need to be encouraged to display their giftedness rather than hide their abilities, in order to avoid underachievement, and this can be achieved by promoting the acceptance of a range of diversity and difference within the classroom.

f) Culturally other gifted students should be encouraged to be bi-competent and taught skills that enable them to straddle both worlds. Their own culture should be celebrated and they should be encouraged to become competent in that culture as well as meet the expectation of Western culture.

g) The school system should do more to address the ‘deficit viewpoint’ (Gibson & Vialle, 2007; Gruppetta, 2003b) that is reflected within the Australian school system. In particular teachers need to be educated to welcome a diverse range of students to their classrooms without the inherent prejudices that ensure some students are viewed as inferior because of their cultural or religious background.

Contributions to the literature on giftedness:

h) Leadership should be recognised as a specific gifted characteristic rather than perceived as a by-product of giftedness.

i) Service to others should also be recognised as an attribute of giftedness.

10.3 POSTETHICAL REVIEW

In conducting this research I followed my own ethical guidelines written expressly for this research. In all areas participants were permitted to negotiate all facets of their interaction with the research and allowed the final decision on how they and their data were portrayed within the final dissertation. Negotiations with participants in the initial recruitment phase were marred by an incident of ‘inadvertent offence’ (Gruppetta, 2008) where a Muslim participant was highly offended by dog hair on my clothing as fully documented in Chapter Six. As per my own guidelines I
worked through this situation with the participant, however she declined to continue with the study, therefore her data were returned to her and not included within the findings.

Due to the ‘small world phenomenon’ (Milgram, 1967) an incident that occurred early in the research was the accidental meeting of two of the participants at a conference I was attending. At the time I had completed three interviews with Esi and one interview with Bobbie. Their attendance at the conference was not surprising as the conference theme was research theory, and Bobbie was a PhD student, whilst Esi was completing a Masters, although at different universities. After arriving at the conference I firstly encountered Bobbie, and then Esi hailed me, and I was obliged to introduce them to each other.

Conscious of privacy issues, I introduced each to the other as a student I had met at previous conference. Esi raised an eyebrow but did not correct my introduction, whereas Bobbie simply accepted the introduction. Neither questioned me later as to why I had introduced them in that way, each having a complete understanding of my deep concern for complying with ethical guidelines.

This meeting was quite interesting in the sense that whilst both could relate easily to me, they initially appeared to have difficulty conversing with each other and finding common ground. I have since discovered that despite their completely different cultural background and age groups they have become quite good friends and quite often accompany each other to conference forums. To my knowledge they have not told each other that they are both participants in my study, however such disclosure is out of my control.

10.4 POSTSCRIPT

The perspectives presented of these participants’ lives are restricted to only a small slice of time. “The narratives we shape are necessarily limited. Their lives go on; our presentations of them are framed” (Siedman, 1998, p.111). Involvement in a research project can also impact on the participants and change their viewpoints and
future choices as a direct consequence of their involvement in the research (NHNRC, 2001). The post study choices of these participants reflect little impact from their involvement in the study with the exception of Brenda. Although all their lives have changed since finalising the study, only Brenda seems to have been directly affected by her involvement in the study.

Brenda has once again changed her career path and is now teaching in tertiary areas. One of the major factors influencing this choice has been the economic downturn which placed considerable strain on her finance career. She has struggled emotionally through much of the career change, and almost lost her marriage. She and her husband have reconciled now and Brenda has just enrolled in a PhD, although she still struggles with imposter syndrome and is unsure whether she is capable of this level of study. I can only hope she eventually comes to realise her giftedness and recognise she is not an imposter within academia but has every right to claim her place in the field.

Harriet, Esi and Bobbie have all finalised their studies, both Harriet and Bobbie have completed their Doctorates, and Esi has completed her Masters. Harriet notified me recently that she has returned to live in Australia for the time being, but has not made any further contact.

Esi and Bobbie have both kept in touch. Bobbie’s children have left home now and she is struggling with ‘empty nest syndrome’ but overjoyed to have become a grandmother recently. Esi, after realising through the work on her collage that she needed a partner has recently remarried. Her husband is Italian and they are blissfully happy.

Mark has increased his external interests in art and opera, and seems even less semi-retired than before, however he seems to have changed little else.

Tiffany has continued to struggle through her marriage breakup, and has now given custody of her children to her estranged husband. She has currently started a new
relationship and is pregnant with her fourth child whilst pursuing her photographic career.

Zaynab is no longer married, although still working with Islamic schools in her community. She briefly toyed with running for Parliament, and then decided that politics was not her career path.

Alex has married since his interview and I was privileged to be invited to the wedding. As with the wishes of his bride’s parents the ceremony was Christian Orthodox. However in the middle of the reception the bridal party left and returned in traditional Hindu clothing, with Alex giving me the tiniest of winks as he passed by my table. The guests were informed that to honour both cultures a traditional Hindu blessing would be performed. As soon as they began I had to rapidly conceal a grin, the ‘traditional blessing’ was in actual fact a complete Hindu wedding ceremony, although only some of the other guests seemed aware of it. In reality Alex and his bride were married twice on the same day, and afterward Alex told me they thought this was the best way to mollify both sets of parents. There could be no dispute in either culture that they were married, both traditions were honoured and everyone was happy. As he later explained, Alex invited me to witness the event because he knew I would immediately understand that there were two ceremonies, although the majority of the Christian Orthodox guests appeared to be unaware.

Son has changed the least, although this is not surprising as he seems to be a perennial stable person regardless of what happens around him. He remains working in the same field and continues to support the Buddhist community tirelessly.

I myself find that on completion of this dissertation that I am very aware of its strengths and limitations. Although a different final product than what I first anticipated it presents the overall findings of my research into giftedness to the academy. My final reflection on my own giftedness leads me to want to investigate my own level of bi-competency and develop the skill of interweaving academic literacy within my own narrative writing style.
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Table 1. Ancestry of Sydney’s Population by birthplace of parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry by birthplace of parents</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oceania:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,135,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Australian Peoples (Including Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander)</td>
<td>4,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>20,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td>27,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Oceanian</td>
<td>37,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,224,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West European:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1,086,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>96,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>366,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>38,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>99,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other North-West European</td>
<td>72,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,761,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern and Eastern European:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>167,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maltese</td>
<td>47,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>31,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>112,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>22,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>28,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>32,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>20,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Southern and Eastern European</td>
<td>105,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>567,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North African and Middle Eastern:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>114,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>18,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other North African and Middle Eastern</td>
<td>77,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asian:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>58,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>57,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>10,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other South-East Asian</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East Asian:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>248,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other North-East Asian</td>
<td>43,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>292,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern and Central Asian:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>66,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Southern and Central Asian</td>
<td>55,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of the Americas</td>
<td>49,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan African</td>
<td>29,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>315,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Persons</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,948,015</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: ABS, 2007)
Table 2. Religious beliefs and/or practices in the population of Sydney.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>135,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>794,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>61,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brethren</td>
<td>3,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1,182,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches of Christ</td>
<td>6,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td>12,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter Day Saints</td>
<td>12,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>19,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Christian</td>
<td>24,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>174,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>36,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian and Reformed</td>
<td>116,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>9,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist</td>
<td>10,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
<td>155,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Protestant</td>
<td>11,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian (not defined)</td>
<td>50,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,680,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>48,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>134,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>32,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religious Groups</td>
<td>22,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described or not defined</td>
<td>61,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>361,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,904,815</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: ABS, 2007)
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

HERC PROTOCOL REPORT

ATTACHMENT 1

HERC PROTOCOL NO.
HREC 05/141

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR
Grupetta, Maree

PROJECT TITLE
The life journey of gifted adults: A narrative exploration of developmental differences across cultures

APPROVAL DATE
September 5 2005

EXPIRY DATE
December 30 2006

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL (if applicable)

Please advise the Human Ethics Officer if your records differ from the above Protocol.
Research Project

Title: The Life Journey of Gifted Adults: a narrative exploration of developmental differences across cultures.

Dear (Name inserted),

My name is Maree Gruppetta, as a Doctoral student at UWS, with an interest in Gifted and Talented education. As discussed during our initial telephone conversation I am currently seeking participants for a research project as part of my Doctoral dissertation requirements. The research project is focused on investigating the experiences of Gifted and Talented Adults representing a variety of cultures within Australia. The information generated by this research will be valuable in informing Gifted and Talented education in the future.

For the purpose of this research Gifted persons are not restricted to only those demonstrating academic giftedness. Gifted individuals are those that ‘stand out’ as particularly gifted or talented within your community, and may include giftedness in any field. It is understood that giftedness may be defined differently within cultural contexts, and discussion regarding the various ways in which your culture may define giftedness and/or specific characteristics of giftedness would be welcomed prior to contacting participants for the study.

Once a criteria for giftedness within your cultural context is established you will be asked to forward the attached information to any person you feel is ‘gifted’ or extraordinarily talented in any field within the blank stamped envelope provided for you to address to the nominated individual. The envelope contains an information letter and an ‘expression of interest form’ and a stamped self addressed envelope should the Gifted individual be interested in further information about participating in the study, and these are attached for your perusal prior to further discussion. Alternatively my supervisor and myself may be contacted for further explanation:

Researcher
Mrs. Maree Gruppetta
0417 310 410
m.gruppetta@uws.edu.au

Supervisor
Dr. Janice Hall
4736 0378
j.hall@uws.edu.au
Involvement by participants would begin from August, 2005 and be finalised by December 1st, 2006. Participant involvement is expected to include a minimum of five interview sessions lasting approximately two hours each. During these sessions participants will be asked questions regarding their backgrounds and significant events within their lives. These sessions will be audio-taped and transcripts provided to the participants to be checked for accuracy. The goal of the research is to record the narrative life stories of gifted adults, which participants will be asked to construct themselves, however some activities may be used within these sessions to stimulate discussion and memory.

As narrative life interviewing can be intensive, every effort will be made to ensure minimum disruption to the participant’s regular duties. The interview times and the type/length of narratives may be negotiated to suit the individual’s timetable. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time and their data will be returned to them or destroyed.

The findings will be published in a dissertation (thesis) format, which will also be published in an electronic format and be available via academic electronic databases on the Internet from early 2007. Summaries of the findings may also be published within academic journals in the future. Therefore participants will be asked to select their own pseudonym, remove any specific references to people or places within the raw data and ensure that all parties are referred to by approximate values to preserve their anonymity. All data collected will be stored securely for five years and then destroyed. The only additional person with access to the raw data will be my supervisor Dr. Janice Hall.

Attached are copies of the required approval letters by the Human Research Ethics Panel, and an ‘expression of interest’ form with self-addressed envelope for the gifted person to return if interested in the project. The signing of a consent form will be required prior to the initial interview and interview questions will be supplied in advance if requested.

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee or Panel (indicate Committee or Panel). The Approval Number is HREC 05/141. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee/Panel through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4736 0883 or 4736 0884). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Research Project

Title: The Life Journey of Gifted Adults: a narrative exploration of developmental differences across cultures.

Dear Gifted individual,

My name is Maree Gruppetta, as a Doctoral student at UWS, with an interest in Gifted and Talented education, I am currently seeking participants for a research project as part of my Doctoral dissertation requirements. For the purpose of this research gifted persons are not restricted to only those demonstrating academic giftedness. Gifted individuals are those that ‘stand out’ as particularly gifted or talented within their community, and may include giftedness in any field. You have been identified as a gifted adult who may be interested in participating in this study.

Please read the information provided below and contact me via email or telephone if you are interested in further information about the study. Alternatively my supervisor and myself may be contacted for further explanation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Maree Gruppetta</td>
<td>Dr. Janice Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0417 310 410</td>
<td>4736 0378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:m.gruppetta@uws.edu.au">m.gruppetta@uws.edu.au</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:j.hall@uws.edu.au">j.hall@uws.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research project is focused on investigating the experiences of Gifted and Talented Adults representing a variety of cultures within Australia. The information generated by this research will be valuable in informing Gifted and Talented education in the future.

Involvement by participants would begin from August, 2005 and be finalised by December 1st, 2006. Participant involvement is expected to include a maximum of three interview sessions lasting approximately two hours each, however usually only one or two meetings are necessary. During these sessions participants will be asked questions regarding their backgrounds and significant events within their lives. These sessions will be audio-taped and transcripts provided to the participants to be checked for accuracy. The goal of the research is to record the narrative life stories of gifted adults, which participants will be asked to construct themselves, however some activities may be used within these sessions to stimulate discussion and memory.
As narrative life interviewing can be intensive, every effort will be made to ensure minimum disruption to your regular duties. The interview times and the type/length of narratives may be negotiated to suit the individual’s timetable. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time and their data will be returned to them or destroyed.

The findings will be published in a dissertation (thesis) format, which will also be published in an electronic format and be available via academic electronic databases on the Internet from early 2007. Summaries of the findings may also be published within academic journals in the future. Therefore participants will be asked to select their own pseudonym, remove any specific references to people or places within the raw data and ensure that all parties are referred to by approximate values to preserve their anonymity. All data collected will be stored securely for five years and then destroyed. The only additional person with access to the raw data will be my supervisor Dr. Janice Hall.

The signing of a consent form will be required prior to the initial interview and interview questions will be supplied in advance if requested.

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee or Panel (indicate Committee or Panel). The Approval Number is HREC 05/141. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee/Panel through the Research Ethics Officers (tel:: 02 4736 0883 or 4736 0884). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Research Project

Title: The Life Journey of Gifted Adults: a narrative exploration of developmental differences across cultures.

Expression of interest form

I am interested in discussing further details of the proposed research project. I understand that this is not a consent form and the information provided will be used only to contact possible participants and will not be used in any form as part of the data for the research project.

Name:________________________________________

Contact Details:
Telephone:________________________________________
Preferred Contact Time/s:____________________
Email:________________________________________

Please return the form in the stamped self addressed envelope provided.

Thankyou,

Maree Grupetta
0417 413 410
m.grupetta@uws.edu.au
Research Project

Title: The Life Journey of Gifted Adults: a narrative exploration of developmental differences across cultures.

Consent Form

This is a consent form for people willing to participate in Gifted and Talented research conducted by Mrs. Maree Gruppetta, a Doctoral student at the University of Western Sydney, Kingswood Campus. The research project is expected to run from August, 2005 and be finalised by December 1st, 2006.

I, _______________________________________, do hereby agree to be a participant in the research project titled ‘The Life Journey of Gifted Adults: a narrative exploration of developmental differences across cultures’.

I have been provided with an information sheet providing details of the research project and have had ample time to read, review and discuss any queries concerning my involvement in the project and am satisfied the researcher will ensure my privacy during the course of the project and any subsequent publication.

I understand that I have agreed to the following:

• An initial audio taped interview (Approx. 2 hours)

• Attendance of a minimum of three audio taped interview/activity sessions of approximately two hours duration to work toward constructing my own narrative life story.

• To attend a final audio-taped interview (Approx 2 hours)

• To ‘member check’ the typed transcripts of audio taped interviews and any other data provided for accuracy and authenticity.
Mrs. Maree Gruppetta has made us aware that as participants we have an ethical right to withdraw from the study at any time for whatever reasons we choose, without question and opposition. We have been reassured that this decision, should we feel it be necessary at any stage, will incur no penalties, disadvantages, adverse negative consequences, or will affect any relationship we may already have or choose to have in the future with UWS. We are willing to participate in this study on a voluntary measure, with no coercion, inducement or influence on our joint decision.

Signature of Participant: ______________________________

Signature of Researcher: ______________________________

Date this consent form signed: __________________________
Participants Self–Survey of gifted characteristics

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X the number which applies. Five (5) is ‘most like me’. One (1) is “least like me”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have an excellent memory.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I do not like repetition of what I already understand.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have varied interests.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I enjoy pursuing my own ideas.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sometimes people think I am showing off because I like using uncommon words.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I enjoy a good discussion.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I dislike routine in my school work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When working on a project, I resent being interrupted.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I prefer to work at my own pace.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I enjoy finding new and different ways of solving a problem.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I like to think about things that are of interest to me for as long as I want to.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I can pursue ideas for long periods of time without closure.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I enjoy finding relationships between topics which might seem totally unrelated.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Generating new solutions to problems is enjoyable for me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I dislike rigid conformity.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I may become discouraged from self-criticism.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am intolerant of stupidity.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I am a very intense, persistent person.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I am unusually vulnerable to the criticism of others.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I have a high level of need for recognition.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I have a high level of need for success.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>People often do not understand my sense of humour.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Sometimes I use my sense of humour to attack others.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I feel like I am different from other people.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I have a strong sense of justice.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I am more highly motivated by internal than external controls.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I experience life very intensely.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I have high expectations of myself.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I am perfectionistic with myself.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I get frustrated when people are inconsistent with their stated values and actions.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I often do not take part in any activities in which I do not excel.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I have been ridiculed for having an intuitive sense of how things are.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I enjoy using my creative abilities in a variety of arenas.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I enjoy thinking about ‘what if’ questions.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>I enjoy activities related to probability and prediction.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I am strongly motivated to reach my highest potential.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>I enjoy trying to solve complex social problems.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>I get frustrated when other adults don’t take the solutions I suggest seriously.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>I enjoy being a leader.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>My most meaningful problem solving is when I am working on social problems.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>My Gender is:</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>My highest educational level was:</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>I was involved in a Gifted/Advanced academic program or equivalent in my youth</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S = Secondary, T = TAFE, U = University, P = Postgraduate studies

‘Common characteristics of College-Age Gifted – Margaret L. Macy – Walden University, 1996”
Mark excerpt – example of difficulty with Characteristics survey

R: Would you mind completing this survey on gifted characteristics?

M: Ya, lets do that

R: OK, it’s just what’s most like you and what’s least like you, so, 5 is most like and 1 is least like so each of the questions you just circle whichever one it is

M: Ya. Now for example ‘I have an excellent memory’, I don’t, therefore?

R: Well then you’d put 1

M: Ah then I put 1 OK

R: Yeah, if you did you’d put 5

M: Ya. I dislike routine in my schoolwork, absolutely yes, so it’s that’s?

R: (laughed) I dislike routine in my schoolwork

M: I dislike routine in my schoolwork, which is true, so it’s 5?

R: Yes

M: I probably have to ask you several times to fully understand it

R: That’s OK. It’s an American test and the woman’s given me permission to use it but I’m not allowed to change the questions

M: Oh, OK

R: So we just have to work with it.

M: When working on a project I resent being interrupted which is totally true so it’s 5

R: Yes

M: I may become discouraged from self criticism, I may become discouraged from self criticism, that means I criticize myself?

R: So if you criticize yourself you make yourself discouraged. Do you talk yourself out of things, do you criticize yourself?

M: No, no
Son excerpt – example of difficulty with Characteristics survey

R: Ok…can I get you to do this little survey? It’s just…it’s a characteristics test.

Son: Do you think I understand?

R: Yes, well I can… I can probably read them to you if you’d rather?

Son: Yes, x is…x is the number which apply?

R: Yes so if it… if it really applies to you, you put five. Ok, so do you have a good memory?

Son: It depends – visual maybe yes but

R: Ok…so…

Son: I’m getting old now so I don’t have the memory any more

R: Ok, so maybe put 3 because it’s in the middle, so put an x on the three

Son: That’s the memory this one?

R: Yes, that second one.

Son: x or tick?

R: Oh, a tick will do… the second one, not the… first one is just saying what you do but that second one...

Son: so just a tick

R: yes, a tick will do…

Son: so a tick will do

R: Yes the second one…the one under…that’s right just tick that one underneath, that’s right…all right so…

Son: it’s the memories the second line?

R: Yes, that’s what I’m saying, on the second line so tick the second line…

Son: this one?
R: Yes, that’ll do ok…you don’t like to repeat things over and over again. If you all
ready understand it do you…

Son: No, I don’t like that

R: ok, so you put 5. Ok…I have varied interests…are you interested in a lot of
things?

Son: Yes…

R: So that would be 5 as well. I enjoy pursuing your own ideas? Yes?

Son: Yes, maybe…yes…no I have to consider…

R: so maybe a 4 if it’s not a 5?

Son: so maybe it’s lite instead of full strength…

R: Yes, sometimes you do have to lift other people, don’t you? Ok, umm…Some
people think I’m showing off because I am using uncommon words?

Son: No…

R: No… so a 1. I enjoy a good discussion?

Son: Yes…yes…

R: Yes so that would be 5. When working on a project I resent being interrupted?
Do you not like it if people interrupt you?

Son: No, but before that…doing things routine…

R: Oh, ok…when you were at school did you dislike doing routine…the same thing
over and over and over?

Son: Yes, I did a bit, yes…

R: Ok, so maybe it’s a 4?

Son: 4, yes.

R: Yes…and then…you don’t like being interrupted?
Bricolage:

As literally a puzzle:

This puzzle was more a result of procrastination than actual focused thought, and yet involved its own ‘ah ha’ experience – visually expressed it permitted the strands of isolated qualitative elements to ‘fit together’ and become a singular methodology with multiple facets and phases, but all following the one path toward the final goal.

Or a play on words:

Bricolage
Autobiography
Art Inquiry
Case study
Memory
Phenomenology
Narrative
Indigenous ways of knowing
Ethnography
Researcher’s Journal Excerpt
26th May, 2006

Working with ‘Brenda’ today, finishing her value activity and collage. Some of the other participants prefer to make their collage without me, go of and do it by themselves, but Brenda was happy for me to watch. It was an interesting process in many ways. First because she was continually cutting out mouths, the way I was cutting out eyes, she didn’t use them all but collected a significant pile in the end. Then she had to have particular things, and even enlisted my help to search for a motorbike (preferably a harley) and spiderman. I realized when she was finished, although she talked me into letting her make a second one, and then a third smaller one, that she was trying to cover all facets of her life. Therefore her collage was her ‘life’ rather than her ‘self’, which in itself is interesting, that may be worth looking at in other collages, did they choose self or life. I chose self, which is why none of my life elements were necessary, I didn’t use family or pictures of my dogs, even thought they are important to me, my collage was completely self/id based – because I choose to keep life elements to myself, to protect that area, or simply because I see the research as focusing inward, or perhaps that is too scary for participants, life is obvious and easy to see, self is not, so they shield it? Always more questions, upon questions, upon questions.

Email to ‘Brenda’ to ask more questions are the same, she answers one, which triggers another, funny part is, she fully expected the next question, “because you are maree” (email quote). Do other researchers recognize this point with gifted adults, you cannot be in control, they are too quick, too curious, too involved in all facets, they will suggest books to read, places to look for information, send references to me. The journey is traveled together with many of them, there is no ‘subject’ WE are researching, perhaps because I am participant too?

29th May, 2006


Very interesting discussion on ‘marginality’ That “some people have developed marginality, rather than being thrust to margins of society. Not stuck as in encapsulated marginality, but able to move through that marginal position through a variety of other cultures. A “dynamic inbetween-ness”.

Also noted the first people you meet from another culture are most likely to be deviants from that culture (note bell curve use for individualism & collectivism), because they are outside that culture group or bi-cultural, therefore you are more likely to meet them. Also noted the difference in ‘coming to the point’ in USA more likely to go point A to point B to point C, in Linear low Context Style, but Nigerian starts with story when 10 yrs old, storyteller, uses Circular High Context method. Still going ABC but in more
round about way, and not necessarily making a point, but giving you all information of the point.

Funny, I speak in ‘Circular Style’ and as ‘perpetual other’ always in the margins of any society/group gathering. Perhaps relates to quote ‘somewhere in the margins I speak for you’.

Also talking to Janice about ‘Brenda” and here collage making, she made the point that Renzulli talks about ‘task’ orientation/focus. Brenda became very focused on the task, and refuses to be limited, nor would she stop until done (late for work). Became very committed to the task. Janice suggested it should have been videoed, and perhaps that would be an idea, although it would have to be blurred face for anonymity, and then you would lose the facial expression.
Understanding and creating empathy.

Creativity - novel.

Drama components - may.

McN.Conf.
Journal Example 2

Ask Bobbie about Angels.

 Coyne College 'self' or 'life'?

no dogs
family etc.
inner self

"And a big if I am truly gifted - am other
due to gift/dess rather than heritage?"

Chapter Title?

Thru gifted eyes
Giftedness, thru the eyes of the gifted.

Would you describe yourself as religious?

Spiritual
Do you get comfort from your beliefs?
What do you believe happens when we die?

"Periods of isolation?"

Note - please ask questions about
values/ethics/

conclusion -"more
research on isolation'
not necessarily a gift/dess
characteristic only - may
be apparent in everyone
may explain why lonely
songs sell so well."
1st Interview Questions:

Icebreaker questions: *Explain the concept of using a pseudonym and then ask:*

1. By what name would you preferred to be called? (within the research forum)
2. Is there any particular reason you like this name?
3. How would you describe yourself? *(description for people who have yet to meet you, how you wish to be described within the research publication)*

Based on the answers to this question several areas may be pursued – for example:

If they describe themselves as ‘honest’, ‘pretty’, ‘clever’ (or any other descriptors) ask why they feel this term applies to them.

If they describe themselves as belonging to a particular culture, ask why they feel this is important to them.

If they describe themselves as a religious person, questions may be pursued such as were you raised in this religion? Why did you convert? How well do the beliefs of this religion fit with your own personal beliefs (and why?).

Note whether they describe themselves as ‘gifted’ or any similar term – then discuss their nomination as a gifted person.

4. My research is about gifted adults, have you been described as gifted or talented in the past? In what area?
5. You have been nominated as a gifted individual, do you feel you are gifted?
6. Are you pleased or concerned with being described in this way? (and why?)
7. Why do you think the nominee said you were gifted?
8. Where you identified as gifted during school, enrolled in OC type class or other high achieving group? (choir, art, drama, sport, etc)
9. Have you ever won any awards/accolades or received any other kind of recognition for your achievements in any area?
10. How do you feel about receiving this type of recognition?
11. Have you ever completed an Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) test? *(what was result if known?)*
12. Would you mind completing this survey on gifted characteristics? 
(If they agree, note results will be sent through with transcript, and permit time to complete survey or let them take it to complete later if they are more comfortable doing that)

1st Interview - Background Questions:

1. Are you married?
2. Do you have children?
3. What type of occupation/career?
4. Do you enjoy your work?
4. Was this your first choice of occupation?
5. Have you pursued other careers/occupations previously?
6. Would you like to pursue another career? (which one?)
7. Do you have brothers and sisters? 
   (If so were you eldest/youngest/middle child)
8. Were you close to both parents?
9. What was your highest educational qualification? 
   (e.g. University/TAFE/Secondary/other)
10. Where were you educated? 
    (In Australia or overseas/public or private education, etc)

2nd Interview - Research Questions:

1. What is your earliest memory?  
   (Encourage to describe in detail)
2. Why do you think you remember this? 
   If question relates to experience prior to starting school ask what other memories they have before they started school.
3. What is your earliest memory of school?
4. Why do you think you remember this?
5. Did you have a favourite teacher at school?
6. Explain why the teacher/s was important to you?
7. Was there a teacher you didn’t like?
8. Could you explain why you didn’t like them?
9. Is there any other school experience/s that you remember clearly? (and why)

General Life Questions:

10. What are your happiest memory/memories? (and why?)
11. What are your saddest memory/memories? (and why?)
12. Is there anything in your life that you regret?
13. What are the moments in your life you are most proud of?
14. Are there any other life experiences that are important to you? (and why?)
15. If you could change anything about your life (past/present) what would you change and why?

*Explain to the participant that these answers are designed to aid in their recall of their life story, and subsequent discussions will build upon these areas. Participants will be sent a transcript of the interview and asked to participate in a subsequent activity prior to constructing their own narrative life story. It is expected they will find there were other things they wished to say, and will remember afterward. Participants will be encouraged to write these things down in journal form or email them to the researcher for discussion at subsequent interviews.*

3rd Interview/discussion

*In order to generate further discussion, an activity regarding personal values will be used to stimulate deeper conversation.*

1st activity:

A stack of cards (approximately business card size) will be given to the participant.

Each of the cards will have a written word representing a value or personal quality/emotion. For instance:
Values such as - honesty, integrity, ethical, respectful,

Qualities/emotions such as – happy, sad, aggressive, calm, patient, busy, lazy, efficient, compulsive, perfectionistic, punctual,

- Participants will be asked to sort these into two piles of ‘most like me’ and ‘most unlike me’.
- As each card is sorted the Participants will be asked ‘why’ they perceive that card is like or unlike themselves.
- If applicable to the discussion - Participants will also be asked where and/or when they learnt this value, and who taught it to them *(For example – honesty - parent/teacher/minister, etc)*
- Participants will also be asked whether they feel this value, quality, characteristic or emotion, causes difficulty for them when dealing with others.

Participants will be sent a transcript of the interview/discussion and asked to construct their own narrative life story, as per guidelines below. Again participants will be encouraged to write down in journal form or email to the researcher anything they thought of after the discussion.

Another activity that may be used to provoke thought and response involves the use of a constructed collage or mind map with elements to be decided by the participant.

**Activity 2**

Participants will be given a large sheet of butcher paper, coloured textas and a variety of magazines, and encouraged to construct a collage or mind map of their life.

The use of physical interaction within a ‘hands on’ activity is thought to access alternative areas of the brain in addition to mere cognitive processes and thereby encourage broader thinking.

Again participants will be encouraged to write down in journal form or email to the researcher anything they thought of after the activities.

**Next meeting - Planning for construction of written narratives:**

- Participants will be encouraged to firstly work out a timeline of their life story.
- The timeline may be initially constructed based on events discussed in the first and second interview transcripts.
- Participants will be asked to devise ‘chapters’ that pertain to their own life stories *(such as ‘early childhood’, ‘early school days’, ‘high school’, ‘adolescence’, ‘university’ or ‘early career’, ‘marriage’, ‘parenthood’, etc)*
• Participants will be encouraged to include poetry, drawings, collages, refer to favourite songs or music or any other item they feel explains aspects of themselves or their lives.
• The chapters will be individualized to each participant as each will have their own particular epiphanies or significant life events that will trigger the beginning or ending of each phase.
• The written narratives will be discussed at a subsequent meeting.

Planning for subsequent interviews/meetings:

If participants are comfortable in expressing their own narrative life stories within a written form, then these will be discussed as constructed with a minimum of researcher input (for example - could you provide more detail about this experience? How did this experience make you feel? etc) The goal is to hear the participant voice, not the researcher’s.

For those participants requesting assistance in constructing their narrative, more questions will be required to expand on themes and epiphanies. Such questions will be individualized according to the life story of the participant concerned.

As participants have yet to be recruited and are likely to have a variety of ages/gender and life experiences it is difficult to predict the exact questions required, therefore these will be developed in direct consultation with the participants themselves.
Excerpt from My Interview – (Note: Differences due to own participation)

1st Interview Questions:

1. By what name would you preferred to be called? (within the research forum) N/A

2. Is there any particular reason you like this name? N/A

3. How would you describe yourself?

Average looking, sometimes passably pretty, occasionally striking, not beautiful. Fairly honest, righteous, hate injustice. Fairly clever, at least I find academic work fairly easy. Not really religious in the sense that I don’t attend church but believe there is some sort of higher power. Possibly my Indigenous heritage contrasts with the Irish Catholic side, although I usually manage to gel all the different cultural beliefs within my extended family together fairly well.

4. My research is about gifted adults, have you been described as gifted or talented in the past? In what area?

I was identified as gifted at the age of 3 years, and again by teachers at various ages when going through the school system, usually academic areas, although not maths.

5. You have been nominated as a gifted individual, do you feel you are gifted?

No, not really, I have really understood what gifted is, at least not in the sense that it applies to me. I can read and regurgitate information faster than most people, just get through more tasks than the average person, and tend to multitask, doing several things at once, but don’t really feel that should be considered unusual. There is this bumper sticker that says “I’m not weird, I’m gifted”. But I think I need one that reads the other way around. That says I’m not gifted, just weird.

6. Are you pleased or concerned with being described in this way? (and why?)

I don’t really like it. Being considered gifted has always put more pressure on me, to perform, to achieve, to do something special. I just want to do my thing without pressure from others. I don’t like the label and all the connotations associated with it, and would prefer to be average. I often go to great lengths to appear average by working more slowly, or changing the way I work when people are watching me. I hate being watched by others.

7. Why do you think the nominee said you were gifted?

I slipped, if someone noticed I was doing anything out of the ordinary then I slipped up. Or perhaps it is just because I wrote something they liked, or finished too many things too quickly, that is usually what makes people take notice.
Esi’s Collage Explanation

I just used pictures I had on hand in my pictures file, and one of my friends looked at it and commented that I need to get another interest [other than Japan] and perhaps she is right. The first thing I included was the couple, the one in the top right hand corner, because after a long and difficult time they came together, and they are very much in tune with each other and are happy and content with each other, without the Western endless demonstration. For example in a Western movie you’ve got to see them in bed with each other, you have to go with the whole love story and physical interaction. But the filmmakers in Japan are slightly different and in this situation you need to see this sort of compatibility with each other and this sort of happiness and I realised after looking at that, that that is what I would like I would like to have a partner.

The top left hand corner is a photograph of the water and that is really significant, because it was a cascade through my mind, which liberated me from the endless chore of trying to write everything to suit my supervisor in text, whereas I personally, graphically had difficulty with this. It was a decision [to change supervisor] that had been on the boil for a while, and I had been knocking my head against a brick wall for a long time and also had been receiving a lot of derisory [sic] remarks, which is unforgivable in education, so that was what you call a watershed. The tiny little one sitting on top is foxes, which in Japan are significant because any animal that lives in a burrow is closer to the source of energy of the Earth, although sometimes they use badgers, anything that burrows.

That little star is just because in every scenario, because in any situation something sparkles. But it is also because the stars on the cover, you make them by turning the picture just a little degree at the time, and it is funny how things can change, just by moving things a little degree of perspective.

The flag of Imperial Japan because that is what I have to deal with at the moment because I have to deal with the expansion of Japan and the legacy of WWII, and then of course there is the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which is my home town, and very important. I worked very hard to sharpen the bridge to emphasise the point.

And the Indigenous icon is very powerful in the Australian landscape because one of the powerful things is that it is there but not there. One of the most awful things is the knowledge that there were all these massacres and coming to terms with the fact you are the invader I guess, and so I usually like to have one of those somewhere. As from a long time ago I was very aware that in the landscape of Australia there was something missing and that was what was missing, and you don’t find it in the other cultures because they have been there so long they have bonded in the land in some way but have integrated and they haven’t been occupied and conquered.

This picture is Korea which is another world and because of the problems with the Buddhist culture they were banned to the mountains and they are particularly beautiful. Geomacists are called into find the appropriate place to connect with the....this is
according to Feng Shui, which is the Chinese thing for the most suitable location, and when you get there you can see they are actually what they supposed to be, and you can feel, I don’t know if you can feel the energy or not, but the locations are magnificent. Then there is Buddha which is really the dominant thing in Japan and it is none aggressive religion, which is a bit unusual in today’s world. And in the Christian religion...all religions to me are alright, but the way they are manipulated by the human race is not. And to me the one big negativity with the Christian religion is their obsession with being the ‘right’ one. And the need to convert people, and conversion is an act of aggression and what you call imperial colonization and all things like that, and it is an insult, it is aggrogant, because you are assuming you know better.

Underneath that are geezos [sic], and you will find them all around the place in Japan, their purpose is to safeguard the traveler. Usually somebody puts a clean bib on them now and then, usually they are at crossroads to safeguard the wary traveler. And over here is the sun, which is the endless sun in Australia, which claws rather than beams, and I use that because of its intensity.

Down the bottom is a copy of an ancient map of Japan and it is really representative of a road map, or my life map, so here we have the blazing Australian sun and here we have the UK which is a place I dearly love and feel at home. Down the bottom we have the American military and this was one of the most bloody battles, and I think most of Australians are totally unaware of the number of Americans that died defending Australia. And I think this is something we should be totally aware of, I know there is a lot of anti-Americanism. And it is only the Americans that have made my thesis possible, I have received considerable negativity and mindless restrictions from the ethical committees in Australia, I received no replies from Australian agencies that stand to benefit the most from my research, but it was the Americans that made things possible because of their more positive attitude but they are more inclined to reward talent than knock it on the head. Australians tend to mow down the tall poppies and are in general more negative, a more why should I do it attitude. The date (Japanese lettering) means the era of the present emperor of Japan, because he has been the emperor for 18 years, and the month and day.

To make this collage I have used Adobe Photoshop, Adobe illustrator, and In Design, and Japanese IME, and fonts downloaded from the Chinese IME website. It is printed on Epson Photoshop paper, because it makes a huge difference to your presentation if you present your pictures on the correct paper.
Participant Timeline Example  (Esi - As both Raw Data)

**Example - Esi**

**Ages 1-4 (Early Childhood)**

*I was maybe 2 or 3 and I was standing next to a piano, and my father was playing the piano, we lived in ??? at the time. [I remember] Because I liked him.*

**Ages 5-12 (Primary school years)**

*School*

*Kindergarten teacher. Loved her, young and pretty used to wear a hat to school She could do no wrong [earliest memory of school]*

*I had lots of them [favourite teachers]Because they treated me nicely, they recognized I was smart and said so*

*[several teachers didn’t like] Yes, there was one I had in grade 4 who hit me across the face with a 15 inch ruler, and naturally after that I didn’t like her much. Well I have no idea what I was doing, she just came up to me and whack, I think I was talking, and she sent me outside, and it was freezing, and I was sitting in the coat cupboard to get warm, and the headmaster saw me and came up and said ‘why are you here’ and I said ‘I don’t know”, and here I have this great big red thing across my face, he must have seen it, and he took me back inside, and after that she never touched me again and that was the end of that.*

*There were other teachers I didn’t like. Because they were slack[and] Didn’t work… waiting for retirement. You know when you are 12 you can see it, you don’t have to have it explained to you.When others come in and go teach, teach, teach, and one comes in and says ‘open your textbook’, you can tell.*

*I didn’t like another one because he threatened to tell my father if I mucked up. Because he used to work part-time, and my father was his boss at tech, he used to work part time there, and if you don’t do this right now I’ll tell your father, and I thought it was so underhand.*

*[General school experiences] I spent most of my time staring out the window waiting for the other kids in the class to catch up… The whole time basically…It was just one long boring time (laughed)*

*Yes, I used to come first in the class. I was a year younger than everyone.*
**Esi – Condensed into dot points**

**Ages 1-4 (Early Childhood)**

**Aged 2-3 standing at piano with father**

**Ages 5-12 (Primary school years)**

**School**
- Kindergarten teacher, young and pretty with hat, loved her
- Lots of favourite teachers - treated me nicely, knew I was smart
- Some teachers didn’t like - Grade 4 who hit me across the face with ruler
- Other teachers I didn’t like. Didn’t work, waiting for retirement, slack. 12yrs
- You know when you are 12 you can see it, says ‘open your textbook’, can tell.
- Another one because he threatened to tell my father if I mucked up. so underhand.
- I spent time staring out the window waiting for the other kids to catch up
- It was just one long boring time
- I used to come first in the class. I was a year younger than everyone.
- I came dux of the primary school.

**Family**
- [Father] lecturer at TAFE, and University, then the Chief Chemist in a factory…
- Home a lot, used to have long holidays.
- He used to mess about with us
- [Mother] I didn’t talk to my mum much.
- She had a favourite, and it wasn’t me
- The boy who believed what mother said.
- Isolates that one from the siblings as well
- I realized that I was the smartest one
- But also I was one of the quietest ones
- But I think I learnt that observing thing
- Second house down coast and we used to drive past the Black’s camp
- There wasn’t any racism in my family, except you didn’t look at them

**Ages 12-18 (secondary school years)**
- Only one high school
- Put me in the ‘A’ class
- mother wrote a letter and put me in the ‘C’ class with the dumbos

**Ages 18-25 (early adulthood/tertiary education years)**
- I was a pathology technician, 6 years in a district hospital
- I studied science in the beginning.
• Wanted to study biology, not available, and parents said no
• So I did science, chemistry and physics and stuff
• then I got myself a job in hospital laboratory
• big break through in my life, because I saw the world the way it really lived
• I wouldn’t be any good as a nurse
• The technical job was fascinating. Hematology, biochemistry, bacteriology.....

Ages 19-30 (marriage, parenthood, career)

• It is not the job [pathology technician] you had with children
• I was 19 when I got married and had children
• A mistake from the beginning, married for the wrong reasons
• He was 12 years older than me
• mother once told me[I.Q.] in a fit of spite [prove marriage was wrong]
• The three of them were natural births, watching them being born
• The worst one [memory] was when daughter smashed her two front new teeth
• Best one [memory] second daughter, day we brought a brandy snap each

Ages 30-38 (consolidation of family, career)

• When I got divorced, it was a relief
• But I lost all my money had to buy my freedom
• About 18 months after I got divorced I bought a house, satisfaction, amazement
• I had to go back to work, by that time technology had leapt ahead needed study
• Learnt Japanese while children small,Found it all fascinating
• Teaching Japanese at the WEA.
• I got a job in Adult Migrant Education and then Sydney and Hostel.
• Then there was job for three months in Japan while children were teenagers
• Then I went to work for the open high school, in ‘electronic classroom’,
• Attended big OTEN conference, like a movie star, with photographs
• Confrontational discussion with the Italian teacher
• [Good memories]They involve also times spent overseas - Spain?
• Japan, I was accepted into Owasaka University as a guest researcher
• In schools, software taken off computers, having to act like an undercover agent.
• If you are with Japanese when having lunch in the park you will be stared at.

Ages 39-56 & beyond (consolidation of self)

• Japan
• Africa?
• Korea - going to work in Korea for a year
• USA? - Real Truth & Friends
• Aust – Back from Japan this time, been away for 4 years
• Melbourne I was alright, Sydney I was weird because just come from Tokyo
• Melbourne Private High School, migrant kids, good job
• Asians, especially say ‘Are you really Australian’
• Now I feel Australian because they [Aboriginals] said I was
• Abused when with bunch of Vietnamese, bunch of Koreans
• UnAustralian body language in queue, shoved up, go back where came from
• Even inside University people will say, in Japan too long, that’s what wrong.
• She wounded my soul, actually offended me
• Sneering for being Japanese, excuse me?
• Irritated, bought a ladder, cleaned the gutters, fixed the washing machine
• I do the garden now
• I am proud of my children
• Sometimes I am proud of myself
• Stopped doing the self-destructive
• A global citizen,
Dear Maree,

Ah well, if you were amused it wasn't all bad.

My sympathies for your guilt! I sometimes think guilt produces a disproportionately small quantity of motivation compared with emotional pain.

Yes, I definitely feel like I'm researching myself too. Not just in terms of your research project, but observing my oral language (an unsettling experience!) and seeing little things about what's happened in the last two years -- how I've changed internally, how my life has changed, what I've forgotten, and what is still instantly recognizable.

I'm attaching my edited version (filename H_edited ...) of the interview transcript you did some time back. Below, I have some notes on what I changed. Then I have some thoughts about your new narrative story (hmm, I wonder if there's a better way to phrase "narrative story"?).

For the transcript, I've tried to keep the changes to a minimum, being aware that transcribed oral language is a strange beast, but here are the kinds of things I've done:

* fixed mis-hearings and restored words that I swallowed (sorry, it must have been dreadful trying to transcribe this!)
* tidied up the punctuation a bit, especially when needed to group the clauses more clearly
* spelling and typography fixes
* occasionally reworded things when my sentences got all tangled (aiming to preserve the sense of what I said that day)
* improved the flow and deleted repetitions when my verbal tics became insufferable (I tried to avoid doing this)
* totally rewritten one bit (the exchange where during the interview I was already dissatisfied with what I said); I would like the old exchange to disappear
* added clarifications in brackets on occasion
* noted a few bits I apparently said that make no sense even to me!

As for the narrative story, I think you've done the best job you could do on it, and yet I don't think it works, unfortunately. It gives the illusion of a coherent, polished, written statement by me, but it's not really organized in a way that I would do it; the
changes of subject lack motivation, and so I can tell that it has really been patched together from a bunch of answers to interview questions. There are fairly simple things that could be done to improve it -- updating it with my transcript changes, reducing the vagueness of expression that comes from oral communication, and checking it for accuracy (since a mistake or two has crept in) -- but I don't think these would address the fundamental structural problem, and so I don't think the result would be satisfactory.

So I guess the question is, what do you think you'll be needing for your research, (a) as raw data, and (b) as a document to reproduce in the thesis? If you want some kind of narrative document to reproduce, let me know what length you require and I'll try to cook up something based on the interview transcript but shaped in my own way.

A final note: you used a different password in the narrative and the transcript, but in a moment of startling genius [joke], I figured out how you'd altered it (two small changes). Just so you don't get all tangled up later. The transcript password is still set as you set it, but let me know if you need help with it.

Best wishes, Harriet.

Maree Gruppetta wrote:
> 
> Dear Harriet,
>
> I am terribly amused you were consumed by guilt, I have been trying to finish things to send to participants and have been equally consumed by guilt that I am taking so long to get back to people, so please don't worry about it. (And I know its long, I typed it!)
>
> And that type of meta cognition (referring to the fact I am researching your values) has been most interesting when working with some participants, in some cases it is almost like they are researching themselves!
>
> Glad to hear all is well with you,
>
> Maree
> ----- Original Message -----
> > To: "Maree Gruppetta"
> > Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2006 2:34 PM
> > Subject: Re: Life Story
> >
> > Dear Maree,
> > >
Hello!

I have been consumed with guilt for months that I haven't got back to you. It's particularly ironic when you're investigating how I acquired my values :-(

I went through about 2/3 of the transcript (it's long, as you know!) and then, for no good reason, didn't finish it. It kept getting put on to-do lists and not getting done. Aargh.

My life is busy but all's going fine; there's no adequate reason.

Enough of the guilt trip for now. I will look at this and reply in the next 48 hours.

With greetings and huge apologies,
Harriet.

Maree Gruppetta wrote:

Hi Harriet,

Hope all is going well for you since dissertation is completed. I haven't heard from you regarding the interview transcript, so let me know if there is anything you need changed before I write too much of it in, can't have me using something inaccurate as data!

I have been trialing a way of weaving the narrative story from the transcript data, using excerpts, therefore your 'voice' rather than mine. I have attached the draft, although it will probably need to be more condensed by the final presentation (word count issues - can't have 10 stories at 2,000 words, that will be 20,000 words), so I may have to cut the 'school' comments down and use them elsewhere as data.

Could you have a quick look and see what you think? Obviously edit anything you like, it is your story not mine!

Let me know if you need the password resent,

Thanks,

Maree
Example of Email transcript – Brenda

To: 'Maree Gruppetta'
Sent: Sunday, May 28, 2006 8:45 PM

Ha-ha-ha-ha ---- had to do it!!

-----Original Message-----
From: Maree Gruppetta
Sent: Sunday, 28 May 2006 5:05 PM
Subject: Angles!

Very funny smart alec!

You knew perfectly well what I meant, geez - and you wonder why I suggested you should look for typos in my thesis - guarantee you'll find every single one!

----- Original Message ----- 
To: 'Maree Gruppetta'
Sent: Sunday, May 28, 2006 3:48 PM
Subject: RE: So then.....?

Hmmmm…OK.....

'spirits' for instance are they just ghosts/memories of our former selves that appear to people sometimes - or do they have a purpose, for instance to warn of danger, care for people

No, I don't think they're memories, they are ghosts though, I believe. The ghosts look as we did when we were alive, (and don’t start asking me whether or not they like to change their outfits!! That, I haven’t got a clue OR belief on!!☺) and I think appear to children mainly and only select adults. I’m now going to rip off somebody else’s explanation as to why children see ghosts more often than adults…. and no I don’t know who I am ripping off, I’ve just heard it somewhere before..... it’s apparently because children are so open to life and possibilities and still have their innocence. Whereas adults, as they have grown to become such, have learnt to become so over-opinionated and strong in beliefs/likes/dislikes. Adults aren’t as innocent and free as children are. Does this make sense or am I just rambling?? Feel free to interpret this with your much better wording! In terms of purpose, I think some ghosts will warn of danger or harm, but there are other ghosts that can also cause danger & harm. But still, I don’t think that there really is a designated purpose for ghosts, unless they perhaps made a promise to someone about something while they were still living???? My mother has told me ever since I can remember that when she dies, she will regularly come to visit me. I have told her this will drive me insane!!! And you know what, I know she bloody well will be visiting me, and I reckon I'll know it's her too. So even though I won’t be able to touch her physically, I will probably feel her more than I do now and won’t feel that sad that she has died.

and do you believe in guardian angels

Well, I’ve never heard of guardian ANGLES – I can’t remember the last time an obtuse angle tried to help me out in a bad situation!☺ But if you’re talking about guardian angels, no I don’t particularly believe in them as ‘angels’ as such. They are just spirits helping out (with a fancy name given to them)

-----Original Message-----
From: Maree Gruppetta
Hi,

Just one more question - regarding spirits.

What do you believe about 'spirits' for instance are they just ghosts/memories of our former selves that appear to people sometimes - or do they have a purpose, for instance to warn of danger, care for people (and do you believe in guardian angles?), and can they be malevolent and scare people/cause harm?

Sorry, I think too much!

Maree

----- Original Message ----- 
To: 'Maree Gruppetta'
Sent: Saturday, May 27, 2006 4:03 PM
Subject: RE: Curiouser and curiouser

Wellllll…..hmmm….yet again

No, I would not at all say I am a spiritual person. Definitely not religious either.

how your own ‘psychic ability’ fits into your beliefs? (for instance is this an 'external' gift or simply an extension of your own talents?)
I would say this is probably how I have been all my life, not necessarily an ‘extension’ of any talents I may possess, but a part of who I am. I do not relate psychic ability with the fact I believe in spirits and some kind of afterlife.

'reunited' with loved ones/pets etc - do you believe in 'past lives', that we are reunited in another life perhaps, rather than simply congregating somewhere on another plane?
Past lives are kind of iffy….. I always make a joke about what someone could have been in a past life, but I really am not sure whether to take it seriously…. I am kind of indifferent about past lives. In terms of being reunited with rels and pets after death, it could quite possibly be on another plane… but who knows, and I’m not going to volunteer to find out right now either!! I have a hen’s night to go to in a couple of hours!! Ha-ha-ha Anyway, I don’t think it’s actually another ‘life’ we’re entering into upon death, I think it is just another realm and we can remain in this realm indefinitely.

concept of 'karma' - if you do evil, bad things will happen to you, if you do a good deed you will be repaid, that sort of thing?
I’ve always been iffy about karma as well – I’ve never been the superstitious type, only to joke about it with someone or reflect on the saying "what comes around, goes around". But I would have to say, I don’t take it seriously enough to say I actually believe in it or am obsessed with good karma.

Brenda
P.S> I almost knew your questions in full just by reading the subject line!! Ha-ha-ha And no, it has nothing to do with any psychic ability, it’s just that you’re Maree.

-----Original Message-----
From: Maree Gruppetta
Mmmmm...very interesting,

So would you say you were 'spiritual' rather than religious?

And my next question was going to be how your own 'psychic ability' fits into your beliefs? (for instance is this an 'external' gift or simply an extension of your own talents?)

But in light of what you said about being 'reunited' with loved ones/pets etc - do you believe in 'past lives', that we are reunited in another life perhaps, rather than simply congregating somewhere on another plane?

And what about the concept of 'karma' - if you do evil, bad things will happen to you, if you do a good deed you will be repaid, that sort of thing?

Maree

----- Original Message ----- 
To: 'Maree Gruppetta'
Sent: Saturday, May 27, 2006 11:10 AM
Subject: RE: by the way....

Mmmmm..... interesting question...

Well I do believe that spirits exist and that even though ones physical self is no longer on Earth, your spirit is on Earth. So yes I do believe in ghosts, haunting and the like. What I don’t believe in however, is that we “go to meet our maker”. Perhaps there is another realm where spirits congregate, but I don’t necessarily call that heaven, and it does not necessarily mean that you are going to be greeted by a God of some kind. I do believe that spirits wait for one another, so for example, when I die, I know I’ll be reunited again with my grandparents and all my pets over the years.

Does that cover it??!! 😊

-----Original Message----- 
From: Maree Gruppetta
Sent: Saturday, 27 May 2006 10:01 AM
Subject: Re: by the way....

Thanks,
Also forgot to ask a question yesterday: "What do you believe happens when we die?"
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**Value Commonalities & Differences Summary Table**

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Comments: Where **Bold**, underline or * used indicates was important, discussed or moved in original data. Only where number of replies e.g (4) is bold, etc does it indicate ALL agreed this value was important/much discussed, etc.
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Comments: Deliberately picked cards in colour order – Purple, Orange, Green, Yellow, Red, Pink. Said was not fastidious yet constantly fiddled with collage placement, card stacks to make neat/perfect, appeared to be unconscious of this. For ‘citizen’ said ‘citizen’s arrest’, and debated concept of citizen. ‘Respect’ only if others respect her and ‘smart’ depending on company she is with – masking?
Photograph of Bobbie’s pattern made from value cards.

This photograph of the actual value cards is of poor quality as it was taken with a mobile telephone camera. Nevertheless it displays the pattern made by Bobbie as she completed the value activity. You can clearly see a gap where there were not quite enough cards to complete a rectangle and this irritated Bobbie.
### ANALYSIS OF COLLAGE - Example – Zaynab (New Guinea/Muslim)

#### Subjective Frame

- **TIMELINE** – of own life – important events
- **PERSONAL** symbols used to denote emotion – tears for sadness, flowers for happiness
- **SELF** – portrays self/life but appears removed from self, not self-portrait but events in life – little face near tears could be attempt at self portrait?

#### Cultural Frame

- **APPROPRIATION** – of standard iconic symbols for representation
- **RELIGION** – used ‘mosque’ shape roof, blossom for Christianity
- **CULTURE** – used modern accepted symbols to denote ideas, possibly trees are New Guinea based
- **GENDER** - marriage/children culturally accepted progression of life. Also teacher, acceptable career for women.
- **POLITICAL** – not challenging social order, cultural role of women accepted?
- **COLOUR** – own children used ‘skin’ tone, used ‘brown’ for school students – her own children are whiter/paler?

#### Structural Frame

- **ICONS** – traditional – mouth to speak, pen to write, building for school, waves for sea, steps descending, tears for bad times, cloud for ‘heaven’, storm cloud for problems, cradle for children, birds for freedom. Camera for media.
- **MATERIALS** – used crayon – childlike
- **COLOURS** – range used, no particular symbolism, green tree, blue water, traditional – Red steps and green mosque challenge these views
- **BACKGROUND** – grey parchment type paper
- **TEXT** – included as personal explanation of symbols and events for audience – did not trust icons to convey meanings, not reliant on visual literacy.

#### Postmodern Frame

- **MAINSTREAM** – acceptable rendition of timeline
- **OMMISSION** – drug use, hippie lifestyle period. No humour or parody apparent. Space not used in bottom left corner.
- **CHALLENGES** – accepted gender role – ‘free now’.
- **COLOUR** - not traditional, green mosque, red stairs, also colour of students vs colour of own children
- **DIRECTION** – reads from middle left to bottom right, then back to top right and across in progressive flow
- **LANDSCAPE** – layout to be read this way, all icons this way up
### ANÁLISIS DE COLLAGE - Ejemplo - Tiffany (Aboriginal/Christian)

#### Subjective Frame

- **SELF** - mamá, papá, vida familiar y niños
- **husband** - interrogatorio de sí mismo - muestra
- **emotion** – oscuridad para tiempos malos – corazones para
  amor/hope
- **AESTHETICALLY** – agradable, interesante
  formas, inesperado.
- **HUMAN EXPERIENCE** – agujas/velocidad/saco –
  experiencia de drogas
- **Fear/confusion/hate** – experiencia de abuso
- **Favourite foods/experiences**
- **EMOTIONS** – amor/odio, miedo/sonrisa – extremos
- **MIRROR** – cómo ve a sí mismo? Reflejo/reflexivo?

#### Cultural Frame

- **DELIBERATE** – creado para el investigador – para compartir
  historia de la vida – representar a sí mismo
- **NATIVE/CULTURE** – construye su propia sociedad, su
  familia y dónde pertenece (etnografía)
- **ABORIGINAL** – rojo/negro/amarillo – colores indígenos, aunque no
  estilo Aborigen – conexión con el país, el lugar de
  crianza.
- **GENDER** – pelirroja, femenina, ojos azules,
  apariencia de una cabeza vacía (dumblonde?) –
  comentario sobre la forma en que son vistas las mujeres?
- **RACE** – contraste con pelirroja, ojos azules
  sexualidad – cómo juzgan a sí mismos, reflejo en la sociedad.

#### Structural Frame

- **SYMBOLISM** – familia, raíces, ojos azules,
  contraste con el legado – son su cultura. Estrella – demasiadas
  puntos – no una estrella australiana?
  espacio vacío – no una cabeza vacía – futuro
  promesa/hope – ojo mirando hacia adelante y atrás.
- **TEXT** – lista de palabras importantes – significan
  personas/事件 (no evidentes en la entrevista) – DAD
  y GOD en mayúsculas – miedo x 3, lágrimas, huida, confusión x 2 –
  odio dos veces, amor cinco veces, pero uno con ? – en el
  futuro texto solo
  ‘amor’ no odio/odio, etc.
- **WORDS** – códigos/SEÑALES – alienación de palabras –
  ‘A’ para el marido – aún cuida.
- **ABSTRACTION** – un símbolo – aún no sabe por qué – forma
  de lágrima que conduce al pasado.
- **Children symbols** – swing de neumático. Hojas del árbol
  que se desprenden en el futuro espacio
- **MEDIA** – Hoyts, Madonna, vaqueros, música, Pepsi
- **TREE** – tendido, simbolizando la muerte/fin de
  infancia (fue abatido el árbol)

#### Postmodern Frame

- **NEW** – no típico arte – no apropiación – ideas originales.
- **FACE** – no tradicional, no erecto
- **TREE** – no erecto, tendido
- **LANDSCAPE/PORTRAIT** – papel usado en ambos
  direcciones, no convencional, no de pie de
  vista/visión
- **PARODY** – de dumblonde
- **NOSTALGIA** – mirando hacia atrás
- **CHALLENGES** – idea de arte tradicional, arte
  indígena, obra maestra – el papel del arte – para
  comentar sobre la sociedad, compartir ideas, reflejar a la sociedad.
Example of Colour Coded Interview – Excerpt from Alex 10th September, 2006

A: **Family** – yes family is really important to me. I never want the family to separate. Another reason I wouldn’t go and work in America, I was offered the chance to work in America but would not go, it doesn’t matter how much money, it is extremely important, and now my family is getting bigger as well.

A: **Competent** – I feel I am competent, but I would be a fool to say I was over competent.

R: Do you feel you are sometimes not doing your job as well as you could be doing your job, does that worry you?

A: No, I do sometimes put in extra hours on the weekends.

R: There are people who, for instance put in an assignment and thought they did C level and then got it back with a HD, and they felt a bit guilty because they didn’t put their whole effort in, and other people think you have done more.

A: Mine has been the opposite. Besides first semester when I failed because I was lazy and didn’t go to class and I would hang around the bar, after that I never set foot in the bar again, I just studied and studied. And always got through due to my effort into it, and I would think I should get a Distinction and only got a pass.

A: **Good Health** – Yes, it is one of the key reason I go to the gym, I like to be fit, my belief is the healthier you are the longer you live, I don’t like to take tablets and stuff.

A: **Smart** – hmmm…(long pause)

R: That’s funny, because you actually described yourself as smart in our first conversation, the first thing you said was I am smart.

A: I know, but I don’t want to sound cocky!!

R: (Laughed) OK but do you really think you are smart?

A: Yes (forced) but I am not the smartest

R: Smart, specifically in engineering or generally smart

A: I am not generally smart, I am smart in my key areas, that is why I am hesitating, if you ask me about history or something I would be like (blank look) but about engineering I would be great

R: So you had won awards for history but you don’t remember it
A: But that was high school
R: So you leave High school and just wipe it
A: Yes, that is actually how I am, I learn it, pass it and then forget it
R: Funny thing is it is probably still in there, and if you started doing something in that area you might recall it.

A: Concern for others – Definitely, I am really concerned, I always think about others.
R: Others as in people close to you, or just others in general
A: People who are close to me, I would like to have concern for others like around the world, but realistically I don’t. I always think I really want to donate. When I see those ads I feel bad, I am one of those people who flick the channels I can’t stand to see that stuff.

A: Leader – I like to be the leader of a group, it comes back to power, I want to be very powerful.

A: Security – in what way?
R: Do you need to have security in your life, would you work to create security, do you have enough security in your life?
A: No, I don’t, I am working on it
R: So it is important to you? For some people it is really important, for others they can drift through life and don’t care.
A: No, it is important to me.

Additional questions:
R: What do you believe happens when we die?
A: I believe in reincarnation, if you have done good deeds and lived a good life you will come back in a better circumstance. If you have been a prick to everyone you will come back in poverty. But having said that I am not closed minded, I am learning about Christianity as well and I believe in heaven as well, it contradicts.
R: Is that difficult for you that it contradicts? From what you grew up with or do you find a way to relate them all together.
A: It is because of my mum as well, she told me all God is one, all religions just see it a different way, so I don’t discriminate against other’s vision or whatever. I believe that God is everywhere, so if I am bad I will be punished.

R: Do you believe in angels or spirit guides?

A: No, well maybe, I have never witnessed it. I go along with what my parents taught me, but I am the type of person that doesn’t believe it because I haven’t seen it.

R: As you were growing up have you ever had any incidence of people discriminating against you because of your background, culture, skin colour, your religion, anything like that?

A: Yes, that was actually why I had the fight in high school

R: OK, so that was the main reason. Were there other incidents with teachers for instance?

A: I used to think that physics teacher

R: Yes, I wondered about that, but you said she was Asian herself

A: Yes, and she was picking on the Asian as well.

R: Weird

A: I’m not sure what I done

R: It will probably bother you for the rest of your life

A: Yes

R: Did it put you off physics?

A: No, actually I did physics again at Uni.

Then closed with instructions for Collage completion and suggested he may want to write the story of his life – he said ‘no way’, he has no time and no inclination to write a story at all, told me to write it – said ‘have fun’
**Researcher – Phase 1**
- Complete Interviews, value activity, collage activity – PRIOR to contacting participants
- Record responses
- Identify and suspend preconceptions

**Participants - Phase 1**
All Participants
- Complete Identical Initial Interviews
- Complete Survey
- Complete Value Activity (table?)
- Complete Collage Activity

**Researcher – Phase 2**
- Initial Analysis
- Identify new information
- Identify commonalities and differences to own preconceptions
- Identify areas in need of more probing

**Participants - Phase 2 - Individualise**
- Individualised Questions (extending initial interview responses)
- Construct Timeline of Individual Life Sequence
- Probe Individuals Values Further (Where each learnt, how important, possibly hypothetical moral/ethical problems)

**Researcher – Phase 3**
- Further Analysis and repeat phenomenological process:
  - Identify new information
  - Identify commonalities and differences to own preconceptions
  - Identify areas in need of further probing

**Participants - Phase 3**
- Construct Narratives
- Review narratives
List of Sources for Collage Work

Daily Telegraph (2006), May 8th, p. 9
New Idea (2006). April 29th, cover, p.54
New Woman, (2005) April, pp.148-149
Woman’s Day (2005) December 5th, p. 24; 27; 29; 35; 43; 49; 51; 53; 65; 67; 69; 83; 85;87;89

Woman’s Day (2006), April 24th, p. 19; 115
Women’s Weekly (2005). October, p.49
Women’s Weekly (2005) December, p.53, 55, 193-194,
Sunday Telegraph (2006) Official Easter Show Magazine, April 7th, p.43

Please note: As some of the participants constructed their own collages I am not able to ascertain the source of all images used.