Catherine Holmes

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| title | A study of child’s play from an Indigenous perspective in Australia: An interpretive approach to socialization. |
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| Australian Indigenous early childhood policy and programs are dominated by Western values and practices and aredriven by deficit discourse. The **purpose** of this study is to describe the process of acquiring social and cultural practices that enable a child to become a dynamic, knowledgeable participant in a remote Indigenous context from a strengths perspective (Heath, 2008; Ochs, 2000). As a child-centred ethnography, the study will provide insights into how to develop positive collaboration between Indigenous families and early years educators that will provide the missing link between home play activities and pre-school education. Through this research, Ngaanyatjarra families will be able to reflect on child practices through environmental variations such as presence or absence of physical objects, common characteristics of playmates and the introduction of technology. To provide effective early childhood education, policies and practices must identify strengths and goals of Indigenous peoples to successfully respond to their needs. The **relevance** of this research is that, around age three, Indigenous children in remote communities undertake a major transition from the home to formal schooling and this is typically monitored by non-Indigenous educator who typically know little about Indigenous child development. Children whose home language and cultural practices differ from the mainstream are being disadvantaged when making the transition from home school and this plays out as youngsters progress through schooling. Children are “learning to learn” (Bateson, 1972) through play, yet we know little about the nature of play in remote Indigenous settings. The proposed study will investigate:1. how play is occurring in families and homes;
2. its impact on the development of social, cognitive and linguistic skills required for the commencement of formal education;
3. the relationship between play and learning in early childhood and pre-school settings; and
4. the impact of play on language socialisation and enculturation.

The **theoretical** framework for this study is located within the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research. The **field site** for this studyis the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in the Western Desert in Australia. There are thirteen remote communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. This study will take place in three of the thirteencommunities.The multi-sited case study will utilisedfive**methods** of data collection with a co-Ngaanyatjarra researcher: 1. Naturalistic play interactions recorded through video, audio and photography.
2. Semi-structured interviews about daily routine and child-rearing with the caregivers.
3. Questionnaire documenting current housing arrangements and early learning practices.
4. Workshop at the end of the data collection period to draw together the views and thoughts of the multi-sited participants.
5. Participant observation

When researching with Ngaanyatjarra children, I will be aware and adhere to ethical research theory and practices such as: children’s rights as stipulated in current national and international policy, ensure informed consent has been obtained and the impact on the child as a result from the research has been measured (Morrow, 2002; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Throughout this study, I will be continuously reviewing and planning for these **theoretical** and practical considerations when **collaborating** with Ngaanyatjarra children and their families.  |