

# **Pedagogies and Learning in Cooperative and Symbolic Communities of Practice: Implications for and from the Education of Australian Show People**

**Beverley Moriarty\*, P. A. Danaher#  
and Geoff Danaher^**

\*Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, Central Queensland University

#Faculty of Education, University of Southern Queensland

^Division of Teaching and Learning Services, Central Queensland University

Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> international  
pedagogies and learning conference,  
University of Southern Queensland,  
Toowoomba, 18 September 2005

# Overview of Presentation

- Overview of research
- Cooperative communities and showpeople
- Symbolic communities and show people
- Discussion of possible implications

# Overview of Research

- Research into education for Traveller communities at CQU since 1992
- Focus on travelling show and circus communities within Australia

# Overview of Research (Continued)

- Occupational show Travellers – have set runs
- Interviews with children, parents, teachers, educational officials
- 2000 establishment of Queensland School for Travelling Show Children

# Overview of Research (Continued)

- Circus community – don't have set runs
- Interviews with performers, children

# Overview of Research (Continued)

- Other possible travelling communities:
  - Armed forces
  - Itinerant workers (e.g., fruit pickers)
  - Lifestyle Travellers ('Grey Nomads', 'Boaties')

## Overview of Research (Continued)

- Research team has different backgrounds, locations (institutional and geographical), theoretical perspectives
- Maintain a cooperative community and generative approach to the research

# Overview of Research (Continued)

- International links
- Educational Traveller communities in:
  - Ireland (Gypsy Travellers)
  - Netherlands (bargee families)
  - Venezuela (carnivals)
  - Nigeria (nomadic pastoralists)



# Cooperative Communities (Johnson & Johnson, 1998)

Positive interdependence:

- Sharing of mutual goals and resources, rewards and identity
- Complementary roles

# Cooperative Communities (Continued)

## Individual accountability:

- Logical and transparent connection with positive interdependence
- Individual responsibility for roles that are essential for the group to succeed

# Cooperative Communities (Continued)

Promotion of one another's success:

- Giving assistance and encouragement to one another

# Cooperative Communities (Continued)

Interpersonal and small group skills:

- Trustbuilding
- Conflictmanagement
- Communication
- Leadership
- Decision-making

# Cooperative Communities (Continued)

Group processing (or reflection):

- How well are the mutual goals being achieved?
- How effective are the group processes?

# Symbolic Communities

- Cohen's (1985) depiction of communities as symbolic constructions
- "...community... hinges crucially on consciousness", which is "encapsulated in perception of its boundaries, boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction" (Cohen, 1985, p.13)

# Symbolic Communities (Continued)

- “In the face of this variability, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols” (Cohen, 1985, p.15)
- “Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of ‘fact’” (Cohen, 1985, p.98)

# Symbolic Communities (Continued)

- Three key elements underpin symbolic communities:
  - community
  - boundary
  - symbolism
- “People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a reference of their identity” (Cohen, 1985, p.118)



## Symbolic Communities (Continued)

- Australians show people use multiple symbols to celebrate their show identities and also to express important individual differences among themselves
- Show people use symbols to negotiate their interactions with local people by emphasising their interdependence while downplaying negative stereotypes

# Symbolic Communities (Continued)

- Educationally, the showpeople's use of symbols represents their making sense of their lives, both informal schooling and in the informal learning of the 'hidden curriculum'
- Understanding the meanings attached by the showpeople to various symbols helps to make explicit how they construct and potentially reconstruct the boundaries between them and local people and the boundaries within the show circuits, and hence the kinds of educational opportunities desired for their children

# Symbolic Communities (Continued)

- Showpeople 'sactive involvement in particular symbols of the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children:
  - logo
  - uniform
  - song
- The meaning -making that local people who tour the school classrooms derive from these and other symbols

# Possible Implications

- Pedagogies and learning require considerable reflexivity, commitment and sometimes political activism if they are genuinely to contribute to the fulfilment and transformation of their intended beneficiaries
- The meanings that have emerged from the microscope of the show people's reflexive self-examination have highlighted the transformative power of their cooperative and symbolic communities of practice

# References

- Cohen, A. P. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. Chichester and London, UK: Ellis Harwood and Tailstock Publications.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1998). The three C's of effective schools: Cooperative community, constructive conflict, civic values. *Connections: Journal of the Australasian Association for Co-operative Education*, 5(1), 4-10.

# Thankyou forparticipating!

- Woof!

