Artful Mob: An inquiry into the lived experiences of Art Yarning journeys with Indigenous people on Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that, except where due acknowledgment has been made, the work is of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis/project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed. The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), and the Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation are stakeholders of the research results.

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Elinor Assoulin
23rd January, 2019
Acknowledgements

I live and work on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, owners of the Melbourne region, and this research takes place with and on the lands of Gunditjmara and Wathaurong peoples in Southwestern Victoria. I pay respects to Country and Elders past, present, and emerging. I acknowledge the history of the lands I stand, work and live on, noting that Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded, and that colonisation continues. I am committed to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the fight for justice and real land rights.

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For those with doubts about visual language
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Abstract

The *Artful Mob* research project seeks to explore the lived experiences, and subsequently, the value of integrated methods of art therapy and Indigenous Knowledge Systems of knowing, being and doing. The research is, on one level, a ‘meta’ research project, whose goal is an essentially methodological one, and concerns the development and trial of an integrated form of method, and the demonstration of the potential value of this method, in order to make the case that it can then be used for various purposes in the future. This method involves the integration of group art therapy\(^1\) tools and processes and conceptions from Indigenous Knowledge systems - a method I term *Art-Yarning*\(^2\).

This method was developed and tested it out in practice in collaboration with the Gunditjmara and Wathaurong communities in Southwestern Victoria, and this research focusses on capturing participants’ reflections on what Art-Yarning means for them, and my own reflections on what the method means, in contrast or in comparison to various method ideals put forward in the literature. Thus, the research is, in a sense, an exploration of the value for social scientific research of methods derived from group art therapy - a test of whether these methods can be successfully repurposed into an exemplary form of integrated research that addresses some of the critiques that have been made of more conventional forms of social science research when applied to Indigenous communities. The research is also an exploration of what kinds of new knowledge - and, perhaps, transformation - became possible as a result of implementing this method. Therefore, the research has a dual result, with dimensions that are both substantive and methodological in character. The central methodological research questions are:

Can an integrated form of method between group art therapy and Indigenous Knowledge systems be successfully repurposed into an exemplary form of integrated research? And what kind of new knowledge - and, perhaps, what kinds of transformation - might be possible if these methods are implemented?

Ethics is an inseparable element of decolonised research and the exercise of reflexive practice, which examines and re-examines a particular approach to ethical ways of Knowing, Being and Doing, is a crucial component of this thesis. I make the foundational argument that ethical conduct in Indigenous health research necessarily involves adaptation to the local Indigenous ethics system, and therefore that the re-problematisation of existing notions and structures of ethics in Indigenous research is an ethical obligation of researchers. I engage in an example of such a process by reviewing literature relating to *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (NHMRC, 2003). This analysis illuminates *Artful Mob*’s ethically challenging moments and ‘white possessive logic’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2015), whilst reinforcing critical reflexivity as a research stance.

The complex relational webs of existence applicable to the participants, myself as a researcher-participant and an immigrant, and the research itself, demand a methodological approach which liberates all actors from expectations of generality, or notions of certainty or expert insights into Indigenous social realities. I present the *Art-Yarning* methodology, and a related integration of knowledge systems as an enactment of ‘coalitional consciousness’ (Sandoval, 2000), as an honest, ethical, innovative and creative mirror of social and structural realities.

A further foundational assumption of this thesis is the presence of a Relational philosophy - the view of purposeful connectedness between everything on earth and beyond, across Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems. I frame this assumption through a review of the literature on art-based research in the social sciences, in order to demonstrate that art therapy, although a Western product, shares similar

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\(^1\) Although the program has therapeutic dimensions, the research does not make a neo-colonial pathologising claim about the provision of art therapy to Indigenous participants and communities. Instead, this term enables the distinction between general and purposeful art making.

\(^2\) Although the common definition of yarning is a cultural protocol of conversation, Art-Yarning refers to a far deeper form of integration, which is based within the philosophy of the relational common to both Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy.
paradigms of Knowing, Being and Doing as those of Indigenous knowledge systems pertaining to these three conceptual zones.

To do this, I review prominent theoretical conceptions across Australian Indigenous scholarship, art therapy and the works of postcolonial theorists (Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha) to seek theoretical support to the thesis of a common Relational standpoint across the two knowledge domains. I aim to demonstrate that such relationality has micro parallels in processes of group art therapy. The image, art materials, space, what happens and what does not happen, the sharing or non-sharing with the group, are all entities which contribute to the understanding of one’s self and thus, their existence.

Finally, in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, I share examples of how the integrated Art-Yarning method both describes and creates the social realities of participants. The Art-Yarnings re-told here stand for more than findings reportage and intellectual engagement with comparison to existing literature - instead, structural choices ensure a balance between an authentic presentation of Art-Yarning and my own interpretations of these.

In conclusion, Art-Yarning enhanced the self-awareness of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who exist in the complex web of the Cultural Interface, and create spaces from which variations of the Relational enacted and transcend art-making to embodied experiences. For the non-Indigenous participants, the method crystallised pathways of adaptation to various Indigenous ways of Knowing-Being-Doing. The method unsettled our settler identities in both bearable and productive ways and promoted healthy cross-cultural communication. Art-Yarnings have revealed a common thread I have identified as the Messy-Whole-Self, which reflects strong, resilient and whole Indigenous identities. This does not dismiss the urgent need for justice or undermine the challenges Indigenous participants face. It does however, illuminate and celebrate the strength, diversity and richness of their identities and counterbalances the deficit-driven portrayal of Indigenous people across governmental, structural and street communications in Australia. Indigenous knowledge systems and people become teachers to learn from rather than about.
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Declarations

I declare that:

- The knowledge gained from this research project is limited, uncertain, shifting, partial and momentary.
- The content in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter does not propose any singular or collective set of notions about Indigenous identities, and only reflects those of the participants.
- The use of the terms *Indigenous, Aborigina ls, Torres Strait Islanders* and *First Nations* does not reflect proposed homogeneity across the different groups of first peoples to occupy the continent since long before colonisation.
- The research would have not been possible without the permission and collaboration from Elders, key important peoples, participants and countries. Any knowledge gained is relational.
List of publications arising from this work


Terminologies

Country/countries
The term *country* (or *countries*) is used throughout the thesis in accordance with Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems. More specifically, as Professor Mick Dodson explains:

> When we talk about traditional ‘Country’... we mean something beyond the dictionary definition of the word. For Aboriginal Australians... we might mean homeland, or tribal or clan area and we might mean more than just a place on the map. For us, Country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains (Australians Together, 2010, p.2).

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander & Indigenous
I use the name or names of Country or Countries of scholars, Elders, community members and participants in the first instance of mentioning their names, whenever such knowledge is available to me, except where more than one person is being discussed. The term *Indigenous people* is used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. Where the person refers to her or himself as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or both, I follow this choice in the text. I use *Aboriginal* for quotes or names of documents or similar.

The terms: *Indigenous people*, *Aboriginal people*, *Torres Strait Islander people*, *First Nations people* and associated terms are used in this thesis with unresolved difficulties. I adopt the advice of John Rennie Short (2012) that readers should assume quotation marks around all words related to these terms. I concur with, and reaffirm, his statement that “Aboriginality is not an unchanging biological fact: It is cultural construct forged from a subaltern position, shaped by a dominant non-Aborigine culture, and always in relation to changing political discourses” (2012, p.130).

I maintain ongoing acknowledgment at different points of the thesis that the terms *Indigenous, Aboriginals* and *Torres Strait Islanders* are colonial constructions which have also gained a certain legitimacy among First Nations peoples (another problematic term due to its collective tone) and therefore have become an intercultural descriptive. Such repetitive acknowledgment helps me remain cognizant that, as Moreton-Robinson (2011) puts it, “‘Aboriginal’ signifies a commonality of shared conditions of colonisation but cannot fully capture our respective ontological, epistemological, axiological and cultural subjectivities” (p.414).

Plural and singular forms are used to indicate the following:

- **Indigenous peoples**- multiple Indigenous communities/cultural groups.
- **Indigenous people**- single cultural group
- **Indigenous persons**- multiple individuals.

Aborigines
I note that the word *Aborigines* is used when it reflects historical usage, but that this word is now considered by many to be offensive and harmful language. As I do not feel that it is appropriate to change or censor the terms used by other authors, I have left this term intact when quoting
others. The topic is contentious, and the work of Fesl (1988) is an example of an opposing view, where she points out that the Aboriginal is an adjective and is much more offensive because of the connotations attached than the noun Aborigine.

**Stolen Generations**

* Australians Together (2010, Discover Australian History) explains:

  Between 1910 and 1970, many Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families as a result of various government policies. The generations of children removed under these policies became known as the Stolen Generations. The policies of child removal left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect Indigenous communities, families and individuals.

**Yarning**

Kovach (2010) explains that yarning is an oral means of ‘transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition’ (p.42). Out of the various forms yarning takes in research, the most important for the methodology of this thesis are therapeutic, research topic and cross-cultural types of yarning, which each intersect with the formal and informal verbal sharing processes in group art therapy. This concept is discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter.

**Non-Indigenous researcher**

The term *non-Indigenous researcher* refers to any researcher who does not identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. As Moreton-Robinson has cautioned (2011), this term can problematically serve as a racial signifier that avoids naming Whiteness. In this thesis, however, I have made the strategic decision to use the term to reflect the ways in which Whiteness is limited in its ability to capture the location of white settlers who are acutely aware of their dominant position, and yet who wish to engage in Browning the discourses within their lived experiences. Whiteness also fails to capture many others who are neither white nor Indigenous. As an immigrant of Jewish identity, with Moroccan and Libyan heritage, I identify as other than exclusively White, and yet as a citizen, I am also positioned in the complex network of power relations deriving from Australian colonial history.
Introduction

The big question for us now is what our era represents. What kind of people are we? We are becoming more complicated. Were we ever more individualistic in spirit than we are today, even though we remain strongly connected traditionally, culturally, socially, economically, or by colour, identity, race politics, or by any of the characteristics observed when others look at us, and on our behalf, either to separate us, or to define us as one people? This is a country where you always hear that Aboriginal people are like this, or like that – but were we ever one homogenous mass, with exactly the same thoughts, the same ideas, goals, ambitions? What are the border lines? Where are the transgression points precisely?

Tracker Tilmouth in Wright (2017) Tracker, p.1

Vincent Van Gogh says, “I put my heart and my soul into my work, and have lost my mind in the process”, and Paul Klee says that the self is a “dramatic ensemble”. This research seeks to co-create with participants a space where the mind can temporarily be lost, so as to illuminate parts of this extraordinary ensemble of the self whose existence is necessarily co-created with, and dependent on, relationships between the self and the outside. This framing may sound counterintuitive. How do you lose your mind, however temporarily, in a research process that – by academic convention – drives for the creation of knowledge? And, if you succeed in such a quixotic task, what is the status of the knowledge that arises on the other side of such a process?

The method of the thesis entailed a collaboratively designed art making program, developed through close collaboration with two Aboriginal Corporations, Winda Mara and BADA in the Gunditjmara and Wathaurong communities in Southwestern Victoria. The Artful Mob workshops took place between the 20th April, 2016 and the 12th May, 2017. The project had 21 participants who were recruited through their involvements with various programs within the hosting organisation. The sessions were voice recorded, and journal entries and artworks were recorded weekly.

The content and structure of the program were designed to integrate tools and processes more normally associated with art therapy, with concepts from Indigenous Knowledge Systems and with a method of art-making and participant reflection that I will call art-yarning. My interest, in this research, is in capturing participants' reflections on what art-yarning has meant for them, as well as my own reflections on what the method means, particularly when contrasted to various method ideals put forward in the literature. In other words, the research is, in a sense, an exploration of the value for social scientific research of methods derived from group art therapy - a test of whether these methods can be successfully repurposed into an exemplary form of integrated research that addresses some of the critiques that have been made of more conventional forms of social science research when applied to questions concerning Indigenous communities. However, the research is also an exploration of what kinds of data - and, perhaps, what kinds of transformation - became possible as a result of implementing this method. Therefore, the research has dual outcomes, with dimensions that are both substantive and methodological in character. The central methodological research questions are:

Can an integrated form of method that draws resources from group art therapy and Indigenous Knowledge systems be successfully repurposed into an exemplary form of
integrated research? And what kind of new knowledge - and, perhaps, what kinds of transformation - might be possible if these methods are implemented?

Therefore, although this thesis describes art-based research, it is not a thesis ‘about’ art and, despite its allocation within Indigenous research context, it is also not a thesis ‘about’ Indigenous peoples. Instead, the thesis describes the results of a collaborative and cross-cultural process of art creation, in order to reflect on the potential value of the method for participants and for social science research methods.

Before going forward, it is important to clarify why and how I use the term art therapy. Although the program has therapeutic dimensions, and although communities and participants had no qualms using this term, I am conscious that the term carries a potentially pathologising shadow. Despite these qualms, I use the term because the program enlists specific tools and processes from the discipline of art therapy, sometimes referred to as directives. There were important differences in how these tools and processes were implemented in this context – for example, the co-facilitator and I took various measures to minimise therapeutic elements to ensure that we facilitated, rather than therapeutically intervened, when participants shared their experiences. Nevertheless, the participants’ engagement with specific art directives, coupled with sharing - or yarning - is what sets this program apart from a general art class, and retaining some of the language relating to art therapy techniques allows this aspect of the research to remain explicit and transparent.

Across the course of the research, the participants and I have found Art Yarning to be an effective, powerful, safe and healing method for the purposes of inner, outer and cross-cultural communications. However, we have also learned that it is both impossible and unnecessary to arrive at exact and accurate knowledge of how the method achieves any particular results. Indeed, as will be discussed in much greater detail below, a significant finding about the method is precisely around the need to accept restrictions around access to knowledge – of the self, of the other, of the other’s culture, and of the process itself. Rather than a limitation, ‘letting go’ of the need to know everything in fact enables a greater space from which new learning has occurred and continues to occur.

Another significant finding relates to the commonality of what, following the literature, I will call the ‘relational’ within each worldview. This research originated from my wonder at the presence of the relational in both Indigenous cultures and art therapy, but the actualisation of the art-yarning method with diverse Indigenous participants painted this wonder into lived realities in ways I did not expect. The participants – including me as a researcher-participant - found that engagement with art-yarning provided embodied experiences of knowing, being and doing within a relational web that extends to include everything within and outside this world. Doing art and then talking about it, or not, made us see-feel parts of ourselves, of the other, of Country, and in turn of our ways of being-knowing-doing in the world in ways that can only (and yet still only partially) be understood through the lived experience of the creative process.

These powerful embodied experiences of self and other (human and non-human) are not to be mistaken for advocacy of a visual type of universalism. The method used here instead enabled moments of shared commonalities to manifest alongside accentuation of our differences. In other words, the Art Yarning method created a dance floor between ‘knowing-being-doing’ in solitude and in a group; as an individual and as Indigenous and non-Indigenous; as a group with a majority of Indigenous people; and as a group of individuals. We did not intentionally search for commonalities and differences - we simply lived a set of creative experiences together, while observing our lived experiences of engagement with the art-yarning process.
Further, we have found that the notion of restricted and shifting access to knowledge is itself a commonality. In other words, the belief in, and usage of, other ways to know-be-do is not the only commonality between Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy. There is a point where access to how this knowing-being-doing operates is restricted. In Indigenous knowledge systems this point varies from one person and community to another and depends on multiple factors. Subsequently, the ways we relate to each other, Indigenous to Indigenous or to others, is impacted by our individual levels of access to knowledge. Similarly, in art therapy related processes, the nature of the visual conversation that occurs between the art maker, art work, art materials and art space can only be explained to a point, but its full explanation always resides within the intimate relationship of these actors.

Again, rather than limit our capacity to know our self and the other, our conscious engagement in a form of group art-making that recognises and makes visible this fundamental limitation, reveals a wealth of new knowledge about ourselves as individuals and, unexpectedly, about the range of adaptation possible, for non-Indigenous people, of Indigenous ways of being-knowing-doing. This adaptation, rather than abrogating our non-Indigenous identities, can expand our repertoire of knowing-being-doing in the world and allow us to come closer to understanding Indigenous perspectives in ways impossible through words, which in turn can strengthen our individual and cross-cultural relationships.

Naming these inter and intra understandings is a double-edged sword - it communicates the research findings in a form accessible for understanding and, in turn, for future referral for the purpose of utilisation, manipulation or contestation. But in doing so, the harmony of its pre-dissection form is diminished – which, ironically, impacts on our understanding, while also risking homogenisation or essentialisation and other risks associated with cultural appropriation - particularly sensitive spaces in an Indigenous research context. To ensure that such a sword retains its edge, the Artful Mob project also includes an upcoming exhibition (in 2019) that should be seen as an equal part of this research, even though it takes place beyond the boundaries of the formal written thesis.

Art-making is a means of transcending differences in language, and, together with the collaborative process through which the sessions were developed, it also seeks to create an inclusive ground for cross-cultural communication - even if only for the duration of the creative process itself - where no one dominates the other, and we are all safely alone together. Across the research journey, art-yarning became a known and shared example of joint language-into-being. It went beyond describing or translating, into individual and collective creations. It allowed us to lose our minds so that we could find ourselves and others in new, exciting and promising ways. The chapters below are organised to bring the reader through the key elements of this process, moving back and forth between the specific context of the collaborative research design process, reflections on more traditional academic theory and literature, and the new forms of knowledge, including particularly knowledge about methodology, generated through this project.

Summary of chapters

Chapter 1: Gunditjmara and Wathaurong - Country & Community - Background

Country and Community are seen as active participants in this research. This research has been designed and carried out collaboratively, in partnership with the Winda Mara Aboriginal
Corporation located on Gunditjmara Country and the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) located on Wathaurong Country. Community is a loosely used concept in Indigenous contexts (Bailie & Paradies, 2005), which can be defined in terms of cultural groups, geographic groups or communities of interest (NHMRC Guidelines, 2003). In this chapter, I refer to Winda Mara and BADAC as the Communities, and provide a summary of historical background for Country and organisational context for Community. Although necessarily brief, my aim here is to situate the research within the strong and unique Country and Community which have enabled it. While I acknowledge that many Indigenous people live in stark socio-economic disadvantage compared with the living standards of the rest of the population, this chapter deliberately does not focus on deficit data. While this socio-economic disadvantage plays part in the lived experiences of some of the participants, it does not serve as justification for this research. Instead, my aim in this chapter is to present essential background for understanding the hosting organisations and each Country - their borders, landscape, people and languages.

**Chapter 2: Ethics**

In this chapter, I explore debates over ‘universal’ versus ‘contextual’ understandings of ethics, with particular reference to debates over the implications of universalising discourses for research in Indigenous contexts. In particular, I explore theoretical appropriations of Foucault’s writings on ethics, as well as Bent Flyvbjerg’s (2001) work on Aristotle’s concept of *Phronesis*, as springboards to make the case that ethical conduct in Indigenous research should see the non-Indigenous researcher adapting to the local Indigenous ethics system. Within this framework, I argue that a principal ethical obligation of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers is to engage in regular re-problematisation of our notions of ethical research, in order to contribute to new decolonising forms of knowledge and practice, particularly in Indigenous health research.

On this basis, I then engage in an example of such a re-problematisation process by reviewing the literature relating to the document *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (NHMRC, 2003). This document is promoted as a set of guidelines, rather than a prescribed code for ethical conduct in research. Yet the document has been generated by the State, Universities and other institutions, seeking clarity and certainty in their own ethics oversight process, and they generally make the use of this document compulsory. This paradox of guidelines that are, in practice, compulsory has led researchers such as Swazo (2005, p. 571) to ask:

> with the formulation of a protocol, a code, do we appropriate Indigenous knowledge and practices, structuring a possible domain of action thereby, only unwittingly to ‘recolonize’ what is Indigenous by the very fact that subsumes that body of knowledge and practice ‘juridically’?

I am intrigued by this problem, which for me is further amplified by my Jewish immigrant identity. That is, the research field, the academic institution and my inherent identity, position ethical thinking and conduct in an intersection of several cultural systems: Jewish, Western, and Indigenous. While I elaborate on this point in other chapters of the thesis, in this chapter I focus on some of the theoretical and practical ways through which scholars think and do ethics, and how these compare with my own ethics-related experiences within the communities involved in this project.
Chapter 3: Methodology

If we were to imagine the Artful Mob research project as a web constitutive of various actors - the participants, the communities, the researcher, the academic institution and so forth, it would be impossible to identify a permanent position for each entity because of its diverse and often contradictory qualities. For example, I am at once a researcher and a participant; I am non-Indigenous, but as a recent Jewish immigrant with North African heritage, I do not fit neatly in the position of the coloniser either. Some of the Indigenous participants have non-Indigenous heritage; others have non-Indigenous partners. Some wish to explore and express their Indigenous identity, while others prefer to focus on other, non-racial, dimensions of their being. The research utilises Indigenous ontologies but it is also situated in an academic institution that is predominantly driven by non-Indigenous paradigms.

This complex starting point requires a methodological approach that has integration as its substance. The chapter thus opens with a review of literature that articulates decolonisation as the process of resistance to Western research methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, 2014; Bishop, 1998; Liamputtong, 2008; Wilson, 2008; Nakata, 2007; Moreton-Robinson, 2004, 2014; Rigney, 1999; Chilisa, 2012; Laycock et al., 2011). I then shift my focus to a literature review of a postcolonial Indigenous research paradigm which emphasises concepts such as ‘the space in between’ (Bhabha, 1994), and ‘Coalitional consciousness’ (Sandoval, 2000; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

Reviewing these literatures allows me to frame my overall methodological argument, which is that a decolonised approach, which calls for integration of knowledge systems, is useful and realistic for Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous researchers, academic and other institutions who are involved in research within Indigenous contexts.

Drawing together such material, I argue that, in addition to a departure from a binary logic, the methodological approach must liberate all participating actors from the notion of certainty, expectations of generality, and the ability of having expert insights into Indigenous-specific aspects of social realities. In the quest for such an approach, I have found useful Law’s (2004) innovative proposal of unsettling method by contributing to the remaking of methods “…that imagine and participate in politics and other forms of the good in novel and creative ways, and that start to do this by escaping the postulate of singularity and responding creatively to a world that is taken to be composed of an excess of generative forces and relations” (p.9). I argue that the integrated art-based and yarning methods I propose in this chapter could represent a creative way to participate in research that opens up a practical space for different experiences of being-in-the-world.

I then explore the potential of the art-making process as a methodological vehicle through which the identification and communication of an individual’s, or a culture’s, sense of self - of being - can take place. To do so, I engage in a literature review of art-based approaches to research in the social sciences (McNiff, 1998, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Silverman, 2005; Finley, 2003; Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008; Eisner, 1997, 2008; Kramer, 1971; Huss, 2012; Huss & Cwikel, 2005; Mullen, 2003; Sclater, 2003; Finley, 2008; Mahon, 2000; Moon C., 2002; Sclater, 2003), as well as review of literature concerned with the use of art-based research within Australian and international Indigenous research contexts (Huygens, 2014; Zurba & Berkes, 2014; Power & Bennett, 2015; Dufrene, 2002; McCoy, 2008; Archibald et al., 2010; Nickson et al., 2011; Lu & Yuen, 2012). The overall goal of this section of the literature review is to articulate the powerful connections that exist between art-making and cultural identity, healing, and social justice/action. Importantly here, Indigenous knowledges are not all the same, and the utilisation of visual exploration of representations of identities can be harnessed to express differences.
These various reviews set the scene for my identification of three places where art therapy and Indigenous knowledges meet, and serve as justification for the art-yarning methodology of this research. To do this, I use Law’s (2004) comparison between Euro-American and Indigenous knowledge systems. I take the differences he discusses across the three concepts of Enactment, Agency and dualism, and Ontological disjunction, in order to show their similarities across Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy domains. These similarities - upon which the methodology of the Artful Mob project is built - have two important implications. The first relates to the possibility of integrating Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy processes and tools in a practical way, in order to conduct research which is useful and beneficial to participants, communities, and the researcher. The second relates to the capacity to produce a methodology which is shifting, uncertain, slow, modest, vulnerable, and diverse. Such qualities are desired because they mirror the realities of life and of cross-cultural research.

**Chapter 4: Relational Places of Knowing Across Australian Indigenous knowledge, Art Therapy & Postcolonial Terrains**

Chapter 3 explores the specific challenges that the method of art-yarning was developed to address, in particular by seeking parallels between recent, critical conceptions of social science method, and understandings of decolonising methods in Indigenous research. Chapter 4 explores a related terrain, but this time from the point of view of critical social theory, seeking out possible parallels between Indigenous knowledge systems, art therapy, and key concepts in postcolonial theory. In particular, the goal of this theoretical literature review is to explore how, amid different formulations, a belief in the Relational - the view of purposeful connectedness between everything on earth and beyond – can be found in Indigenous knowledge systems, art therapy theory, and the works of selected postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha.

More specifically, this chapter seeks to explore theoretical parallels for the Indigenous notion that geographical locations, groups of peoples, flora and fauna, earth, sky, cosmos and so on are regularly involved in various forms of communication from which existence and knowing become possible. The chapter highlights micro-parallels between this notion and concepts undergirding processes of group art therapy. The image, art materials, space, what happens and what does not happen, the sharing or non-sharing with the group: all can be seen as entities which contribute to the understanding of one’s self and thus, one’s existence. This chapter seeks to tease out such parallels through a review of prominent theoretical conceptions within each knowledge system. In the process, I also introduce key categories that will help us interpret the visual and verbal materials presented in the concluding Knowledge Synthesis chapter.

Together, I aim to engage these bodies of literature in a discursive exploration of how ideas about communication and representation that originate from very different ontologies, can also hold commonalities that are useful for the enhancement of one’s sense of self, and thus his or her inter, intra and cross-cultural communications. For example, Fanon (1963) uses the famous metaphor of black skin, white mask to frame a psychoanalytic approach to the investigation of the impact of colonialism on the oppressed – analysing, in particular, processes by which the oppressed seeks to mimic the oppressor in order to feed into the constant battle with an inferiority complex - striving to be like the coloniser, whilst knowing that you never will be. Later, we see Bhabha (1994) reworking this concept to argue that such mimicry is potentially a useful anti-colonial resistance tool. Moving into discussions about representations of Indigeneity, we find a complex use of visual language to signify Indigeneity - from the use of white stereotypes of
Indigenous identity in constructions of Indigenous corporate identities, to visual representations of Indigenous research paradigms premised on pre-contact visual Indigenous knowledge. In art therapy, we use the inner and outer faces of masks in order to explore inner and outer self-perceptions, the communicated and non-communicated, the visible and non-visible parts of the self — a practice that, as we will see in chapter 5, was adapted for the exploration of identity and self-concept for participants in the *Artful Mob* project.

In this chapter, my goal is not to strive for perfect alignment of these theoretical conceptions from different traditions. Instead, I use theoretical conceptions from three knowledge domains to demonstrate two potentials: first, that, in essence, each theory is relational to the others since it seeks to establish its ontological identity as different to other ways of knowing; and second, that the similarities between these approaches do not lead to a universalism or a strict equivalence between traditions - but they do exemplify and enable a unique form of self and cross-cultural communication. With this theoretical potential established, I then turn to the exploration of the materials generated by participants in the *Artful Mob* project in chapter 5.

**Chapter 5: Knowledge Synthesis**

In this chapter, I use the integrated art-yarning method to explore the creating into being of the participants as this unfolded through the *Artful Mob* workshops, with dual interrelated goals in place. The first pertains to the knowledge synthesis that the participants – including me, as a researcher participant - have gained from engagement with this integrated method. The second relates to discussion about how this new knowledge compares with the methodological concepts from chapter 3, and the theoretical concepts from chapter 4. As suggested in these earlier chapters, beyond description of an integrated research method, art-yarning captures a common visual-verbal way of being-knowing-doing in-the-world. Therefore, the art-yarings re-told in this chapter stand for more than findings, reportage, or intellectual engagement with the existing literature. Rather, these art-yarings are intended to exemplify how the integrated method both describes and creates the social realities of participants. These personal stories contain many happy, strong and positive moments in the make-up of our identities and lives. Alongside these, more positive, moments, are stories we have shared of great pain born of past and current life challenges, failings and losses. In a true demonstration of the Relational, the art materials; the artworks; the spaces; Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries; spirits; hosting organisations; and participating peers have all been conjured to provide the support and courage to remain safely engaged as we retell and recreate our lives.

The participants - and I, as a researcher-participant - have found art-yarings to be an effective form of integrated communication that has allowed us to enhance our self-awareness as Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who exist in the complex web of the Cultural Interface. Furthermore, the Art-yarings have created spaces from which variations of the Relational enact and transcend art-making, forming embodied experiences. In particular, the art-yarings of the Indigenous participants revealed a common thread which I have described as the *Messy-Whole-Self*. Far from reflecting fragmentation or inferior identity formation, I associate the emergence of this messiness in part with the impact of colonialism, but even more with an expression of the evolving nature of the Relational in Indigenous philosophies. The *Messy-Whole-Self* reflects a strong, resilient and whole indigenous identity. The notion of wholeness-through-mess in representations of Indigenous identities does not dismiss the urgent need for justice, nor does it undermine the challenges the Indigenous participants face in light of continuing subjugation. It does however, illuminate and celebrate the strengths, diversity and richness of participants’
Indigenous identities. This is a portrayal of resilience and strength distinct from often negative representations of Indigenous Australians across governmental, structural and street communications in Australia, and which I hope this research can contribute to rectify.

At the same time, powerful evidence for the conceptual commonalities between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous domains of knowledge came in the form of the unplanned participation of several non-Indigenous participants. For these, including myself, art-yarnings crystalised pathways of adaptation to various Indigenous ways of knowing-being-doing. The method unsettled our settler identities in both bearable and productive ways. Rather than an abrogation of our identities, these experiences of adaptation have enriched self-awareness and cross-cultural communication. Our visual representations of: our names; waterways; creation stories; cakes; shapes; gifts we have and want; kitchen utensils; bridges; animals; masks; seasons; cloths/accessories; and Islands, along with our yarnings, have enabled us to know and re-know, establish and re-establish, celebrate our strengths and face our pains. Often as a result of these processes, we can experience transformations to our ways of knowing-being-doing. What the creative process is - even for one person - may be more radical and important than trying to say what it is. It is certainly difficult to explain how to move one’s ears, yet such difficulty never cancels our desire to attempt the task in hope of finding precious moments of intra and inter-understandings.

Chapter 6: Parenthesis

Consonant with the fundamental concept of research as generative of partial, uncertain, and shifting knowledge, this final chapter is written as an interlude. Rather than a summary of a project that had distinct start and end points, this chapter aims at a summary of reflections related to each research phase, with the recognition of the provisional currency these reflections necessarily hold. In other words, the Art-Yarning method is likely to continue to produce new knowledge for both myself and, I believe, for the other participants, because it is founded on the idea that understanding Self and Other is an ongoing process. This will be particularly true for those participants who choose to continue engagement with the creative process, whether in solitude or as part of different types of art groups.

In this chapter, I revisit chapter 2’s discussion of the four questions Foucault posed to guide his study of ethics across time and culture, as a springboard from which to reflect on the ethical dimensions of the Artful Mob research project. In this temporary place of rest, I seek to have an honest discussion about aspects of the research which have worked well, in particular due to significant progress in the ways we view and enact social science research. As well, I aim to explore the limitations and tensions that still arise in Indigenous research, in part due to residual tensions between institutional and Indigenous conceptions of knowledge systems.
Chapter 1: Country & Community Background

‘When I go home to Lake Condah I know that this land is my life, this land is me and I am the land. So it is with all our people’

Aunty Iris Lovett-Gardiner (1997) Lady of the Lake, p.8

The research was grounded in collaborations with Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation (Winda Mara) located on Gunditjmara Country and The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) located on Wathaurong Country. Community is a loosely-used concept in Indigenous contexts (Bailie & Paradies, 2005), which can be defined as cultural groups, geographic groups or communities of interest (NHMRC Guidelines, 2003). In this research, I refer to Winda Mara and BADAC as the Communities. In this chapter I provide a brief historical background and context for both Country and Community, without which the research would have not been possible.

Gunditjmara Country

Gunditjmara Country is in Southwestern Victoria and its borders are Cape Bridgewater and Lake Condah in the west, Caramut and Hamilton in the north, and the Hopkins river in the east. The Country includes Warrnambool, Port Fairy and the Portland districts. Clark (1995) explains that Dhauwurd wurrung is the language name of this area and its five sub-dialects are spoken by 56 clans (Figure 1). These clans are divided into two moieties: the grugidj (sulphur-crested cockatoo or Long-billed corella); and the gabadj (Red-tailed black cockatoo). Clark (1995) notes that Tindale (1974) has delineated this language area as Gunditjmara. Gunditjmara Country is the common collective ethnonym in use by Elders and literature (Lovett-Gardiner, 1997; Buildth, 2005; Carter, 2015; McNiven & Bell, 2010; Cornell, 2015).

Figure 1: Dhauwurd wurrung (Gundidjmara) Language area and clans (Clark, 1995 p.14).
The Gundidjmara people believe that Budj Bim, a Creator Spirit, has created the volcanic landscape, where plentiful stone and water were used by its people to build houses and develop a sustainable enterprise of freshwater fishery, and where they continue to have a strong social, cultural and land management presence (McNiven & Bell, 2010; Builth, 2005). In the well-known 1881 publication *Australian Aborigines*, James Dawson provides detailed descriptions of the language and customs of the Gundidjmara and neighboring clans. His descriptions (in Carter, 2015) reveal sophisticated aquaculture practices of season-timely creations of stone barriers across rapid streams, to divert the current using a lip-funnel-mouthed basket pipe, through which, during floods, eels would pass with no return. Carter (2015) states that, despite colonial biases, Dawson recognizes that the ‘Gundidjmara and Djabwurrung produced the country that produced them’ (p.112). He further explains that, in the 1970s, archaeologist Harry Lourandos had partially relied on Dawson’s work to outdo the colonist’s construction of the primitivist hunter-gatherer model and demonstrate the permanent economic, social and cultural structures of the Gunditjmara and surrounding clans. Similar accounts of permanent architecture were given by other earlier explorers such as Thomas Mitchell who discovered large stone dwelling around Lake Condah (Figure 2) (Pascoe, 2014, p. 76).

![Figure 2: A reconstruction of a Gundidjmara village, Western Victoria. Illustration Paul Memmott (Pascoe, 2014 p.167)](image-url)
McNiven & Bell (2010) explain that “it is the ancestral source of eels which play an important role in Gunditjmara subsistence and identity” (p.86). The interweaving of land and water management, cultural heritage, eeling and identity continues through present day and is exemplified through a variety of initiatives including: The Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape, Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area, and the Lake Condah Sustainable Development project (McNiven & Bell, 2010; Builth, 2005). This local Relational of Country, culture and identity was also enacted within the Artful Mob program, where we spent a day with Aunty Maude collecting the specific grass at Tyrendarra and then returning to the Winda Mara Museum to learn or develop basket weaving skills.

Gunditjmara people had contact with white people from at least 1810, when whalers arrived for work at the Portland Bay area, and with the permanent settlement of the Henty family in 1834. Through research into Dhauwurd wurrung language, Clark (1995) identifies 28 massacres of Gunditjmara people which took place between 1833 and 1850, of which the most known is the 1841 massacre initiated by dispute over a whale at Convincing Ground - on the coast between Portland and Surrey River. Similarly, Lovett-Gardiner (1997) describes Murderer’s Flat - a massacre place near Lake Condah that she knew but was forbidden from visiting, and where her grandmother was saved by hiding in the surrounding swamp. Gunditjmara people fought colonialisation through an organised resistance which lasted several years and is known as the Eumeralla Wars. The name was assigned because most attacks on settlers occupying meeting grounds and other sacred places were carried around the Eumeralla River and Stony Rises, where the vast number of basalt rocks covering the landscape provided an ideal strategic location (Clark, 1995).

In 1860, the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines was established on the recommendation of the 1858 Victorian government committee to establish a series of reserves onto which Indigenous people would be displaced (Agora, 2013). In 1866 the government reserved land for Indigenous people around Lake Condah on Gunditjmara Country, and a mission opened on the grounds in 1867. Lake Condah mission holds complex importance in the landscape of Gunditjmara Country. Clark (1995) explains that, despite its assimilative agenda, family groups of the Dhauwurd wurrung settled there as a means to maintain ties with Country - a decision which saved the Gunditjmara people from a fate of total dislocation that many other Indigenous groups have experienced. Similar to the efforts of Wurundjeri-led Indigenous people in Coranderrk (Giordano & Andrea, 2014), attempts to gain independence and self-govern the reserve were hindered by the 1886 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act, better known as the ‘Half Caste Act’. This political strategy, reflective of the logic of elimination (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388), enabled the Board for the Protection of Aborigines to forcibly remove Indigenous people of mixed descent from Reserves. The impact included an immediate and great decline in population, separation of families, and a general state of decay. The mission was closed in 1918 but Indigenous peoples continued to live there until the 1950s (Clark, 1995; Lovett-Gardiner, 1997).

Lovett-Gardiner (1997) is from the Kerrup-J-Mara clan and she was born at Lake Condah and lived there until her teens. Despite slavery conditions, she also describes it as a place of great significance for her people. She adds that, while much of the culture was lost rather than passed in secret, the Aboriginal identity remains through a person knowing their Country and clan. On the one hand, she describes the place as beautiful home with spirituality such that ‘nothing overcomes it’, alongside a place where people were treated so badly, ‘it was like a concentration camp’ (p.15). Reading her personal account of living at Lake Condah Mission with her grandmother, both knowing the place as a home and her later knowledge and experience of destructive experiences, the complexity of feelings is striking. As she explains, “those days as
children were happy days. It wasn’t until later on that we realised what was happening to the Aboriginal Community” (p.61). Lovett-Gardiner was luckier than many of the children she describes being taken away in systematic manner. In a summary of her account of life on Lake Condah, there is an overarching theme of respect and trust in Elders. The difficult decisions these Elders had to make saw the co-existence of incomprehensible hardship and cultural survival on their own Country.

The Eumeralla Wars and the decision to move onto Lake Condah Reserve signify survival strategies that have since been followed by a rich history of self-government. Cornell (2015) explains that the Australian federal government refuses to recognise Indigenous communities as self-constituted political bodies, which has resulted in a range of creative pathways for communities interested in practicing genuine governing power rather than settling on self-management. Gunditjmara is a nationally and internationally known example of a community who chose to engage in innovative relationships with local government and other bodies to advance their self-governing capacity (Cornell, 2015). In 1981, following the case of Onus v Alcoa, an out-of-court settlement with the Victoria government resulted in the Gunditjmara regaining significant control over parts of the Country, including the Lake Condah Mission. Lake Condah was re-flooded and funds enabled the purchase of culturally significant properties, some of which have been declared Indigenous Protected Areas (‘IPAs’) (Vivian, 2014).

Land management initiatives, including the reconstruction of fish traps, stone houses, and interpretive facilities, are still in place and are part of current tourism, environmental, cultural and educational self-governing structures (Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, 2007). Given the lack of sovereignty or recognition of communities as self-constituted political bodies, the Gunditjmara have a remarkable list of achievements highlighted by a non-exclusive native title determination made by consent on 30 March 2007. The Gunditjmara are part of the current historic Victoria Treaty process, of which the commissioner, Jill Gallagher, is a Gunditjmara woman. The Budj Bim cultural landscape is registered as a national heritage site and is undergoing a UNESCO assessment for addition to the World Heritage List.

**Winda Mara**

Winda Mara is in Heywood, a country town in Southwestern Victoria with a population of 1700 out of which 7.7% of the population are Indigenous (ABC, 2016). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission purchased the Tyrendarra property in 1998 and vested the land with the Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation. Winda Mara is an Aboriginal Controlled Health Service (Figure 3), but its importance far exceeds the services it provides to Indigenous people of the area. There is an inherent tension within the Aboriginal Controlled Health organization: as the first community-controlled health service in the world (Burgmann, 2003), it is an empowering body which provides service to the people by the people. In turn, it is politically significant as a challenge to white-bureaucratic control of Aboriginal people. This model of managing Indigenous affairs means, however, that Communities are reliant on funding from, and are thus beholden to, government (Burgmann, 2003). Furthermore, the western focus on the individual is reinforced via the provision of social services through a distinct governmental model, which “treat Indigenous communities simply as collections of individuals who are themselves envisioned as ‘partible-as consumers’ of various program services” (Cornell, 2015, p.15).

Winda Mara provides services to 450 Indigenous peoples living in the Heywood, Portland, Hamilton, Lake Condah and Casterton district. 72% of the employees are Indigenous, and the positions they hold range from management to administrative roles. Economic development and
independence are objectives of the organisation. Winda Mara’s areas of service include: health; family services; community services; housing; land management; heritage and culture; economic development; tourism; and education, training & employment. These services are available for all persons in need, regardless of their cultural identity. Although Winda Mara and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation are two organisations, this distinction is formal and all achievements and work to be done are seen collectively as Gunditjmara business.

![Winda Mara on Apology Day 2013](Winda Mara, 2018)

**Figure 3:** Winda Mara on Apology Day 2013 (Winda Mara, 2018).

**Wathaurong Country**

Wathaurong is one of five language groups making up the Kulin Nation (Figure 4) who are the traditional owners of the areas surrounding Port Phillip and Western Port Bays. According to Clark (1995), the traditional boundaries of the Wathaurong peoples include the present-day Western Victorian districts of Geelong, Ballarat and Beaufort (Figure 5). There are 25 clans who follow a patrilineal moiety system of Bunjil (eaglehawk) and Waa (crow). The Wathaurong co-harvested eels with the neighbouring Djab Wurrung and Girai Wurrung (a Gunditjmara clan) clans, as well as trading in axe stones and adhesive gum. The Wathawurung people had contact with Europeans from 1802, of which the best-known relationship was with William Buckley, an escaped convict who lived among them for over 30 years and whom the Wathawurung believed was a reincarnated Murrangurk, a deceased member of the clan (Clark, 1995, Pascoe, 2007). Buckley was instrumental to the notoriously cunning treaty Batman signed with the Kulin Nations. Pascoe (2007) explains that Batman and his team used Buckley for his knowledge of the Wathaurong for land acquisition, and “the wholesale theft of land and murders of tribesmen caused the Wathaurong to treat him as a traitor” (p.24).
Figure 4: Kulin Nation (Adapted from AJDC, 2015)

Figure 5: Watha wurrung Aboriginal languages and clans (Clark 1995 p.170)
Clark (1995) explains that, during the Port Philip Aboriginal Protectorate (1838-49), Wathaurong Country was managed under two jurisdictions. The Wathaurong refused to settle in the Wesleyan mission at Birregurra in Gulidjan Country, and three small tracts of land were set aside for the people, following recommendation by the Chief Protector, George Robinson, in 1948. However, the elimination of the protectorate in 1849 resulted in government neglect of the Wathaurong people, and many moved into gold rush or farming towns or worked on pastoral stations which were established on their traditional lands. With the formation of the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines in 1860, three reserves were allocated to the Wathaurong people: Steiglitz; Karngun; and Mount Duneed (Clark, 1995). In 1865 a group of parents and their children from the Wathaurong clans arrived at Coranderrk to engage in a two-way residency trial, after which Balybalip, the Wathaurong clan head instructed the rest of the clan to move onto the reserve, where they lived under the leadership of Wurundjeri leaders Wonga and later, Barak (Giordano & Andrea, 2014).

Clark (1995) states that the first known killing of an Aboriginal person by a European in Western Victoria took place in 1803 in Wathaurong Country, and overall, he discusses five different known massacres of Wathaurong people. Like their Gunditjmara neighbors, the Wathaurong people engaged in warfare with the colonisers. They learned of the massacre in Convincing Ground and were therefore better prepared for the coming encounters (Clark, 1995; Pascoe, 2007). For example, in 1837 a group of 200 Wathaurong raided the Clyde Company’s Golf Hill station on the Yarrowee river, north of Inverleigh, using spears and firesticks and lost two people during this attack (Clark, 1995).

BADAC

BADAC is in Ballarat, a country town in Southwestern Victoria with a population of 157,485 people, of which 1.4% of the population is Indigenous (ABC, 2016). BADAC is an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCHO) for the Ballarat and district area, covering 4 local government areas. Members of the Ballarat and district Aboriginal community established the organisation in 1979. BADAC uses the Social Inclusion principles as a framework to deliver services across five general areas of: health; aged care; housing; early childhood services; and Koorie family services. It offers an extensive range of programs and services, some of which are: the Baarlinjan Medical Clinic; Active Lifestyle Program; Early Years/Playgroup, Kinship Care and Aboriginal Family Lead Decision Making; Home and Community Care; Emergency Housing; Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Support; Social & Emotional Wellbeing Program; local Justice support and stolen generations. This research project collaborated with the Koorie Family Services team. The services are open to all members of the public, with priority given to BADAC members. An eligibility criterion for membership is for persons to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and/or be spouses of such persons. BADAC focus on prevention and early intervention, using a client-centred approach, to ensure clients are personally engaging in the development and nurturing of their own futures (BADAC, 2015).
Key Elders

Although I was privileged to meet and work with several Elders and key people within these communities, I have worked particularly closely with Uncle Ted and Aunty Maude, who were instrumental in both enabling and facilitating this research. Out of respect to the Elders’ humble approach and their focus on community work, I provide only a brief background about each.

Uncle Ted Lovett is a Djab wurrung/Gunditjmara Elder. The Lovett family is well-known for its generations of leadership. It is also widely known that the family plays significant role in Australian military history, where, despite 20 members serving the Crown, their own land at Lake Condah was taken and their land applications under the Soldier Settlement Scheme rejected. Recently, the family has received some formal recognition in the Department of Veteran Affairs Building in Canberra (Reconciliation Australia, 2017). Uncle Ted is well-known among many Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Australia, particularly for his former career as an Australian Rules footballer who played with the Fitzroy club in the Victorian Football League during the 1960’s. Uncle Ted is one of the founding members of BADAC, and is a regular contributor to the ongoing work of the organization. Like many Elders and leaders, he also carries a heavy load of community work. He is a recipient of the Centenary Medal for Services to the Ballarat Aboriginal Community and a former ATSIC Regional Councilor. In our interactions, I learned to listen acutely to both his verbal and non-verbal communications. Uncle Ted keeps an extensive collection of photographs and newspaper clips relevant to a range of Indigenous topics, including his own football career, which he generously shared with me, and from which I have learned much about a career in the spotlight as a Djab wurrung/Gunditjmara man.
Eileen Alberts, or Aunty Maude, is a Gunditjmara Elder. Eileen’s grandmother Fannie Alberts was born on Lake Condah Mission and was a child maid to the mission master’s wife. Aunty Maude has served a leading role in her community for many years, advocating for the Gunditjmara peoples and Country at multiple individual, community, and State levels. In one of her roles, Aunty Eileen works for the Budj Bim Land Management Team in Heywood, where she mentors the young Indigenous workers about Country. Aunty Maude is also part of an Indigenous team who are working with the Melbourne Museum to develop their Bunjilaka First Nation permanent exhibition. In discussing her role with the museum, Aunty Eileen shares her hope that “non-Aboriginal people, non-Indigenous people of Victoria, will gain a greater understanding of how we care for our land that cares for us so that perhaps they’ll step on our Country a little more softly and not harm it as much”.

I was introduced to Aunty Eileen by one of my supervisors who is an Indigenous man connected with the Winda Mara community. The vast body of cultural knowledge that Aunty Eileen possesses has been vital for the development of the *Artful Mob* program and my own understanding of Gunditjmara peoples’ ways of being. We have spent hours at various locations in Australia and overseas, with Aunty Maude sharing many captivating stories from her childhood onwards, generously painting vivid pictures for me about her experiences growing up in Little Dunmore, and her multiple connections with the Lake Condah Mission.
Participants: Country or Countries of Descent

Country is vital for an Indigenous representation of identity, and the absence of such knowledge, for some participants, is a source of ongoing pain. Inquiries about one’s Country were often a lengthy process that required building trust over time and employing a gentle approach. I elaborate on Country and identity in the body of the thesis, drawing knowledge from both relevant literature and the participants. The participants of the Artful Mob workshops live on either Gunditjmara or Wathaurong Country. For some this means living on their Country, but participants have a diverse range of Indigenous identities, and therefore are not necessarily all from Gunditjmara or Wathaurong. It can be rightfully argued that the reasons for participants from other cultural groups living on Gunditjmara or Wathaurong are tied to the impact of colonisation. However, it is also important to note that some of these participants have made a conscious choice to live off their Country.

The Indigenous participants at Winda Mara identify as: Gunditjmara; Torres Strait Islander; and Whadjuk (Perth). The participants at BADAC identify themselves as Aboriginal people from: Wadawurrung (VIC); Bwgcolman (Palm Island); Yarrabah (near Cairns); Adnyamathanha (Flinders Rangers, SA); Dibulla (WA); Gunditjmara (VIC); Wurundjeri (VIC); Wemba Wemba (VIC); Yorta Yorta (VIC); and Muti Muti (NSW). Some of the participants across both locations identify as a combination of two or three different cultural groups, and some of the participants are of mixed ancestry but self-identify with just the Indigenous group culturally and socially. Further relevant information about the participants is provided in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter of this thesis.

To sum up: in this chapter, I presented the hosting organisations involved in this thesis, the Communities, and provided a summary of historical and organisational context for each as well as historical background for Country. I aimed to focus on representations which depict the strength and uniqueness of each Country and Community. This aim is part of the ethical responsibility of researchers working with Indigenous peoples, not least because of the deficit.
language which can still be found within the discourse. Coming to know Country and Community through stories of heroism and success, of Community initiatives and ambitions, and of landscape inclusive of dynamic relations with all it contains, means that our approach to ethics is already more open and promising of research relationships which seek to adapt to the local ethical context. The following chapter centers on ethics in Indigenous research generally and with regard to the Artful Mob project in particular, while the rest of thesis continues to revisit and highlight ethical dimensions.
Chapter 2: Ethics

*Laws were most numerous when the commonwealth was most corrupt.*


*We have adapted to white men, but they did not adapt to us.*

Uncle Ted, Djab wurrung/ Gunditjmara Elder
Personal communication, 2016.

Introduction

In chapter 3, which discusses the methodology of this project in greater detail, I present and situate the integrated method, art-yarning, as a decolonised method within the Indigenous research context. At the outset of this research, I sought to investigate whether and how art-yarning could be successfully repurposed into an exemplary form of integrated research, as well as explore what kinds of data - and, perhaps, what kinds of transformation - might be possible if this method is implemented. The complexities, sensitivities, and history of Indigenous research, however, demand careful, critical and reflexive examination of inherent ethical tensions – some of which can potentially be resolved so to reflect the ethical perspectives of the Indigenous collaborators, and some of which cannot be resolved and should therefore remain important part of our ongoing ethical reflections. In this chapter, I therefore explore some key ethical issues and frameworks that have guided the research design outlined in chapter 3.

My reflections in this chapter are guided by critiques of ‘universalist’ concepts of ethics, which propose that all humans ought to accept and adhere to a common, context-independent moral framework. As a number of scholars have argued, the appeal of such ‘universalist’ or ‘transcendent’ concepts of morality can itself be understood as a contingent and historically determined way of experiencing ourselves in the world (Cooper & Blair, 2002; Swazo, 2005). For purposes of the present research, I have drawn, by contrast, from the works of scholars who attempt to understand ethics as variable, context-, time- and culture-dependent, and action-driven – scholars who have advocated the need for a conception of ethics that departs from what Foucault has characterised as science’s ‘unitary theoretical stance’ (2003, p.9). In this chapter, I explore this concept, first, through a discussion of key elements of Foucault’s writings on ethics, as well as aspects of Bent Flyvbjerg’s (2001) work on Aristotle’s concept of Phronesis. These authors serve as a springboard to make the case that ethical conduct in Indigenous health research should see the non-Indigenous researcher adapting to the local Indigenous ethics system.

At the same time, this chapter understands that a main ethical obligation of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers is to engage in regular re-problematisation of our notions of ethical research in the context of Indigenous health research, to contribute to new decolonising knowledge and practice. As Smith (1999), a Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou iwi scholar, highlights, our notions about what is ethical in both legal and social conduct are imbedded in a “western sense of the individual and of individualised property” (p.118). In this chapter, therefore, I engage in an example of such a re-problematisation process by reviewing the literature relating to the document: *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (NHMRC, 2003) – hereafter referred to as just *Guidelines*.

In Australia, researchers in an Indigenous research context are expected to demonstrate an understanding and application of the *Guidelines*. In spite of the language of ‘guidelines’, which
might imply flexible and nonbinding recommendations, the document in practice tends to dominate how ethical research in Indigenous communities is understood. This dominance reflects the fact that the document itself has been generated by the State, and Universities and other institutions, with a close eye to government funding for research, treat engagement with this document as compulsory for the process of ethics approval. This context leads us to echo Swazo (2005, p.571), who asks, “with the formulation of a protocol, a code, do we appropriate Indigenous knowledge and practices, structuring a possible domain of action thereby, only unwittingly to ‘recolonise’ what is Indigenous by the very fact that subsumes that body of knowledge and practice ‘juridically’?”

I am intrigued by this problem, which I see to be further amplified by my Jewish immigrant identity. That is, the research field, the academic institution and my personal identity, position ethical thinking and conduct in an intersection of several cultural systems: Jewish, academic, and Indigenous. I elaborate on this point in other chapters of the thesis, but, for present purposes, I focus on how the literature approaches ethics in Indigenous research contexts - what are some of the theoretical and practical ways through which scholars think and do ethics in this field, and how do these conceptions and practices compare with my reflections on my own ethics related experiences with the communities and participants?

In this chapter, an overarching goal is to unearth the overall theoretical frameworks through which I chisel my developing ethically conscious academic identity as a non-Indigenous researcher in the context of Indigenous health research. Discussion of Indigenous and decolonising ethics is interwoven throughout the thesis, mainly in the methodology and Meeting Places chapters, but also through descriptions of reflexive practices at various moments of the research. In this chapter, discussion of Indigenous and decolonising ethics is evident in the review of predominantly Australian Indigenous scholarship. The diversity among cultural groups suggests the same diversity in approaches to ethics, and the diverse literature reviewed here aims to reflect the same plurality of approaches to ethics.

The chapter will begin by discussing key concepts from Michel Foucault, focusing particularly on how he conceptualises ethics as time- and culture-dependent, rather than within a universalising or purportedly socially transcendent ‘unitary theoretical stance’ (2003 p.9). To analyse how these concepts are useful for framing a problematising ethical approach to research in Indigenous contexts, I frame the chapter and my emergent ethical approach through a discussion of aspects of Foucauldian ethics as appropriated by scholars in the fields of Indigenous studies and communication (Swazo, 2005; Cooper & Blair, 2002). In addition, I draw on Bent Flyvbjerg’s (2001) analysis of Aristotle’s concept of Phronesis. Because both authors draw attention to ethics as variable, context-, time- and culture-dependent, and action-driven, I juxtapose concepts from these two theoretical frameworks to draw out the aspects which I find useful for research in an Indigenous contexts.

This theoretical analysis provides the framework for a critical review of the treatment of ethics within Indigenous health research, which occupies the middle section of this chapter. For reasons I elaborate upon later in the chapter, I made a discursive choice to use the Guidelines (NHMRC) as the basis from which to explore and reproblematising ethics in Indigenous health research. The attention this document receives in the literature, along with an understanding of its historical development, position it as a vehicle to promote the broader agendas of both Indigenous peoples and the State. While there are many similarities within these agendas, there exists a tension between the two, primarily relating to power and control over Indigenous health research. I explore this tension in light of the theoretical concepts I introduced earlier in the chapter.
In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the overarching themes that I have identified through critical reflections on the ethics of this art-based research project with three Indigenous communities in South Western Victoria. In doing so, I will refer to specific pieces of literature that are either compatible with my experiences, or where my observations suggest that further analysis or elaboration is required. These ethics-related themes are: Aboriginal Reference Group vs. Critical Friends; Community Engagement; and ‘High risk’, Information to Participants, Consent & Confidentiality. This discussion is intended to augment, and work in tandem with, themes discussed in the methodology chapter, such as confidentiality, minimising harm, consent, fuzzy boundaries, authorship and ownerships, representation, and audiences.

The Ethics of Terminology

In addition to the terminology outlined at the beginning of the thesis, the Guidelines take a specific political stance which is relevant to the discussion here. The Guidelines include discussion of the use of language to accurately represent the cultural identity of Indigenous groups. The document avoids using the term ‘Indigenous peoples’ because the authors see this term as failing to adequately encapsulate cultural diversity, and offer instead the use of specific names such as Koori, Nyoongar, Murri, Ngaanyatjarra, Nunga and Palawa (NHMRC Guidelines, 2003 p.2). The authors of the Guidelines argue that the term ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ better reflects such cultural diversity in its distinction between two main groups. However, the document’s proposed terms are also a collective reflection of diverse Indigenous cultural groups. The question of degree is at best arguable, and making decisions on terms to use is made more complex by practical challenges.

For example, the diversity of the cultural make-up of participants from the Winda Mara and BADAC communities involved in this research, makes it grammatically challenging to use all the specific group names when writing about collective processes participants took as a group. However, the scope and purpose of this chapter requires a decision on terminology which can communicate content whilst acknowledging cultural diversity. The term ‘Indigenous’ is used here to reflect the first peoples to inhabit a geographical area, which does not necessarily translate to one group. I will use this collective term when discussing the broader literature. In addition, this term will be used as the preferred present-day term instead of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, I am better positioned to encapsulate cultural diversity by naming the specific cultural group of participants when sharing and reflecting on their individual art-yarning journeys. Everywhere else, I do my best to identify the cultural group of Indigenous scholars when they are first discussed in the thesis. It is a challenging discursive strategy because it risks appearing as exposure of their social circumstances - a treatment from which non-Indigenous scholars are largely exempt. However, it also highlights diversity and demonstrates respect to the ontology of many Indigenous Australian groups through acknowledgment of a Indigenous scholar’s Country.

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As stated, the shorthand ‘Guidelines’ refers to the current version of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*. When discussing the *Guidelines* version of 1991, the term ‘Interim Guidelines’ is used.

**Overall theoretical frameworks**

**Foucault’s Ethics**

Foucault’s work complements Indigenous notions of ethics because his methodology goes to the heart of the issue at hand - that any notions of what is ethical are embedded in a particular set of truths we come to call our own. He uses the specific methodologies of archeology and genealogy to generate knowledge which relies on the imagination of alternative scenarios in order to look at different possibilities that will promote more equal ways of living. This process of investigation reveals that truths are constructed and produced by power. He states:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth; that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements... The status of those who are charged with what counts as true (1980, p. 131).

Therefore, a useful, even ethical, approach to ethical conduct in Indigenous research needs to ensure that we are engaged in a questioning process about our own origin of truths and, thus, our ethics. The idea of integration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies of knowledge, which I discuss in the methodology chapter, holds its own interpretation here too: that, as a non-Indigenous body of work, Foucault’s work begins with the ethics of the non-Indigenous, yet with the aim of enabling views into different realities, or ways of being ethical. In order to remain focused on exploring these depictions of other ethical realities, I only use the four guiding questions Foucault devises as tools for ongoing reflexive practice. After presenting these briefly below, I will revisit the question in the last chapter of the thesis in order to reflect on new related knowledge and its implications for the ethical conduct within this research and overall in the field.

For purposes of this thesis, I am primarily concerned with concepts introduced in Foucault’s later work (*The History of Sexuality 2: The Use of Pleasure* & *The History of Sexuality 3: The Care of Self*), in which he is concerned with the comparative study of three ethical systems: Greek, Roman and Christian. As Rabinow (1984) highlights, Foucault begins by defining ethics as “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself” (p.352). To guide his study of ethics across time and culture, Foucault devises the following four questions:

1. **Ethical substance:** Which is the aspect or part of myself or my behavior that is concerned with moral conduct?
2. **Mode of subjection:** (What is) the way in which people are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations?
3. **Self-forming activities:** What are the means by which we can change ourselves to become ethical subjects?
4. **Telos:** Which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way? (Cited in Rabinow, 1984, pp.352-355)
As Cooper & Blair (2002) suggest, by highlighting the very existence of three different ethical systems, Foucault challenges the idea of one universal basis for ethical conduct. Such comparative study has the potential to illuminate the notion that there is no single, socially transcendent ethical code, but rather various ethics systems, each of which needs to be understood as itself a contingent, historically determined way of a group of people experiencing themselves in their world.

Cooper & Blair (2002) categorise Foucault’s works on ethics into three separate but interrelated ethical systems. The first is named the ‘intellectual ethic’ and focuses on reflection and the withholding of judgment. The second is the ‘political ethic’ with its focus on resistance to domination. The third is the ‘relationship ethic’ which focuses on the creation of new, alternative relationships. According to Cooper & Blair (2002), the goal of the ‘intellectual ethic’ is to transform the self through the acquisition of new knowledge. Rabinow (1984) explains that Foucault starts from the insight that the self is not given to us, but rather “we have to create ourselves as a work of art” (p.351). Cooper & Blair (2002) then argue that a subsequent goal of questioning the self-evident relates and leads to the second category of the ‘political ethic’. Here, they argue, Foucault is expanding the role of the academic to include active resistance to dominating political forces - that is, not only to expose it through writing, but also to join various social resistance movements. Therefore, Cooper & Blair (2002) argue that such resistance “is a cultural matter as surely as it is a political or legal concern” (p.523). Cooper & Blair (2002) suggest that Foucault’s concept of the ‘political ethic’ implies that ethical conduct should go beyond merely following guidelines for ethical conduct, or engaging in intellectual processes of re-problematising what appears as self-evident in ethics. Lastly, Cooper & Blair (2002) propose that, for Foucault, the ‘relationship ethic’ is concerned with the creation of alternative and new relationships, thus extending the alternatives embedded in any human concept or cultural norm (in Foucault’s case, ethics of sexuality). So, for example, rather than genital sex being the law and code for sexual pleasure, engagement with histories of sexuality, with one’s sexuality, and with openness to others’ forms of sexual engagement, can lead to new possibilities such as sexual pleasure that derives, for example, from the practice of Sadism and Masochism. In their summary of Foucault’s argument about ethics, Cooper & Blair (2002) suggest that he calls us to reject the futile search for an omnipresent universal morality, since such a utopian idea will inevitably replace one set of rules with another. Instead, they say, Foucault argues that the practice of ethics can only be undertaken when the historical context creates a confluence of worldviews.

Cooper & Blair’s (2002) reading of Foucault’s approach to ethics is useful for research in the area of Indigenous research in three ways. Firstly, the ‘intellectual ethic’ can lead to the transformation of the self as a researcher through regular questioning of what can appear as self-evident in Indigenous health research. For example, this could include a re-problematisation of the existing notion that Indigenous participants in research are necessarily always ‘high-risk’ or ‘vulnerable’ populations. The greater number of scholars that are involved in this somewhat individual process of de-learning and learning, the greater the possibility of an overall transformation of ‘intellectual ethics’ at the the larger scales of institutions or academic fields. Secondly, the subsequent, interrelated practice of the ‘political ethic’ means that any transformation in ethics occurs simultaneously across both theory and lived realities. The social and health detriments which many Indigenous Australians experience serve as an acute reminder for the necessity of links between theoretical work and lived reality. Lastly, in Indigenous research, the ‘relational ethic’ would mean that various context-based ethical approaches can become available, and more importantly, that any choice made regarding an ethical approach is reflective of the truths held
by the specific cultural group. In various parts of the thesis I reflect on how these three ways have both informed and been manifested in this research.

There is also a nice progression from questions asked by the individual of herself and questions addressed to the collectivity of Western ethics. Similar processes or stages of questioning can, and are, applied in this chapter when an examination of ethics occurs with regard to both the researcher-participant as an individual and as representative or operative within Western ethics. This way Foucault’s questions can be applied in both domains of the research. Furthermore, and as I will show throughout the thesis, the ‘to and fro’ questioning process between the identity of the researcher-participants, and the researcher as a representative of an ethics system, highlights the relationality between one and collective - a theme prevalent in many Indigenous philosophies. In other words, the Relational, which is discussed in this thesis mainly in relation to its commonality in both Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy, is also evident in Foucault’s approach to ethics, which is dynamic, multileveled and operates within the Relational framework. Rabinow (1984) and Cooper & Blair (2002) thus see Foucault’s ethics as a significant challenge to universalist understandings of ethical conduct. This challenge is particularly important for Indigenous health research because, firstly Indigenous groups do not share the same ‘universal’ ideas of ethics, and by default, because Foucault uncovers the non-universality of European ethics.

Foucault is not the only European theorist, however, to explore the potential for a non-universalising approach to ethics. Bent Flyvbjerg’s (2001) appropriation of Aristotle’s concept of Phronesis represents another major theoretical exploration of this issue, and I explore the links between Flyvbjerg’s work and Foucault’s in the next section.

**Phronesis**

Adapting Aristotle, Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that Phronesis is a useful way to think of ethics in the social sciences. Flyvbjerg argues that the social sciences have been heavily influenced by what he calls ‘rationalism’, which he understands as analytical thinking or conscious separation of the whole into parts. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests, however, that rationalism has not provided an effective or suitable foundation for the social sciences, because elevating analysis and rationality into the most important way to learn about human understanding and behaviour, suppresses other dimensions of the human learning process, including: context; judgment, practice, trial & error; experience; common sense; intuition; and bodily sensations. Thus, Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that rationalism’s exclusion of these dimensions renders such an approach ineffective and unsuitable for the social sciences. Like Foucault, Flyvbjerg (2001) also suggests that looking into historical eras preceding the dominance of rationalism can be useful in learning how “our modern concept of rationality might be reformulated and extended” (p.54).

Flyvbjerg (2001) justifies this argument by first outlining Aristotle’s three intellectual virtues: Episteme; Techne; and Phronesis. Based on his reading of Aristotle, he characterises Episteme as ‘scientific knowledge (that is) Universal, Invariable, (and) context-independent’ (p.57). Techne is knowledge about how things work, or how to make them work. Phronesis is redefined by Flyvbjerg (2001) as “Deliberation about values in reference to praxis. Pragmatic, variable, context-dependent. Oriented toward action. Based on practical value-rationality” (p.57). Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that Aristotle contrasts Phronesis with Episteme, saying that Episteme is concerned with theoretical knowledge on knowing why things are, whilst Phronesis informs us about what is the right action to take in particular circumstances. Flyvbjerg (2001) claims that Aristotle saw Phronesis as the most important of the three intellectual virtues because Phronesis is based on
value-rationality, and such activity balances the analytical and instrumental rationality of Episteme and Techne.

Flyvbjerg argues that these characteristics of Phronesis, combined with the added dimension of power, are what make Phronesis both suitable and effective in approaching ethics in research where different worldviews, different systems of law and customs, and power relations intersect. This action-oriented approach to ethics is also expressed by Foucault, who says “ethics is a practice; ethos is a manner of being” (cited in Rabinow, 1984, p.377). More explicitly, Phronesis emphasises concrete experiences that are necessarily context dependent as vital components for making value judgments. In this way, it legitimises value judgments, which must necessarily be based on my own experiences with ethical conduct as the researcher, those of other researchers in the field, and those of the participants and Key Important Persons within the Indigenous communities engaged in the research.

Similarly to Foucault, Flyvbjerg (2001) also sees the role of the social scientist as including contributions to the ongoing process of public deliberation, participation, and decision-making. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that Phronetic social science researchers immerse themselves in the concrete situation of their research and ask the following questions:

1. Where are we going?
2. Is this desirable?
3. What should be done?
4. Who gains and who loses; by which mechanism of power? (p.60).

However, Phronesis is not only a useful concept to be exercised by the individual ethical researcher approaching work with participants with a different worldview. Flyvbjerg’s reading of Aristotle’s concept of Phronesis suggests that Phronesis should also be actioned by the state. Flyvbjerg (2001) explains that, for Aristotle, the concept of Phronesis is imperative for a well-functioning society and operates on two tiers: one that relates to the role of the state to produce policy and legislation— the theoretical framework for how things need to work; and the other that is concerned with the particulars of service delivery concerning individuals and their particular circumstances.

Significantly, Flyvbjerg’s approach to Phronesis in the social sciences has previously been extended to Indigenous health research. For example, Tsey & Hunter (2002) draw on the concept to contemplate the types of approaches to social science most relevant to the needs and challenges of Indigenous health. Bainbridge et al (2013) also view the phronetic approach as one which offers a workable ethical course of action because it allows the researcher a framework from which she can centralise the Aboriginal Knowledge System and respond to the particulars of this knowledge system.

I will return to Foucault’s four questions on ethics and Flyvbjerg’s four phronetic questions periodically throughout this thesis, particularly in the final parenthetical chapter in which I reflect on the ethics of the research as a whole. For present purposes, however, I approach the review of the Guidelines and related literature by using Foucault’s concept of the three interrelated ethical systems of the Intellectual, Political, and Relationship ethics as the guide for the discussions. Similarly, I use Flyvbjerg’s (2001) Phronetic approach to critically reflect on the intersection between the individual researcher and the Settler-Colonial state in relation to ethics in Indigenous health research, but I also want to expand on the individual in this axiom to include Indigenous individuals and communities. Overall, I use these two over-arching theories in relation
to the notion of ethics as non-universal, practical, and culture-, time- and context-dependent, as the basis from which I approach the concept of ethics in Indigenous health research.

**Literature review**

**The development of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research***

Over time, scholarly understanding of what constitutes ethical research in an Indigenous health context has increasingly placed greater emphasis on Indigenous control. In the following sections, I trace this development, at the level of both concept and practice. At the same time, I focus on the emergence of key areas of contestation over how to operationalise ethical research practice in Indigenous contexts, including particularly: collaborative research; community engagement; reflexivity; and Indigenous knowledge systems. In this section, I focus primarily on the precursor documents and processes that led to the current *Guidelines*. In the next section, I focus on the *Guidelines* themselves, before turning to the question of how the *Guidelines* are operationalised in practice.

In Australia, research into Indigenous health has been guided primarily by the documents *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*, and *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* (the *Guidelines*). These documents were developed by NHMRC over the course of 1994-6 and 1997-9, and were revised again during 2001-2003\(^4\), with the intent of achieving an updated version that better reflects ethical conduct in Indigenous health research. Below I examine the *Guidelines* in order to explore its development and review processes, as well as the ways in which it has been intellectualised and operationalised in the literature. At the same time, I reflect critically on my own ethics processes in relation to use of the *Guidelines* and in comparison with the literature.

The first part of this literature review provides a brief historical analysis of the development of the NHMRC *Guidelines*, driven by several key concerns. The first is that such a historical understanding situates the *Guidelines* as a vehicle to promote the broader agendas of both Indigenous peoples and the State and, while there are many similarities within these agendas, there exists a tension between the two, relating to power and control over Indigenous health research. Another key concern is the dominance of the *Guidelines* as the ‘authority’ on ethical conduct. Although challenged in the literature, this dominance is still evident in the statutory responsibility of the NHMRC to oversee ethical conduct in Indigenous health research. In addition, the NHMRC ties its funding to ethics committee reviews, which has led to the formation of over 200 Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC’s) across the country that reinforce this dominance by using the *Guidelines* as a standard for research proposals.

Further, the literature on Indigenous health research often takes the *Guidelines* as a focal point, which suggests the degree of influence or impact the document has generated in the field. This influence can be grouped into several categories (though these are fluid and the literature appears across categories) including: historical analysis of the development of the *Guidelines* (Humphery, 2003, 2000; McAullay *et al.*, 2002; Anderson *et al.*, 2003); operationalisation of its principles through collaborative research models and/or proposed modifications and alterations to its

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\(^4\) The new guidelines, *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders*, were released in 2018. Work on this chapter was carried prior to the release of the newest version yet, this does not change the problematic nature of the guidelines which I present in this chapter.
current content (Gillam & Pyett, 2003; Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006, 2006b; Putt, 2013; Kendall et al., 2011; Gower 2012; Gwynn et al., 2015; Sporle, 2003); and theoretical discussion of its relationship to epistemology, knowledge, control and power (Raven, 2010; Gray, 2004; Johnstone, 2006; McKendrick & Aratukutuku-Bennett, 2003).

Understanding the formation of the Guidelines and its role in research ethics, has much to contribute to our understanding of how more universalising academic ways of knowing-being-doing are, on one hand, dominant and, on the other, challenged, confronted, and debated within academia and across Indigenous-non-Indigenous relations in our society (Humphery, 2003b). Particularly, such debates directed me to reflexive practice on my own epistemology of knowledge, and thus to the ethical position I hold and how it is manifested in my research project throughout its phases. Finally, knowledge of the Guidelines also aids in better understanding how to situate the ethics-related processes experienced during the current research within the contemporary context of ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research in Australia.

In this section I utilise NHMRC funded discussion papers by Humphery (2003) and McAullay et al. (2002) which review the review process of the 1991 Interim Guidelines. More specifically, the review of the development of the 1991 Interim Guidelines by Humphery (2003) provides extended political and historical understanding of the development process. Humphery (2003) used the few written sources available on the events that led to the development of the Guidelines, along with oral histories collected via interviews with several key people who were engaged in this task. Together, these works cast light on the rise of the Indigenous leadership to challenge, not only the state of ethics related to Indigenous health research, but the bigger issue of control over research and services.

Timeline

Two important historical events help situate the birth of the current Guidelines, and the call for a shift of power relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, both broadly and within Indigenous health research. The first event is the famous 1986 Alice Spring Conference on research priorities to improve Aboriginal Health, which was organized by the special purpose committee of the NHMRC and the Menzies Foundation. The second event is the subsequent 1987 closed National Workshop on Ethics in Research on Aboriginal Health, more commonly known as the Camden Workshop. The Alice Spring Conference was a formal meeting place for the rise of an Indigenous critique of ‘Western’ research and the challenge of accepting such a critique by mainstream institutions. It led to the Camden workshop, which was funded by the NHMRC, and had approximately 30 Aboriginal community representatives as well as small number of NHMRC representatives (Humphery, 2003).

The NHMRC acknowledged some concerns and excluded others - mainly those related to ownership of data, administration of research funds and the surveillance of research projects - for reasons that included the need for further consultation and the involvement of more NHMRC ethics committees. The reduction from Guidelines to Advisory Notes status, and the use of the broad term ‘community consultation’ instead of discussion on the centering of community-based organisations, might reflect on the mechanism through which the NHMRC opted to navigate its difficult task of developing guidelines that reflected Indigenous values while maintaining the control of the state over Indigenous health research.
The Advisory Notes were later replaced by a newer version titled Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal Research. Humphery (2003) notes that the document was considered to be inclusive of many of the original recommendations from the Advisory Notes, and developed twelve possible guidelines based on these recommendations, but was also short-lived. The final version was released as the 1991 Interim Guidelines, and was significantly shortened, with content regrouped under three key areas of ‘consultation’, ‘community involvement’ and ‘ownership and publication of data’, which included fifteen guidelines in a bid to offer a more clear and usable set of guidelines (Humphery, 2003 pp.22-23).

**Dominance of the Guidelines**

Despite the availability of State guidelines - for example the 1989 South Australian guidelines and the 1991 Western Australian guidelines - the 1991 Interim Guidelines became the dominant authority to which ethics committees in institutions across the country would refer, in carrying out their role of peer ethical review (Humphery, 2003 p.10-11). This dominance was partly driven by the professional and political status of the NHMRC, as well as the scarce availability of similar written protocols during the 80’s (p.11). Similarly, McAullay et al. (2002, p.8) have identified many articles that propose guidelines for ethical research practice, many of which have been developed by Indigenous researchers and organisations. For example, Maddocks (1992) compares the Interim Guidelines to other Indigenous research guidelines in the state of SA, WA, and NT, and identifies areas of difference, including the role of Indigenous ethics committees and the need for consent to publish findings. McAullay et al. (2002) argue that familiarity with such locally produced guidelines generates the obvious potential to revise the Interim Guidelines in a way that better reflects the diversity of cultural groups and their needs across the country. In addition, familiarity with other guidelines can also help to challenge the perception of the Interim Guidelines as the authority on ethical practice in Indigenous health research, because researchers can consult guidelines that have been produced in a particular geographical area - promoting and emphasising the specific ethics systems of the communities with whom they work.

Today, there are many other protocols for conducting ethical research available for Indigenous communities and researchers, in particular the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (2012), which was developed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) as a response to the lack of Indigenous control and involvement in research (McAullay et al., 2002, p.8). Currently, the NHMRC has the role of coordinating HREC’s, which includes annual reports from AIATSIS and other Indigenous controlled organisations, and which aim, among other goals, to critically explore the relationship between the various existing guidelines and the NHMRC Code of Conduct and National Statement (Davis, 2010). However, despite the availability of other guidelines and protocols, at the institutional level, and specifically for the purpose of ethics applications approvals, the NHMRC Guidelines are still held as the principal ‘authority’ to follow, at least for the purpose of ethics approval.

**Findings of the 1991 Interim Guidelines review**

Humphery explains that the development of the Interim Guidelines reflected the tension between the opposing fundamental imperatives of Indigenous organisations / individuals, on the one hand, and NHMRC, on the other. She describes the development process as ad-hoc, with a funnel-like mechanism that should have been replaced with well-planned collaborative process. From here,
she highlights the importance of realising the limits of Interim Guidelines, and the difference between their appearance on paper and their application to specific research projects.

Humphery (2003) indicates that further revisions of the Interim Guidelines need to include discussions of the limits of such guidelines in the first place, as well as review of the mechanism of ethics committees as the system by which these Interim Guidelines are used. She also suggests that the imbalance among the various clauses that made up the Interim Guidelines is evidence of the over-emphasised attention to issues that concern Western paradigms. She argues that any revision will require a better pattern of debate and negotiation, as well as attention to the internal balance of protocols, which carry the additional role of anticipating possible future issues. In addition, the availability of many other comprehensive sets of guidelines by other, Indigenous-controlled, organisations raises a legitimate question concerning how the Interim Guidelines could be revised in a way that justifies its ‘authoritative’ status and aligns its content more closely with other existing protocols.

Humphrey’s interviewees agree that, on reflection, the overall outcome of the Interim Guidelines was to enable effective discussions about research priorities. The Aboriginal community did not see the Interim Guidelines as an end goal, but rather as a vehicle through which the broader cause of gaining control over Indigenous research could be pursued (2003, p.31). The usefulness of the 1991 Interim Guidelines was therefore in making the NHMRC acknowledge that traditional academic research methods are not the only, or the best, ways to conduct research, and the subsequent establishment of Aboriginal health ethics committees (2003, p.35). Humphery argues that these accounts further clarify the position of Indigenous people towards research and their insistence that it be driven by community benefit rather than for research’s sake alone (p.38).

McAullay et al. (2002) found that Indigenous people had no fundamental disagreement with the content of the Interim Guidelines, nor did the literature contest the use of guidelines. The Interim Guidelines were specific in the principles they described, and some statements reflected the foundational values of self-determination and community control as identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, the Interim Guidelines were found to lack clear articulation of values such as reciprocity and cultural respect, which were identified by Indigenous peoples as foundational for the ethical conduct of research. Their literature review suggested the need to engage with: involvement of Indigenous peoples in health research and promotion of Indigenous peoples’ involvement in all research phases (in the Interim Guidelines, Indigenous peoples are mentioned only as research participants or assistants); compliance and monitoring of approved research, which isn’t covered by the Interim Guidelines; problematic research fields (i.e. genetics); and the development of new collaborative research models to increase research partnerships.

The authors selected the remaining two themes - of Relevance & Benefits, and Consultation & Consent - in order to demonstrate the limitations of the Guidelines for every possible context in which Indigenous health research might be developed. A reference to what has been defined as ‘Right to Research Benefit’ (Kothera, 1997, cited in McAullay et al., 2003) can be found in the Interim Guidelines, as well as in the reviewed literature. However, the authors argue that both the Interim Guidelines and the wider literature are characterised by levels of generality that fail to specify how benefits of research can be assessed. Few articles from the periods which the review covers suggest the need to acknowledge and distinguish between various dimensions of benefits, in order to ensure that long-term benefits particularly can be facilitated in the process of ethical assessment (Anderson, 1996; Torzillo, 1997). In a similar manner, Anderson et al. (2003) state that the diversity in types of Indigenous collective structures complicates the identification
of the ‘correct community’ to consult with on research projects, in ways that cannot be captured in guidelines which set clear and straightforward criteria for consultation.

In light of these limitations of the Interim Guidelines, the authors conclude that the revised guidelines can and should direct researchers to think critically about Relevance & Benefits and Consultation & Consent by allowing flexibility in their related processes, while providing frameworks from which these processes can occur. In summary, the authors find that, whilst the need for the Interim Guidelines is accepted, the revised document should more explicitly reflect Indigenous values and provide frameworks through which research processes can be actualised in multiple and flexible ways. There needs to be further attention given to several key areas of concern for Indigenous communities, including participation, benefit, consultation, consent, dissemination, ownership of data, and overall control of the research.

Current Guidelines

One major debate about the current guidelines is a debate over the desirability of strictly articulated ethical guidelines (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006). The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation’s (NACCHO) response to the final draft was that the document does not adequately cover the many general principles required for ethical conduct (NACCHO, 2003, in Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006). McKendrick & Aratukutuku Bennett (2003) state that the problem with the revised edition is much broader and relates to who has control over research. They argue that the newly-desired ideal of promoting trust between researchers and communities is used to undermine strict guidelines, which they feel are necessary given how this trust has been violated historically (p.22). Furthermore, the Guidelines have been criticised for minimising the impact of the colonial history of research on Indigenous peoples (Johnstone, 2006). Above all, the continuing health disparities of Indigenous peoples reflect how policies like the Guidelines have failed to lead to a reconceptualisation of research practice (Thomson et al., 2004; Johnstone, 2006).

On the other hand, one of the key debates concerns the argument that using specific rules is problematic, and that there are many possible situations where ethics committees might not reach the right moral decision, along with the many questions that committees cannot answer. From this perspective, it is the role of researchers to exercise an early and far more developed thinking about the implications of their ethics decisions (Loff & Black, 2004; Anderson et al., 2003). Still others, like Stewart et al. (2006), suggest shared negotiations between ethics committees and researchers are required in order to have a shared understanding of ethics requirements.

The works of key Indigenous scholars both in Australia and New Zealand have called for developing an agenda for research and welcoming collaborative and participatory methodologies that empower Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Nakata, 2007). These calls have generated increasing responses which deal with the operationalisation of the Guidelines through collaborative research models and/or proposed modifications (Gillam & Pyett, 2003; Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; Dudgeon et al., 2010; Bainbridge et al., 2013; Bishop, 1998; Christie, 2010; Jackson-Barrett et al, 2015; Bainbridge et al, 2013; Gwynn et al, 2015; Chenhall et al, 2011; Pyett et al, 2009; Crespigny et al, 2004; Fuary, 2009). Other responses included calls to shift the focus from research methodology to research philosophy by moving from principles to epistemology and rational ethics (Kendall et al, 2011), or by developing an understanding of what Raven (2010) refers to as research actors and their varied enactment of guidelines, as a more effective way to understand the role of guidelines in building ethical research practice.
There is some evidence of institutional progress in increased Indigenous control over research. For example, the national *Lowitja Institute* was established in 2002 to improve Indigenous health through effective research. A local example of similar effort is the *Victorian Aboriginal Ethics Project* (Stewart & Pyett, 2005), which aimed to find ways to assign more control over research for Indigenous communities. However, the review above suggests that similar concerns about lack of Indigenous control over research in broader terms, alongside other, more specific, problematic aspects such as HREC’s, Benefits, and Consultation, still persist today. In the section below I continue with discussion about three areas of focus regarding ethics across relevant literature - operationalisation, alternative theoretical approaches and Human Research Ethics Committees.

**Ethics in Indigenous Research - Current Directions**

Emerging literature post the 2003 revision of the *Guidelines* appears to focus on the following aspects of ethics in Indigenous health research. The first and most dominant direction for ethics in this context is related to the various ways in which the *Guidelines* can be operationalised in research practice in order to ensure ethical conduct. Another significant new direction in ethics relates to the emergence of alternative theoretical approaches from which to view the *Guidelines* and, more broadly, the ethics process within Indigenous research contexts. A third important criticism in the above cited literature relates to Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC’s) as the central mechanism through which the *Guidelines* regulate Indigenous health research. Below, I begin by reviewing existing literature in relation to HREC’s, followed by a literature review about the operationalisation of the *Guidelines*, and I conclude with a review of literature relating to Indigenous practical models for developing appropriate contextualised ethics practices. As in the review so far, the following discussion on ethics committees is also guided by an overall theme across the literature of greater Indigenous control over health research.

**Ethics Committees**

Non-Indigenous members tend to dominate ethics committees (Dudgeon *et al*., 2010; Stewart *et al*., 2006). This has led some scholars to call for the *Guidelines* to explicitly reflect Indigenous perspectives on what is fundamental in order for ethical conduct to occur (Anderson *et al*., 2003). Other researchers emphasise the value in researchers becoming familiar with the ethics review process and the way in which it is influenced by ‘moral panic’ (Fitzgerald, 2005), and dominating narratives (Fitzgerald *et al*., 2006), in order to better prepare their applications and manage responses received from ethics committees. Further empirical data into the ethics review process by ethics committees in Australia is needed in order to ensure the conduct of relevant and needed research projects (Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2006).

Since ethics committees play a central role in the ethics process, literature often situates the *Guidelines* in relation to ethics committees. The literature raises critical questions such as: what is and/or should be the role of HREC’s; can HREC’s fulfil such roles effectively; and if so, what is missing from the current *Guidelines* to ensure HREC’s can fulfil their role efficiently? The responses place emphasis on HREC’s as a vehicle through which to gain control over Indigenous health research (Loff & Black, 2004; Anderson *et al*., 2003; Gillam & Pyett, 2003; Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; McKendrick & Aratukutuku-Bennett 2003; Stewart *et al*., 2006; NACCHO, 2003 in Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006).
The literature reports low numbers of Indigenous representation on HREC’s (Dudgeon et al., 2010) and raises concerns about the risk that ethics committees which are dominated by non-Indigenous interests might exercise biased judgment by reflecting their own values (Anderson et al., 2003). One response suggests revising the Guidelines as three separate documents tailored at researchers, HERC’s and Indigenous communities (Gillam & Pyett, 2003). Similar proposals have been made to reposition the focus from researcher to institutions and turn the Guidelines into a clear set of processes and structures applicable for institutions and HREC’s to follow, while researchers are left to collaboratively work out the details with communities on the ground (Sporle, 2003; Putt, 2013). An international example of such a model is the New Zealand 2008 Good Practice Guidelines, whose targeted audience are government officials responsible for research. This means the content is specifically tailored to guide the role of ethics committees (Putt, 2013).

Chenhall et al. (2011) argue that the HREC’s represent a highly complex and bureaucratic system, which approaches qualitative research through quantitative logic. It lacks evidence-based guidance and adequate training in qualitative research for its members, leaving decisions on complex ethical issues to inexperienced committee members. In addition, some problematise the fact that the Guidelines appear to not challenge ‘Western’ principles of research ethics (Gillam & Pyett, 2003; McKendrick & Aratukutuku-Bennett 2003; Anderson et al., 2003). Some have argued that this presentation of broad principles, applicable in principle to any health research, makes it unsuitable for use by ethics committees (Gillam & Pyett, 2003; McKendrick & Aratukutuku-Bennett, 2003).

Fitzgerald (2005) suggests that we can understand the ethics review process by HREC’s using the concepts of punctuated equilibrium and moral panic. Adapted from Eldredge & Gould (1972, cited in Fitzgerald, 2005), the concept of a moral panic refers to an exaggeration of harm and risk, involving the construction of imaginary non-conformists and dependence on diagnostic instruments by powerful special-interest groups (Chalmers & Pettit, 1998; Van den Hoonaard, 2001, cited in Fitzgerald, 2005). Fitzgerald (2005) suggests that these concepts can be appropriated to understand the evolution of the ethics review process as a result of periodic controversies and moral panic.

Fitzgerald calls for greater awareness of group processes which affect decision making, and which include the role and status of committee chairs and other leaders in the group. More empirical data on ethics review processes will allow us to better understand this vital process. Such enhanced understanding of the process should ensure high quality and ethically responsible research that addresses contemporary needs and populations in appropriate ways. Fitzgerald (2005) argues that, at the very least, understanding the impact of moral panic on the ethics review process can help researchers prepare applications that are better tuned to the concerns of committee members, or if that fails, to at least better manage the responses they receive with regard to their application.

Fitzgerald et al. (2006) expand on another aspect associated with the ethics review process, which is concerned with the narrative that takes place in HREC meetings. A narrative is often generated by one person, such as the review officer, and on many occasions, provides the first point of contact with the application for the other members. Because such a narrative is the introduction to the discussion for the application, it has great influence on the nature of the discussion that follows. Rather than providing an answer as to whether narrative should be part of the review process, the authors argue for greater conscious awareness on the part of ethics committees’ members, both narrators and listeners, of the extent to which the narrative, rather than the application, can influence the review and decision-making process.
While there is an agreement among the above researchers about the need to make institutional changes to the operation of ethics assessments, some scholars still view the Guidelines as a workable document which can be used as a basis for research agreements between communities and researchers, or used in conjunction with collaborative, participatory based research (Gillam & Pyett, 2003; Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; Dudgeon et al., 2010; Bainbridge et al., 2013; Bishop, 1998; Christie, 2010; Jackson-Barrett et al., 2015; Bainbridge et al., 2013; Gwynn et al., 2015; Chenhall et al., 2011; Pyett et al., 2008; Crespigny et al., 2004). The question of whether the Guidelines are workable, however, cannot be resolved solely by looking at the actions of ethics committees; how the Guidelines are operationalised in research practice is also a central concern. In the next section, I turn to this issue, exploring the literature that directly addresses the operationalisation of the Guidelines.

**Operationalisation of the Guidelines**

*The one and only nobility is personal excellence*


The themes that have emerged from literature that discusses operationalisation of the Guidelines include: collaborative research; community engagement; reflexivity; and Indigenous knowledge systems. These are guided by an overall theme of greater Indigenous control over health research. Such literature is always anchored in practical research projects, mainly in rural and what is often called ‘remote’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, the Guidelines were developed with the input of Aboriginal people living on the eastern seaboard/south eastern Australia, which suggests geographic perspective is a significant issue here and one that speaks to the diversity of Aboriginal peoples. The richness of alternative models for ethical conduct in Indigenous health research is mostly guided by the view that the Guidelines should serve as a general framework from which specific and context dependent practical ethics emerges.

A number of authors have put forward practical models for ethical Indigenous health research. For example, Crespigny et al. (2004) have devised the ‘partnership model for ethical Indigenous research’, which consists of four key features of respect, collaboration, active participation and meeting needs. Ethnographers Chenhall et al. (2011) analogously highlight the role of reflexive engagement with research process. They advocate for participatory action research, but note that such research also requires support for researchers to balance their professional conduct with their close relationships with participants, and demands attentive awareness of ‘microethics’ - that is ethically important moments in our interactions with participants and communities. Similarly, Dudgeon et al. (2010) argue for greater recognition of community participatory action research - at a national level through the Guidelines and, at local level, through the development of structural mechanisms and processes that enable HREC’s to better hold researchers accountable to the Guidelines. In each case, the model of ethical research focuses on processes that enable Indigenous peoples to reclaim and reposition the representations of cultures in research, while requiring non-Indigenous researchers to examine and re-examine concepts of Whiteness/power and decolonisation.

The NHMRC role in such efforts consists of changing the criteria for evaluation of research performance to include evidence of meaningful implementation and translation of research findings into policy and practice, as well as broader evaluation of research processes and the
community perspective on these. Jackson-Barrett et al. (2015) argue that researchers must start with the protocols and concepts of Indigenous peoples associated with their research, and once these are understood and navigated, researchers can then proceed with addressing the national Guidelines. Gwynn et al. (2015) similarly argue that, whilst the Guidelines include principles related to community engagement and ownership in research in order to increase the understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, gaps still exist in researchers’ actualisations of such understandings. They therefore propose governance structures and procedures to support community engagement in research, and view their model as giving substance to the Guidelines. Bainbridge et al. (2013) develop a model for the social process involved in gaining community engagement.

Pyett et al. (2008) call on all researchers to address the Guidelines’ core values, but stress the importance of seeking approval from Aboriginal ethics committees, as well as developing familiarity, understanding and respect to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO’s). Dunbar & Scrimgeour (2006) argue that, in accordance with the World Health Origination (WHO) position on Indigenous health research, the Guidelines should be used as the basis for development of negotiated research agreements between Indigenous peoples and communities and researchers. Such an approach would increase the potential for Indigenous peoples to assert control over research, and provide a framework for monitoring research after ethics approval. The authors cite the Aboriginal Health Council in South Australia as an example of an institutional modification and use of the WHO generic research agreement pro-forma, and argue that the WHO’s document can be modified to represent specific and context-dependent areas of concern for Indigenous peoples in wide range of research contexts. Regardless of the model or practices employed, Fuary (2009) states that, despite good intentions, there is not always a neat fit between institutionalised ethics and relational ethics. Therefore, ethics should be view as an ongoing, self-regulating process mirrored in the development of adaptive protocols and agreements that are context dependent.

Among these valuable examples of operationalised ethics in Indigenous health research, one example stood out as an authentic uptake of an indigenist paradigm. Christie et al. (2010) describe the enabling of Yolngu knowledge authorities to participate in the academic teaching of their languages and cultures to students, from Darwin, California and Tokyo, from their remote homeland using new technologies. Christie et al. (2010) discusses the multilayered ethical behaviours in play. First is the long-term commitment of the university, through its ethics committee, to work with the evolving experiential nature of the fieldwork, and to recognise what Fitzgerald (2005) refers to as the ‘ethical moments’ embedded in the knowledge work of the Yolngu knowledge authorities. Second is the ethical behaviour of the researcher, enacted through a research design that prioritises the particular philosophical and geographical standpoint of the Yolngu knowledge authorities. That is achieved by using the new technologies to show the Yolngu Elders on their country storytelling, sitting, standing by, listening, looking at various directions, and making comments. Rather than a tokenistic gesture, this method reflects ethical commitment to the Yolngu’s epistemology of people-places-moments “talking and thinking as usual” (p.75). Christie et al. (2010) state that such epistemology has implications for collaborative research in that, instead of presenting a community with a research question, the researcher should work together with Indigenous peoples to develop the issue and work through it in discussions, waiting for a story to emerge. Most importantly, Christie et al. (2010) share with us a valuable ethical lesson about truth being but one factor, alongside factors such as relevance, effect and usability in ethical conduct that is about the pursuit of rightness. The next section will further develop this point by discussing theoretical positions on ethics in Indigenous research.
Contextualised Ethics: Indigenist Practical Models

In this section I aim to draw attention to various indigenist practical models for developing appropriate contextualised ethics practices in the field, in relation with specific communities. I view the following section on ethics-related reflections on the Artful Mob processes as an example of the works discussed here. Influenced by decolonisation theorists such as Martin Nakata, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Aileen Morten Robinson, there are researchers who emphasise that ethical behaviour in Indigenous health research translates to varying levels of engagement with decolonised Indigenist research, shifting and expanding worldviews as the means for redefining and reframing ethical conduct (Bishop, 1998; Johnstone, 2006; Raven, 2010; Kaveline, 2008; Corra & Willer, 2002; Gray, 2004; Swazo, 2005; Rigney, 2001; Kendall et al., 2011). Among such literature we can find a wide range of theoretical positions on ethics in Indigenous research.

One position calls for the full immersion of the non-Indigenous researcher in the Indigenous knowledge system of the Indigenous community involved (Bishop, 1998), and another calls on identifying one’s own, and others’, position within the ethics landscape (Raven, 2010). A third position calls for finding balance between ethical codes as mechanism of regulation and compliance, and enactment of practical ethics - a balance that must consider the complexities involved in the meeting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices (Davis & Holcombe, 2010).

Guided by the notion of immersion in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, for Johnstone (2006) and Kendall et al. (2011), ethical conduct in Indigenous health research cannot include the mere adaptation of an acceptable method. Rather, it must see the non-Indigenous researchers and their institutions engaged in the processes of decolonisation, which includes recognition and reconciliation. Kendall et al. (2011) advocate for a relational ethics approach, which requires daily responsiveness to the worldviews of others, particularly when these are not being commonly promoted by those in power. The uptake of an Indigenist paradigm, with its commitment to understanding, engaging with, and addressing issues that lead to the oppression of Indigenous Australians (Rigney, 2001), can involve practices such as: learning in the real world through social interactions with Indigenous peoples; explicit apology for past wrongs; publications that make such histories visible; differentiation between different groups; and citation of Indigenous scholars and researchers.

Identifying both one’s own and others’ position within the ethics landscape is a more theoretical or epistemological approach to ethics in the field. Raven (2010) offers a theoretical framework that is directly related to the Guidelines, as well as any other guidelines and protocols available in the field. She describes three distinct ethical positions that actors in research move between, depending on the assumptions they hold in relation to the power-knowledge-ethics triangle in Indigenous health research: the gatekeeper, the guardian and the gatecrasher of knowledge. Each position affects the view of knowledge, and therefore knowing the three positions can better prepare researchers to navigate their role in in relation to the others. For example, the gatekeeper views knowledge as a commodity that has a certain market value, and thus sees his/her role as the regulator of access to such knowledge. Gatekeepers in Indigenous health research might include universities (Kaveline, 2008), government and non-government institutions, including Indigenous controlled health organisations, who exercise power to control access to knowledge (Corra & Willer, 2002). However, the Australian Research Council (1999) suggests that Indigenous communities are also increasingly playing the role of the gatekeeper. In cases where the gatekeepers are Indigenous peoples, protocols can be seen as important mechanism through which to manage Indigenous knowledge (Raven, 2010).
The guardian, by contrast, usually implies a caring and protective role, views knowledge as embodied, and therefore approaches Indigenous knowledge on a relational basis between knowledge holders and knowledge seekers. Protocols and guidelines are then used as tools to co-manage knowledge in this relationship (Raven, 2010). Finally, the gatecrasher views knowledge as free and thinks that access to it should be available to all. In Indigenous health research, this category would usually refer to those who seek access to Indigenous peoples and their knowledges, and later use the knowledges inappropriately, disregarding the holders of knowledges and their protocols (Raven, 2010). The colonial history of research is replete with researchers, educational and governmental institutions as gatecrashers. Similarly, Malekoff (2009) argues that critical self-reflection on the contexts in which we locate ourselves is mandatory for enhanced understandings and responses to the gatekeeper, guardian and gatecrasher within us. Such contexts might include our academic institution, philosophical position, cultural heritage or all these together.

Bishop (1998) contends that ethical conduct is neither a question of political understanding nor a refinement or challenging of the paradigm within which the researcher works. Rather it is “the very world view within which the researcher becomes immersed that holds the key to knowing” (p.208). He rejects and warns against the use of Western theories and perspectives on methodologies of participation because they reinforce the researcher’s preoccupation with notions of neutrality, subjectivity and distance - all of which are foreign to Kaupapa Maori philosophy. The Kaupapa Maori philosophy does not view the knower as separate to the known. Heshusius (cited in Bishop, 1998) argues that a preoccupation with managing subjectivity is a “subtle form of empiricist thought” (p.215) because such a process assumes that if we can know subjectivity, we can control it. This is again an epistemic problem because it is based on the belief that the regulation and control of distance in research relationship is required in order to arrive at a ‘real’ knowing. However, as Bishop (1998) alerts us, Kaupapa Maori philosophy does not objectify and subjectify nature, it does not focus on the individual self, nor does it view reality as truth that requires interpretations but as mutually evolving. Bishop (1998) is therefore advocating for our ethical obligation to participate in research that is embedded in Maori’s way of knowing which is ‘born of time, connectedness, kinship, commitment, and participation’ (p.215).

The researcher might choose one position, or even balance between the two positions of full immersion in local Indigenous knowledge and developing their reflexive awareness of the gatekeeper, guardian and gatecrasher both within systems and procedures and within. Regardless of the choice made, it is the diversity of approaches to ethics, both practical and conceptual, that inspires and supports development of other models of ethical conduct.

To summarise: academic discussions about the role of the Guidelines have appeared as a dominant concern for particular periods around its development and its review. This periodic engagement might reflect a type of moral panic - that is, engagement which is characterised as on a needs basis. On the other hand, the turn from direct engagement in discussion about the Guidelines, and into creative participatory models and new conceptual thinking, might in itself suggest an indirect effort to navigate around the dominance of the document whilst funding is still dependent on its use. This dependency of ethics committees in research institutions on government funds further highlight the issue of power and control over research. Gray (2004), who views the Guidelines as primarily ethical in nature, also highlights a fundamental problem with its application. He explains that the Guidelines reflect Indigenous laws and customs, but that these are not formally recognised in the Australian legal system. The result, according to Gray (2004), is a certain distrust in the ethical nature the Guidelines claim to provide in Indigenous health research. In more recent times, this concern about distrust in the ethicality of the
**Guidelines** seems to have subsided somewhat, and researchers appear to be more occupied with sharing their research experiences and models of practical ethical conduct, or contributing to ethical conduct through theoretical perspectives.

These varied approaches to the operationalisation of the *Guidelines* are useful in providing concrete examples of how the *Guidelines* can be interpreted, reworked, and modified in ways that emphasise and personalise local Indigenous ethical ways of being rather than remaining as a national document on ethical conduct in Indigenous research. In the following section, I extend this analysis by critically reflecting on my own experiences in the field. I discuss areas of compatibility, as well as mismatches, between what the *Guidelines* and the literature propose as ethical conduct in research, and what is deemed ethical by the communities involved in my research. In considering the complexities involved in the meeting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices, I also discuss errors I have made whilst believing I acted ethically, creative strategies I have used to approach areas of mismatch between *Guidelines*, literature and practical experience, and the insights I have gained in viewing ethics as culture-, time- and context-dependent.

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**Critical reflections on ethics relevant to my research project**

*A good man would prefer to be defeated than to defeat injustice by evil means.*

Sallust, The War With Catiline. (as cited in Chang, 2006)

In the following section, I critically reflect on the over-arching themes that I have identified through critical reflections on the ethics of the *Artful Mob* research project with three Indigenous communities in South Western Victoria. The methodology chapter is focused on Winda Mara community on Gunditjmara Country, and the BADAC community on Wathaurong Country. Here, however, I also include reflections on my experiences with a third community for which the *Artful Mob* research project failed to receive ethics approval, which I refer to here only as a Correctional Facility. This inclusion is important because I gained important insights into ethical conduct in Indigenous research from my experience with this third community, and it is ethically important to reflect on failures – perhaps, in some ways, even more than to reflect on successes. In doing so, I will refer back to specific pieces of literature that are either compatible with my experiences, or where my observations suggest that further analysis or elaboration is required. I have organised discussion into the following sections, reflecting major themes that shaped the conduct and eventual design of my research: Aboriginal Reference Group vs. Critical Friends; community engagement; and ‘High Risk’ Information to Participants, Consent & Confidentiality. I acknowledge, however, that this is an artificial categorisation, and in practice these ethical themes are interrelated with other themes such as Respect, Research Benefits, Reciprocity, and Spirit and Integrity, which I will discuss in the methodology chapter.

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**Consultation: Aboriginal Reference Group vs. Critical Friends**

The topic of consultation is central in discussions about ethical research practice within the *Guidelines* and in much of the literature cited above. The *Guidelines*, for example, interweaves

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Footnote: A version of this chapter has been published in Assoulin, E. (2016). Critical Friends: reflections on the ethics of the setting-up process of an Aboriginal Reference Group for an art-based exploratory research project with two
the concept of consultation throughout its six core values. Similarly, the guidelines from AIATSIS (2012) include consultation in the title of three of its 14 principles, and refer to consultation, throughout the document, as the foundation for research with Indigenous people. However, as Pyett and the Vic Health Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit (2002) indicate, the Guidelines do not provide an elaborated specification of what appropriate consultation entails. In addition, Pyett et al. (2008, p.52) discuss differences in approaches to consultation with communities in rural and in urban contexts, suggesting that the latter should begin at the broader level, with the relevant peak body through which suitable representatives at community level can be allocated for a more tailored consultation. Anderson (1996) believes that it is not viable to create clear and defined guidelines on community consultation. Instead, guidelines should allow flexibility in the actualisation of consultation while providing a framework though which consultation is evident through either formal partnerships or research agreements.

As Tuhiriwai Smith (1999) argues, establishing reciprocal and respectful relationships is a key feature of an ethical research practice (p.97). The terms Aboriginal Reference Group, Advisory group, Steering committees, and Community-Up ethics, have been used across the literature to describe a mechanism through which respect for community, ownership and control, as well as accountability to the community, and the appropriateness and relevance of the research can be demonstrated (Pyett et al., 2008; Pyett, 2008; Crespigny et al., 2004; Jamieson et al., 2012; Wolgemuth et al., 2008).

The roles of the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG), which the Elders, the hosting organisations and myself have identified as vital for this research project, include: the approval for the research to take place; collaboration on the development of the art-making program to reflect both local cultural perspectives and knowledge as well as the utilisation of art therapy (AT) tools and processes; capacity building through the inclusion and training of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-facilitators; approval of findings for publications; and joint ownership over the findings. I have also committed to consult the hosting organisations on the development and delivery of similar programs to different target groups after the completion of the research.

Jamieson et al. (2012) argue that researchers should constantly review their study goals with an ARG, Pyett (2002) states that all research with Indigenous peoples should have an ARG monitoring them either directly or indirectly, and Pyett et al. (2009, p.53) contend that the relationship between the researcher and the ARG should be formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Following these principles, I initially approached the task of establishing ARG’s for both the Winda Mara and BADAC by making contacts with Elders, Key Important Persons, and the relevant teams at the hosting organisations. These people were introduced to me by one of my supervisors, an Indigenous scholar who is connected with the community. While my research design was guided by these principles, and while I still regard them as a model of ethical conduct in research, my experiences collaborating with these communities conflicted with the straightforward model of continuous, formalised ethics oversight by local communities.

For example, while Pyett et al. (2009) advise to establish a consistent membership early in the project, I found that my attempts to do so met with resistance. An initial meeting over dinner at a horse farm of a Winda Mara staff member included three Elders, a Gunditjmara Key person, and two non-Indigenous professionals from the hosting organisation. All the Gunditjmara people present had expressed willingness to sit on an ARG and had also discussed other potential people for the role. The BADAC management had similarly supported the notion of an ARG, and names
of suitable persons were put forward with an assurance that a group will be established and initial meeting will take place prior to commencement of the program. However, with time I found, similar to Jamieson et al. (2012), that membership in the group placed a substantial burden of expectations on one Elder and one worker in both communities to carry the roles associated with the ARG. Jamieson et al. (2012) suggest that, in such cases, where an ARG is not possible, the role of individual Indigenous staff or community members “becomes even more critical” (p.17).

Sensitive to this problem, I therefore approached both Elders and non-Indigenous workers at the two communities to further discuss how they would like to proceed with the formalities associated with the ARG, given the challenges in actualising participation from other nominated members. By avoiding direct conversations on the subject, I believe the Elders indicated that the formalisation of the ARG was not of high importance. When we came to finalise the art-making program at Winda Mara, Aunty Maude brought another Elder, Aunty Rose, and together with Kelly, the non-Indigenous staff member, we worked to ensure the needs and cultural perspectives of the community, as well as my interest in utilising art therapy tools and processes, were met. A few months later, in a conference, I met with the Gunditjmara Key Person who was present at the initial ARG meeting, and he explained that consultation on an as-needed basis suited him better than a more formally structured consultation process.

My experiences with the process of establishing an ARG with the Winda Mara and BADAC communities also echo the suggestions made in the literature (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; Anderson et al., 2003) that, by providing only the outline of Indigenous cultural principles, the Guidelines emphasises the autonomy of Indigenous persons at community level to make decisions about their levels of engagement with research. It seems that, while the communities’ leaders were aware of the purpose and role of the ARG, having full attendance to meetings was neither possible nor desired. The daily reality of members includes far more urgent business that requires their attention. Rather than insist or expect that the initial research design would be actualised to its last detail, I had to work with whomever was available at the time. Keeping members updated regularly, and allowing feedback and responses to be generated via emails and phone calls (in moderation), were proven complementary ways to sustain the consultation process.

Similarly, the claim that relations should be regulated through formalised agreements, like a MoU (Pyett et al., 2009), and the pressure from universities to have these documents as a protective mechanism for both communities and researcher, is another ethically challenging element associated with consultation. The non-Indigenous manager of the family program at Winda Mara has signed the drafted MoU, but the Key Elder and the Indigenous CEO at Winda Mara took months to provide their signatures. During this time, I also met with a Gunditjmara Elder with whom I raised frustrations at having to produce signed MoU’s and the embarrassment I feel in having to keep bringing this up with communities. The Elder responded by rhetorically asking; “how can we claim our right for self-determination when we are asked to sign consent forms and MoU’s?” (Personal communication, 2016) – needless to say, I left the MoU I had brought for her to sign in my bag. The BADAC management and the Djab wurrung/ Gunditjmara Elder did approve and sign the drafted MoU, but they did not make any changes to its content. In fact, the Elder was not interested in reading it, and asked me to verbally share its content, after which he signed the paper and we proceeded to chat about the program. There was an unspoken, yet clear, sense that we better get the bureaucratic formalities out of the way so that our time together could be used more effectively.

These experiences were valuable lessons on working with what the Elders perceive to be important (the development of an appropriate art-making program), rather than insisting on an externally-driven formal process such as an ARG. The Elders politely resisted my constant
attempts to establish a consistent membership early in the project, as well as efforts to have all members attend meetings regularly. They rightfully resisted by avoiding direct responses and redirecting the conversations. Ironically, I institutively knew the formal approach would not be appropriate to the context of the communities in which I was working, but I also knew that this was what was expected of me as a researcher. This made me reflect on how strictly following generalised guidelines for best practice, making decontextualised demands and impositions on community members to establish the ARG the ‘right’ way, was, in these cases, the wrong way.

In attempting to bridge the gap between guidelines, principles and practice, I have renamed this contextualised consultative process ‘Critical Friends’. The term means here that the key Indigenous people, with whom consultations take place, are seen as critical friends to ensure this process is carried appropriately, yet in accordance with their wishes on how it should take place. In this case, that contextual consultative process meant that consultation would happen: on an as-needed basis; often through individual interactions; and without formal titles such as reference group or steering committees. The latter imply sets of expectations embedded in a highly structured, formal, decontextualised mechanism of operation associated with the requirements of bureaucratic regulation by state or university.

Community Engagement

Community consultation is seen to reflect a pillar of ethical conduct in Indigenous research contexts, precisely because it appears to deviate from a long history of abusive externally-driven research processes. However, the concept of community is often loosely used, with little elaborated discussion on what community actually means, and how one knows with whom to consult (Bailie & Paradies, 2005; Meadows et al., 2003; Anderson et al., 2003; Israel et al., 1998). The Guidelines define community as cultural groups, geographic groups or communities of interest, but such a broad definition does not adequately guide the researcher to make practical decisions regarding consultations. An added factor is that one geographical area can hold multiple communities of interest, each with its own governing group. For example, BADAC is situated in Ballarat - a place well known for diverse cultural groups, but also for a wide range of Indigenous health services. Cross-group politics and questions of power and control are regularly played out, and the researcher’s preexisting contacts can impact the end result in various ways.

In the process of finding an Indigenous organisation with interest in collaborating on the Artful Mob project, I initially made contact with a different organisation in Ballarat, and rapidly found myself caught between conflicting family groups - a phenomenon also described in the literature (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2006; Bailie & Paradies, 2005). It was months later that, with the consultation and support of Uncle Ted, I gained a clearer understanding of these particular complex relations, so that I could understand it as a factor outside my control.

Pyett et al. (2009) make a useful distinction between remote communities, which usually have clear structures and protocols for consultation, and urban communities, which are diverse and dispersed, with consultation protocols that are less clear for researchers. They offer a consultation procedure for research with urban communities which begins with a relevant peak body, and proceeds to consultation with recommended representatives of the community (Elders, key persons or representative bodies).

In my experiences, community consultations were facilitated through the introductions my Indigenous supervisor made between Elders, key persons, hosting organisations and myself. This method echoes the recommendations of scholars such as Pyett et al. (2009) and Anderson et al.
(2003), who acknowledge the relationships a researcher might already have with Aboriginal people from, or connected to, communities as an appropriate avenue for the consultation process. Initial contact is of course not a guarantee for community approval, and I invested time and efforts to develop these relationships, which included participation in community events, informal and formal meetings, visiting and staying on Country, and – above all - willingness to wait patiently while I was ‘sussed out’. In fact, I believe that a different kind of sussing out is taking place even now, while the communities as participants are waiting for publications and the art exhibition related to this project to take place.

The process of setting up the Critical Friends group required what I term practical consultation, which included meetings with usually one or two Elders and key important people. It is here that discussions about all aspects of the project took place. Conceptual consultation, by contrast, refers to Elders and key persons in the community whom I have not met, but who knew about me and the project, and were part of its approval. For example, in Heywood, where Winda Mara is located, the members of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation were aware of my work with their community members, even though we have not formally met. I had asked the Gunditjmara people I was working with to arrange a meeting with the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation several times before I learned that, if such meeting would eventuate, I would be invited rather than invite myself. At BADAC, my co-facilitator Ash taught me that the invitation of Elders and Key Important Persons to approve and/or consult on a research project was an expected sign of recognition, whose importance far exceeds formal consultations. In both Winda Mara and BADAC, the Elders represented the communities, spoke for the communities, and consulted on behalf of the communities. The Elders in these two communities were very familiar with each other. For example, Uncle Ted is part Gunditjmara man and he lived on Gunditjmara Country for many years. Although I have worked to develop my relationships with Elders and community separately, I have no doubts that the approval and support for my research project in each community is due to cross-Countries and cross-Elders communication. These consultation experiences signal that the definition of community is broader than the Guidelines assign, and extends to the overall kinship system and shared collective responsibilities within communities and across neighboring countries.

The consultation process with the community at a Correction facility, by contrast, was very different, and indeed the warning by Pyett et al. (2009) against over-reliance on friends and networks in some research contexts proved particularly salient to the inability of this project to move forward. This experience taught me that there can be several communities with whom the consultation process should take place and that this process can be complex, multi-levelled and that the processes around ethics can vary.

The stated criteria for submission of ethics applications to the Victoria Department of Justice (DoJ) is dependent on the completion of an application of over 40 pages, in which the stated required evidence for consultation consists of letters of support from the Manager of the correctional facility and from the Koori Justice Unit (KJU). The Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation, at the KJU had reviewed my application, and, after the recommended amendments were made, she had indicated to Corrections Victoria (CV) that the unit supported the application and would provide a formal support letter. A support letter was also obtained from the manager of the correction facility.

An ethics application cannot proceed to the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC), until it has been reviewed and supported by the Corrections Victoria Research Committee (CVRC). Upon review, the CVRC requested that I engage in discussions with the Manager of Aboriginal Programs at Corrections Victoria (CV) before support could be granted. Jamieson et al. (2012)
indicates that leadership turnover among Indigenous stakeholders can be high, and wisely suggests that the researcher attempt to anticipate such occurrence in advance and seek advice from ARG members. During initial contact with the Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer (AWO), and for the majority of the time spent with potential participants at the correction facility, the role of Manager of Aboriginal Programs at CV did not exist. The AWO assured me that consultation took place with the relevant person at that program, and that he was in support of this project. The first error I made here was to rely on this information, instead of seeking direct consultation with the relevant person.

I then embarked on series of consultations with the newly appointed Manager of Aboriginal Programs at CV, and provided him with an detailed response to several points of concern that he identified in relation to the project. One of these points was a request for the provision of letters of support from what I have come to term Critical Indigenous Friends with whom I had regular consultations regarding the project. Here it can be seen again how institutional demands for letters of support as a mechanism to ensure ethical conduct, directly contradict the preferred ways of the Elders and Key Persons involved. I was thus placed in a very uncomfortable situation, having to request such formal letters, and this pressure negatively impacted, and indeed placed at risk, the relationships I had carefully developed with these critical friends. Nevertheless, these letters of recommendation were obtained and presented. The final response from the CVRC was a rejection notice of only a few lines in which the committee stated that sufficient community consultation had failed to take place. Through a phone conversation with one of the staff members at CV, I learned that I had failed to consult with the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee on my project.

The ethical responsibility to know whom to consult is not the responsibility of the institution involved, but of the researcher. I was confident that my consultations with Elders and Key Important Persons (six people in total), the AWO, the manager of the correctional facility, and the Koori Justice Unit were adequate. However, I relied on communication from the AWO instead of making direct contact with the appropriate person at the Aboriginal Program within CV. The failure to consult and seek approval from the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee unfortunately had further and greater impact on my attempts to gain ethics approval. I spent 17 months building relationships and trust with potential participants at the correctional facility. We had formed a strong group of 20 men who were invested in my proposed project and who looked forward to its actualisation. I therefore feel that, by neglecting to consult with the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, I had failed these men and demonstrated a lack of ethical conduct. I experienced many sleepless nights and still carry a deep sense of regret, in which recognition of the role the bureaucratic system had played in this deeply unfortunate outcome, offers very little solace.

A second reason CV rejected the research proposal relates to concerns about potential duplication of aims and delivery of an existing art program where selected inmates create ‘Aboriginal Art’ which is then put on display and sale. My efforts to explain the fundamental difference between art-making for sale and art-making for inter- and intra-communication, along with the indication that most of the men were not artists and that the group had no interest in producing Aboriginal Art, were deemed unsatisfactory. This reason was reminiscent of Brunger & Wall’s (2016) analysis of the potential injustices that can result when elected community leaders reject research that may be in the best interest of the community members, but that, for political or social reasons, is not in the best interest of elected officials.

Brunger & Wall (2016) also focus on the intersection between increased community engagement in the name of ethical research, and community research fatigue - an issue that has been raised
by the Manager of Aboriginal Programs at CV. My experience shows that correctional facilities are closed and forced communities, which tend to offer little opportunities for social, cultural or therapeutic engagement. However, given the high rate of incarceration among Indigenous Australian populations (Cuneen, 2011; White, 2014), research proposals which offer long- or short-term engagement with potentially beneficial programs can be seen as useful additional resources, and community research fatigue is less likely to be a relevant issue. Lastly, Brunger & Wall (2016) acknowledge the deeply unsettling and frustrating experiences of researchers whose projects were declined by research advisory committee despite having sought community consent either prior to, or after, engagement with community members. However, they also urge researchers to view such rejections, not as a signifier of an unethical proposal, but rather as a rejection of the moment in time in which it is proposed due to stretched community resources. My experience of the ethics process with CV highlights the additional tensions and complexities that arise from trying to do research in large-scale bureaucratic institutions that themselves are impacted by competing pressures on their ethics processes. Given the alarming incarceration rates among Indigenous populations, I remain hopeful for an opportunity to test this method with Indigenous participants in correctional facilities in the future.

‘High Risk’, Information to Participants, Consent & Confidentiality

There is a prominent ethical dilemma embedded in the homogenised, imposed position the Guidelines and institutions place on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by labelling community members as ‘high risk’ or ‘vulnerable’ peoples regardless of their actual socioeconomic position. Kowal (2014), views this as part of the racialisation of Indigenous people, and argues that such process offers limitations as well as opportunities, for both Indigenous people and researchers. I have been challenged by the institutionally imposed notion that the people I collaborate with are considered ‘high-risk’, ‘vulnerable’ subjects simply because they are Indigenous (Krone et al., 2017). The Elders, Critical Friends and many of the participants in both Winda Mara and BADAC communities do not view themselves as vulnerable people. Furthermore, vulnerability is generally measured by low levels of education and socio-economic status (among other criteria), which is problematic. Yet, in an Indigenous research context, the Elders, Critical Friends and the participants are also automatically viewed by the State and institutions as ‘vulnerable’ peoples based on racial status.

This view of ‘vulnerability’ that is being imposed on both Indigenous participants and on how the researcher ‘should’ approach them, is not a theoretical conception that can be simply ignored in practice. Since this assumption exists from the very beginning of the research process, and is embedded in formal institutional ethical approval process, it has a real potential of casting shadows on the formation of relationships and even contradicting the presentation of a research project as one which takes a decolonised approach. The institutionally imposed classification of all Indigenous people as vulnerable, places me, as the researcher, in an uncomfortable and, more importantly, a non-ethical position. It pre-frames the researcher-participants-communities relationship as one which, by default, relates the vulnerable colonised to an invulnerable coloniser. Presuming Indigenous persons as vulnerable seems misaligned with the core concept of self-determination in ethical conduct in Indigenous research contexts, as well as further emphasising ‘Western’ control over Indigenous research. It also perpetuates a continuation of racial discourses of inferiority and narratives of Australian citizenship that emphasise the incapacity of Indigenous people to act as responsible citizens (Rowse, 2000; Clarke & Galligan, 1995).
My experiences align with the distinction Anderson et al. (2003) make between individual consent as the bedrock of ethical research, and community consent which constitutes the decision-making of a social collectivity. Consistent with the wider literature, the consent of the community, which in my case involved the consent of Elders and key persons as well as the hosting organisations, had to be obtained prior to any engagement with individual consent. University consent forms are paper-based and are usually viewed in the literature as regulatory mechanisms, rather than as necessarily ensuring the ethical conduct of the ongoing research (McDonald & Cox, 2009; Jackson-Barrett et al., 2015). While RMIT supports alternative creative approaches for gaining consent (i.e. audio recordings), and while the responsibility of learning about culturally appropriate methods of consent rests with the researcher-in-training, making these alternative forms of consent visible on institutional forms can contribute to a decolonisation process within academia. There is also value in omitting certain existing language from research-related forms, precisely for its potential colonial connotation. For example, Jackson-Barrett et al. (2015) explain that the term ‘Chief Investigator’ on consent forms is viewed by the Aboriginal people with whom they work as too closely related to the term ‘Chief Protector’, which is associated with the removal of Aboriginal peoples from their families and lands. The Gunditjmara Elder made the same association and expressed anger and shock when she saw this term on the RMIT forms. Whilst I cannot validate this experience with my participants, I also cannot deny the possibility of a similar impact, particularly because many of my participants in both communities have had children and grandchildren removed from their care.

The university’s Participant Information Sheet & Consent Forms includes a compulsory ‘complaints box’. This ‘complaints box’ suggests to the participants that they can discuss any concerns about their participation, which they do not wish to discuss with the researcher, directly with the Ethics Officer at the University. I view this item as less than ideal means to express ethical integrity in a culturally appropriate way because the likelihood of participants contacting an unknown representative is so very small. Instead, a position could be created for a respected Indigenous community member to hear and communicate such concerns to Ethics Officers at Universities. At the same time, I also acknowledge the complex pressures of ethics committee officers, who have to manage a blinding array of different sorts of ethical risks, as well as the committee members who need to sort through massive amounts of information about proposed research on regular basis. In practice, I have managed this tension by informing participants that they can also speak to the Djab wurrung/ Gunditjmara Elder at BADAC and the Gunditjmara Elder or the Indigenous co-facilitator at Winda Mara.

Confidentiality is another core aspect of ethical conduct in research, and generally refers to the obligation of the researcher to protect the identity of participants. The issue of protecting individual identity is referred to on several occasions in the Guidelines with an undertone that suggests that such protection is appropriate. For example, in discussing ways to demonstrate the core value of responsibility, the Guidelines state that the researcher should consider “how the proposal demonstrates agreed arrangements regarding publication of the research results, including clear a provision relating to joint sign off for publications and the protection of individual and community identity is appropriate” (p. 17).

By contrast, Kendall et al. (2011), for example, argue that the small size of many Indigenous communities means that participants can be easily identified. In my own research, all participants, except one, in both the BADAC and Winda Mara communities have expressed their wish to have their real names clearly stated in any related publications. Many participants have told me they had ‘nothing to hide’ (multiple personal communications, 2016), while a few have explained that it is their duty to share their experiences with others; and have expressed their
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hope that particularly young Indigenous people will have access to their stories through relevant publications and the art exhibition. Applying Foucault’s approach to ethics as time-, history- and culture-dependent, can obviate any ethical tension between, on the one hand, protecting the identity of participants, and, on the other, allowing participants to make adult decisions about this matter. Confidentiality is not a ‘law’ of the ethics process, and viewing it as such adds to the view of ‘vulnerability’ assigned to Indigenous participants. Confidentiality ought to be an issue to weigh up, in consultation with community and participants. Relinquishing power to participants to make informed decisions about issues of confidentiality clearly demonstrates the re-problematisation of academic notions about confidentiality, and reflects the creation of a relational ethics where creative and shifting, context-dependent outcomes about confidentiality can emerge.

I view my ethical responsibility in relation to confidentiality to include transparent verbal and/or recorded and written explanations about what confidentiality constitutes and what the potential consequences might be for participants who chose to have their names disclosed in the final thesis and related publications. The Artful Mob consent form includes a variety of choices, from which the participants can withdraw at any point up to publication, and I made a point to remind them of this option at several points during the workshops. Participants made decisions on whether to have their first and/or surname, and/or their Country/ies name/s included. The variety of choices regarding consent reflects a decolonised approach to ethics because it recognises the ‘relational ontology’ (Chilisa, 2012) of Indigenous people as being with many relations and connections, including connection with the land.

Summary

The substance of the ethical conduct pertaining to this research is influenced by, and shares similarities with, existing relevant literature. The experiences of this research process reveal, however, that flexibility and adaptation to Indigenous ways of being remain the driving force for enabling an ethical consultation process. The notions of ethical conduct as manifested through the themes I describe here - whether presented through a ‘Western’ paradigm of ethics, through formal guidelines or even through the experiences of other researchers - cannot always accept creative modifications that bridge existing gaps across Guidelines-existing literature-practice. The ethical challenges presented by these gaps do not simply stay in the theoretical realm. Rather, they cast shadows on the formation of relationships and even contradict, to some extent, the presentation of this research design as a product of active collaboration with communities.

Uncle Ted, Djab wurrung/ Gunditjmara Elder, had once said to me; “we have adapted to white men, but they did not adapt to us” (pers. comm., 2016). I believe this saying to be his coded response to the ethical challenges I have described in my critical reflections here. It succinctly summarises what I have learned to view as ethical conduct in Indigenous research from both exiting literature and my lived experiences with communities and participants. His comment is compatible with Foucault’s approach to ethics, and with Flyvbjerg’s Phronetic approach to social science, because it rests in the common call to view and approach ethics as culture-, time- and context-dependent, rather than expressions of one set of universal, socially-transcendent code for moral conduct. Every research-related decision is an ethical one and reflections on ethical conduct must begin with asking: Whose ethics does each decision reflect?

In the Jewish scriptures, the prophet Micah says, “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid” (4:4 ASV). Sitting under your own tree, while recognising the right of others to sit under their trees, is perhaps a good start to development of
moral values. However, in an Indigenous research context, this alone will not be adequate for the enactment of ethical conduct. Rather, the researcher, particularly the non-Indigenous researcher, must be prepared to sit under the Indigenous tree, immersing herself in its make-up and what it stands for in the eyes of its occupants. The research project must be one of the fruits grown out of the tree, by the peoples of this particular tree, while the researcher remains aware of her privilege to be part of this growing process as an invited guest only, and for whom most prominent ethical responsibility is to become a decolonised researcher.
Chapter 3: Methodology

My hope is that we can learn to live in a way that is less dependent on the automatic. To live more in and through slow method, or vulnerable method. Modest method. Uncertain method. Diverse method. Such are the senses of method that I hope to see grow in and beyond social science.

John Law, After Method; Mess in social science research, 2004, p.11

Show me the work, not the paperwork.

Uncle Mik, Personal communication (2016) Mutti Mutti Elder

Introduction

As stated in the introduction, this research is, on one level, a 'meta' research project, whose goal is an essentially methodological one. Although this method has generated, and continues to generate, data about Indigenous cultures or communities or identities, a major focus of this project concerns the development and trial of an integrated form of method, and the demonstration of the potential value of this method, in order to make the case that it can then be used for various purposes in the future.

To do this, I have enlisted the help of two Indigenous communities in South Western Victoria as partners in both developing this method and testing it out in practice. I am interested, in this research, in capturing participants' reflections on what the method has meant for them, as well as my own reflections on what the method means, in contrast or in comparison to various method ideals put forward in the literature. In other words, the research is, in a sense, an exploration of the value for social scientific research of methods derived from group art therapy - a practical case study of whether these methods can be successfully repurposed into an exemplary form of integrated research that addresses some of the critiques that have been made of more conventional forms of social science research when applied to questions concerning Indigenous communities. However, the research is also an exploration of what kinds of data - and, perhaps, what kinds of transformation - might be possible if these methods are implemented. The dual result, with dimensions that are both substantive and methodological in character, is discussed in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter of this thesis.

The methodology of this ethnographic research project is slow, modest, vulnerable, diverse, shifting and above all uncertain. The methodology must exhibit these characteristics because I am a Jewish immigrant, non-Indigenous researcher working within an academic institution predominantly driven by western ontologies, but also working in partnership with diverse Indigenous peoples within Aboriginal Controlled Cooperatives on Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries - an example of exactly the sort of complex and multilayered space which Martin Nakata (2007) calls the 'Cultural Interface'. Research within this space, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues, calls for the problematisation of research and doing research “as a significant site of the struggle between the interest and ways of knowing of the west and the interest and ways of resisting of the ‘other’” (p.2).

But such a problematisation of research within Indigenous contexts becomes even more complex because the realities of the lives of Indigenous peoples in these sites are not always separate in
definitive ways; the boundaries between ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Western’ are often less clear, and the explanations for the positions of Indigenous peoples are formed in the complex, dynamic, multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007). The complexity of the Cultural Interface is evident in the make-up of participants involved in this research project. Some have Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents, others have married non-Indigenous persons, and others are children of the ‘Stolen Generations’ (Australians Together, 2010, Discover Australian History). They come from different Countries, and vary by age, gender, educational and socio-economic status. They are of course all Indigenous persons, but the ways in which they understand themselves and their positions within these sets of relations varies from non-Indigenous and from one another, and should not be ignored in research that seeks to be useful to their lives. In this chapter I argue that visual methodology overall, and the specific method the participants and I have collaboratively designed – art-yarning - is beneficial in providing a safe and useful space within which their different positions can be explored.

I am also interested in (and in fact capable only of) extending exploration of the Cultural Interface to include the complex relations within which the non-Indigenous researcher-participant positions herself and the research when researching within an Indigenous context. This complexity is evident in my position as a secular Jew who has migrated from Israel to Australia. My race places me as minority with a rich history of persecution and genocide. Israel, prior to becoming the Jewish state, was, from one point of view, also located within the ‘sunny’ parameters of British Empire - a possible point of a commonality with the research participants. From another point of view, which separates state and race, Israel can also be seen as coloniser of the Palestinian and/or other Arabs within the country, which by implication sets me as a coloniser, and in an instant my previous commonality with research participants becomes an exact opposite. Together, these above factors situate me at once as the ‘colonised other’ (Chilisa 2012, p.12), and as the colonising other. How the art-yarning impacts what becomes of each status during inter- and intra- interactions during the Artful Mob workshops, and what are the relevant implications for research in an Indigenous context, are not just interesting, but necessary, questions for the development of decolonised research.

Nakata (2007), Tuhuiwai Smith (1999) and other Indigenous scholars (Wilson, 2008; Chilisa, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Martin, 2010, 2003; Rigney, 1999) sensibly focus their writing (about Indigenous Standpoint theory, Critical Race theory, and Indigenous decolonising methodologies toward Indigenous students, Indigenous academics and Indigenous communities invested in research) on addressing social and health problems experienced by many first nation peoples across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Canada and Africa. A non-Indigenous researcher, who is working in the field and using such theories, cannot but recognise the inherent tension that exists within this position, and must declare it outright and make explicit the limitations of the research findings, regardless of any level of decolonisation the methodology might present. Like other non-Indigenous scholars, often collaborating with Indigenous academics and communities (Christie, 2006; Goulding, Steel & McGarty, 2016; Wright et al., 2012; De Ishtar, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2011), I find the integration of ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Western’ paradigms both useful and most honest in serving the interests and ways of knowing-being-doing of all actors of research.

In this chapter, my overall argument is that a methodology that seeks to explicate these diverse and complex positions of the Indigenous participants and the non-Indigenous researcher cannot usefully do so by emphasising the oppositional nature of the positions, but rather must regularly recognise and acknowledge their constitution in what Nakata (2007) describes as “a complex set of social and discursive relations” (p.201). This foundation also leads to the argument that, as
such, a traditional ‘positivist’ notion of methodology as set of rules and procedures to be followed in order to arrive at objective data, is not only unsuitable for research in Indigenous context; but can be potentially harmful. The unsuitability is due to the fact that such methodologies carry with them, as Law (2004) argues, “a set of contingent and historically specific Euro-American assumptions” (p.5), and also because the research process is marked by uncertainties, which social science research tends to make less explicit and evident in final published works.

As an art therapist I have experienced and witnessed the capacity of the art-making process to communicate to one’s self about the self, about the self to others, and across different worldviews. Without truthful integration with another’s worldview, however, the art-making process is simply another procedural methodology. Therefore, the methodology I propose in this chapter rests on the integration of art therapy tools and processes with local Indigenous knowledge systems, which I have named art-yarning, and which I elaborate later. This method draws on decolonised methodologies but it also equally draws on art-based research and visual methodologies derived from social and phenomenological approaches to art therapy. Below I explore how this research project brings these diverse tools and methodologies together.

I begin with a literature review that highlights the core aspects of Indigenous Knowledge systems as analysed by key scholars. I then continue with a review of literature pertaining to decolonised methodologies, art-based research and art therapy. In order to make my argument for the suitability of Indigenised art therapy methods for research that aims to benefit Indigenous peoples, I conclude the literature review with a discussion about the meeting places between Indigenous Knowledge systems and visual methodologies driven from group art therapy processes. I expand on this dimension again in the theoretical chapter, Relational Places of Knowing Across Australian Indigenous knowledge, Art Therapy & Postcolonial Terrains. To do so here, I utilise three concepts which Law (2004) discusses in his work to compare and contrast Euro-American and Indigenous methods of inquiry in social science, specifically: Enactment; Agency and dualism; and Ontological disjunction.

These intersections are not solely recognised through a review of the literature, but also through the doing of the methodology with the communities. Following the literature review, I outline the proposed methodology for this research project along with critical reflections that have emerged from the Artful Mob workshops to explain why the methodology is slow, modest, vulnerable, diverse, shifting, and above all uncertain. In recognising and illuminating the methodological and epistemological messiness of this research project, I also hope to arrive at what Christie (2006) describes as “a better position to understand the threats and opportunities which Indigenous knowledge practices offer to the academy and vice versa” (p.82).

Ethical conduct is, as with all stages and processes of research in Indigenous context, an inseparable part of the methodology. Ethicality is a way of being and, as Tuhiwai Smith (2014) puts so succinctly, “it is embedded in every conscious and subconscious interaction” (p.18). To illustrate this embeddedness, attention to ethical considerations will be interwoven throughout the chapter, to cast light on the complex interplay of ethical concerns and methodological decisions. In addition, art-based research has its own additional and unique set of ethical considerations relating to the creation and use of imagery. I therefore also discuss the ethics of visual practices in this research within the outline of the methodology. The ethics-related discussion in this chapter is intended to augment, and work in tandem with, themes discussed in the ethics chapter. The ethics-related themes I discuss in this chapter are: confidentiality; minimizing harm; consent; fuzzy boundaries; authorship and ownerships; representation; and audiences.
**Declaration**

I am a non-Indigenous researcher. As such, this methodology does not claim to arrive at any complete understanding of the experiences of the Indigenous participants. I declare that the methodology outlined in this chapter, despite aiming to use decolonised methodologies, is also heavily reliant on the use of processes from the non-Indigenous discipline of art therapy. I acknowledge that my way of viewing the world, the assumptions I make as a result, my particular positioning with regard to knowledge, knowing and meaning-making are all embedded within a non-Indigenous worldview. I am committed to an ongoing reflexivity that aims to minimise the power imbalance that exists within the research relationships, and to prioritise Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. The participants, Elders, communities and Country are vital teachers and collaborators in pursuit of such endeavor.

**Literature Review**

Literature that discusses and challenges existing research in Indigenous contexts does so through three main theories: Critical Race theory, Postcolonial theory, and Indigenist theory (Martin, 2010), which is also known as Indigenous Standpoint theory and has its roots in Feminist Standpoint theory (Nakata, 2007). As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains, the international community of Indigenous scholars is informed by critical and feminist theories, and is broadly concerned with a critique of the subjugation of Indigenous experiences within knowledge production.

Feminist theory emerged in the 1970s as a theoretical tool to show that women’s position in society was not a result of a claimed ‘natural order’, but rather a social construction driven by a social organisation in which men occupy a higher position of power and authority. This exclusion of women’s accounts of their experiences in intellectual knowledge production resonated with Indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups. Insights drawn from feminist theory were therefore useful to the creation and legitimisation of the intellectual space from which their unique experiences could be included (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007). There are continuing efforts to develop specific branches of Indigenist theory, such as the work of Moreton-Robinson (2013) around Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint theory. Critical Race, Postcolonial, and Indigenist theories are all concerned with prioritising an Indigenous research paradigm, which I discuss below, focusing in particular on the importance of Relational understandings of epistemology, ontology and axiology, and the implications of this focus for design of research methodology.

**An Indigenous Research Paradigm**

Methodology is always informed by paradigm. An Indigenous research paradigm views ontology, epistemology and axiology as Relational (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Wilson, 2008; Martin, 2003). Chilisa (2012) explains that a Relational ontology sees Indigenous peoples’ view of themselves in terms of multiple relations and connections binding the living with the non-living, with land, sky, animals, and plants, with all that is earth and beyond. Wilson (2008) explains that the difference between Indigenous and ‘Western’ epistemologies rests in the individual vs. collective view of the nature of knowledge. For Indigenous people, knowledge is not something an individual seeks to find and then own, but rather “Knowledge is shared with all of creation... it goes beyond the individual’s knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge” (p.56). Because Indigenous knowledge systems see identity, kinship, history, language, land and history as
interconnected (Christie, 2006; Martin, 2010), knowledge is constructed in complex, multilayered and continuous ways (Nakata, 2007; Laycock et al., 2011).

Indigenous axiology is based on Relational accountabilities (ethics), and in an Indigenous research context, the researcher is accountable to her relations, fulfilling her roles and responsibilities through the methodology (Wilson, 2008). Louis (2007) offers the four Rs as useful way to conceptualise and act on Relational axiology: Relational accountability; Respectful representation; Reciprocal appropriation; and Rights and regulations during the research process. In describing how the elements of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology come together in an Indigenous research paradigm, Wilson (2008) states:

> Just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships. The ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships (pp. 70-71).

Figure 9 below reflects my visual understanding of the Indigenous research paradigm.

![Figure 9: Indigenous Research Paradigm](image)

The concept of the Relational in Indigenous research paradigms resonates with how I have come to understand, both conceptually (Liebmann, 1986; Malchiodi, 1998; Hiscox & Calisch, 1998) and practically, the essence of group art therapy. During group art therapy, participants form multiple connections and relations - with each other, with the creative space, with the chosen art materials, and with the images produced by themselves or others. The knowledge produced in group art therapy is also relational. It comes to be known through the relationship between the artist, the artwork, the materials, the space, the artworks of others and the verbal and non-verbal languages that are used in these interactions. Similarly, we are accountable to these relations and fulfil our responsibilities by respecting, caring and listening to each other, the space, the materials and the images. I will discuss this intersection of the Relational in greater detail later in this chapter, in a review of the literature and in the outline of the methodology.
Indigenous research paradigms encapsulate a dual goal of identifying, challenging and critiquing the ways in which colonialism continues to manifest in knowledge reproduction, and of reclaiming Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005). It is therefore essential that the researcher working within such a paradigm develop knowledge of a range of Western paradigms (positivist, constructivist and in between) from which to contextualise their postcolonial critique, and understand the decolonisation of its associated methodologies (Martin, 2010; Chilisa, 2012; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Critical reflections on foundational, taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the conduct of academic research in general, as well as when utilising processes from the Western-driven discipline of group art therapy, have sharpened my awareness of the power imbalance that exists within my research project. Reflexivity has led to recognition and acceptance of the limitations that the research entails. Through the shared enactment of the methodology with participants and Elders, we have collaborated in a process of construction and reconstruction of the methodology to prioritise reflections of Indigenous cultural protocols, values and behaviours.

This is only a general overview of what constitutes an Indigenous research paradigm, and the following theoretical chapter provides an elaborated discussion about other core conceptions within Indigenous knowledge systems, as well as contemporary discourses such as Country, Sovereignty, visual ways of knowing and more. For present purposes, it is enough to understand that Indigenous methodology forms one of four elements essential to this research paradigm, along with Indigenous ontology, epistemology and axiology – all of which are bounded by the core concept of the Relational. It is important to emphasise that there are differences among different Indigenous Knowledge systems around the world and within Australia, but the concept of the Relational is a common thread across many diverse traditions (Chilisa, 2012). I have also identified Relational awareness as an important point of intersection between an Indigenous research paradigm and group art therapy processes. Below, I develop these ideas further by exploring key literature that defines what constitutes Indigenous methodologies, and investigating how such methodologies intersect with frames of references deployed in the use of visual methodologies in both social science research and in group art therapy processes.

**Decolonised methodologies**

Decolonising methodologies are an indispensable aspect of an Indigenous research paradigm. They are the tools through which the researcher centers the research within the worldviews of Indigenous peoples, so they can understand themselves from within their own frames of reference (Wilson, 2008; Chilisa, 2012; Liamputtong, 2008; Rigney, 1999). Laenui (cited in Chilisa, 2012) suggests five stages to the process of decolonisation which include: Rediscovery and recovery; Mourning; Dreaming; Commitment; and Action (pp.15-17). Similarly, in representing an Indigenous research agenda, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) uses the metaphor of directions and ocean tides. Decolonisation, Healing, Transformation, and Mobilisation are four processes which she argues need to be integrated into practices and methodologies.

Tuhiwai Smith goes on to explain that terms such as healing, decolonisation, and recovery are different to terms used in conventional Western science, a difference which lies in the political focus they carry, as contrasted with more conventional scientific ideals such as neutrality and objectivity. However, she also notes that there are various Western social science methodologies whose intentions are similar to those conveyed by Indigenous research, including particularly forms of social research motivated by commitments to benefit people. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and other Indigenous scholars speak, however, of Indigenous peoples being cynical of the capacity of
Western methodologies to deliver benefits to them and to their communities. Both the similarity of intention and the doubts of usefulness are motivators of my interest in the development and use of integrated, visual methodologies in Indigenous health research.

Rather than presenting art therapy as a panacea that will convince Indigenous peoples of the ‘good’ in Western methodologies, I argue that such tools and processes can promote an indigenisation process where the Indigenous participants, Elders and Key Important Persons make informed decisions on whether they want to use these tools, how they want to use these tools, and with what cultural knowledge, protocols, values and behaviours are these tools to be used. When this indigenisation process takes place, there is potential mutual benefit for researchers and community members.

This call for integration of Western and Indigenous methodologies is not new. A substantial body of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars calls for multidirectional borrowing from various knowledge systems (Sandoval, 2000; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Alatas, 1974 cited in Chilisa, 2012; Christie, 2006), and there is a growing collection of researchers who have employed various degrees of integrated methodologies successfully in Indigenous research contexts (Goulding, Steel & McGarty, 2016; Wright et al., 2012; De Ishtar, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2011; Kite & Davy, 2015; Cochran et al., 2008; Roy, 2014; Stewart, 2007). The common thread among Indigenous scholars who advocate integration of various knowledge systems is that the integration process is seen as a valuable tool with which oppressed people can reclaim power over their ways of being and doing, in the realities of their lives where the oppressed and the non-oppressed exists.

Integration in decolonising methodologies

Whilst a core aspect of a decolonised research approach relates to critiquing and challenging the dominance of Western paradigms, decolonised methodologies do not reject Western theories and methodologies outright. On the contrary, many Indigenous scholars advocate for integration of knowledge systems, for mixing of methodologies, and for multidirectional borrowing from diverse cultures (Sandoval, 2000; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). For example, Sandoval (2000) defines the methodology of the oppressed as “a set of processes, procedures, and technologies for decolonizing the imagination” (p.68). Through the deconstruction of multiple critical and cultural theorists, she argues for a type of postmodern consciousness and political practice employed by U.S. third world feminists. One sub-type of this consciousness, and the one she holds as the most important, is the ‘differential consciousness’.

Briefly, differential consciousness offers ideological praxis for the political practice of non-white oppressed women, whereby such women consciously shift between various ideologies or standpoints as the conditions of oppression or the shape of power changes, in order to maintain their struggle for emancipation and equality. ‘Differential consciousness’ is of interest here because, as Sandoval (2000) states, it is:

Linked to whatever is not expressible through words. It is accessed through poetic modes of expression: gestures, music, images, sounds, and words that plummet or rise through signification to find some void — some no-place — to claim their due (p.139).

According to Sandoval (2000), this mode of consciousness, which operates outside speech, inspires and depends on the methodology of the oppressed. However, it also closely describes the essence of creative arts therapies where art, music and dance are seen as nonverbal languages of expression for all people. Therefore, I argue for an intersection between this proposed theory of third world feminist consciousness and the philosophy of art therapy. This intersection is
compatible with Sandoval’s (2000) call for the development of a ‘coalitional consciousness’ that brings oppressed people together with all people of the world to work toward social change.

This commitment to integration has justifications beyond my (un)comfortable humanistic position as a non-Indigenous researcher. The Indigenous scholars above who advocate integration, call for the use of any aspect of dominant power as a vehicle for the survival of the oppressed. In Tufiwi Smith’s (1999) description of research as a site of struggle between Western and Indigenous worldviews, integration of ideas, knowledge and theories is seen by such scholars as a valuable tool with which oppressed people can reclaim power over their ways of being and doing, in the realities of their lives where the oppressed and the non-oppressed exists. As Chilisa (2012) put it so succinctly, “mixing is the methodology of survival for the oppressed” (p.24). Below I turn to review how some of this mixing is reflected in research in Indigenous contexts which utilises such an integrational approach.

**The use of integrated decolonised methodologies in Indigenous research contexts**

A recent review of Australian Indigenous health research literature suggests that non-Indigenous researchers need to become more aware of the Cultural Interface; the meeting place between Indigenous and Western knowledge (Gray & Oprescu, 2016). In this place, knowledge is to be understood as culturally relative, and the non-Indigenous researcher is to enact this understanding by the use of Indigenous methods along with reflexive practice that recognises and analyses biases which are brought to the research (Gray & Oprescu, 2016).

This meeting place is applicable to all types of disciplines concerned with Indigenous health research. For example, in epidemiology studies, Roy (2014) argues that the apparent incongruity between epidemiological survey research and an Indigenous Relational paradigm, does not suggest an incompatibility or uselessness of research within an Indigenous context. She argues that, through a process of reframing epidemiological survey research to include principles of cultural safety, social justice and community partnership, such research, by using both quantitative and qualitative methods, can yield results that are viewed as trustworthy by Aboriginal participants, the community and Western measures of validity. Similarly, in discussing the use and development of instruments to measure quality of life (QoL), Kite & Davy (2015) suggest such processes require more than cross-cultural adaptation of existing QoL instruments. Rather than describing an Indigenous QoL instrument that fits all, the authors call for the use of Indigenous methodologies to extricate indigenous peoples’ perceptions of QoL at a local level, capturing the heterogeneity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The integration of the Indigenous method of yarning is popular in existing decolonised methodologies (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Wilson, 2001; Kovach, 2010; Walker et al., 2014; Geia, Hayes & Usher, 2013; Wright et al., 2012). Kovach (2010) explains that yarning is an oral means of ‘transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition’ (p.42). Towney (2005) emphasises yarning’s inseparable link to spirituality, making it a powerful way in which Indigenous people connect to one another. Bessarab & Ng’andu (2010) define yarning as “an indigenous cultural form of conversation” (p.37), and describe four types of yarning: social, therapeutic, research topic, and collaborative. Walker et al. (2014) add the additional forms of family yarning and cross-cultural yarning evident in their research on Indigenous women’s perspectives on health. Out of the various forms that yarning takes in research, therapeutic, research topic and cross-cultural types of yarning are of specific interest to the methodology of the current research project, and are seen to intersect with the formal and informal verbal sharing processes in group art therapy. It is important to note here that the term
assigned to the method – art-yarning -- does not simply reflect integration through a tokenistic inclusion of the yarning protocol, but rather reaches more generally to Indigenous knowledge production through the Relational.

The following section discusses several examples of how yarning has been used in different Australian research in Indigenous contexts, highlighting unique characteristics in each example. In research about help-seeking among Indigenous men with mental health problems, Isaacs et al. (2011) use the Western research methods of in-depth interviews and focus groups, using cultural sensitivity with an exclusive focus on the voices of Indigenous men, workers and carers and importantly, the cultural advisor and his recommendations. Similarly, Goulding et al. (2016) use informal yarning groups in order to conduct a social audit of the issues, concerns and aspirations of the residents of an improvised Indigenous community in Northwestern Australia. The authors also recruit two Indigenous research assistants, consult with Elders and adhere to cultural imperatives such as ‘sorry business’ (mourning) and the low season. Different to other research in Indigenous contexts, the goal here is to synthesise the narratives of local people and present these stripped from the researcher’s recommendations to the employer - an Aboriginal corporation - in preparation for entering a partnership with key service providers. In response to charges of this resulting in a self-limiting view with the potential to hinder research, the authors argue that the usefulness of the method is evident in the high participation rate (147/200) and in the delivery of a report containing new and surprising observations.

Kovach (2010) uses the conversational method (equivalent to yarning but in a research context) in two research projects, one with Indigenous academics and another with non-Indigenous academics. Both projects include mixed qualitative methodologies consisting of the Indigenous Plains Cree’s conversational method and the Western approach of thematic analysis for organising data. The findings suggest a direct inter-relationship between the conversational method and ethics and care. Kovach (2010) argues that review of the literature and decisions about the design should go hand in hand with relational preperations such as visiting community and participating in ceremonies.

In research seeking Indigenous women’s perceptions of health, Walker et al. (2014) reflect on the multiple forms of yarning used, not only as a direct method with the participants, but as a method for engagement with Elders and Indigenous health organisations. Walker et al. (2014) identify a cross-cultural form of yarning as evident in the range of Indigenous, non-Indigenous and mixed domains communication styles used among all people involved in their research. They argue for expansion of the elements involved in using yarning as a method in research to include “visual, physical and sensual elements that inform dynamic and ongoing dialogues between human and between humans and non-humans” (p.39). The bi-cultural research team collaborated with the Bawaka Cultural Experiences, an Indigenous tourism business in north east Arnhem Land in NT, in order to advance the social, economic and environmental goals of the business, as well as the researchers’ goal of a research partnership that results in manuscripts for publications. The authors state their inability to completely capture their experiences and this limitation, in itself, serves to highlight the relational essence of yarning as a method. That is, yarning is performed by people, the country itself (i.e. rain, animals), and processes and products such as basket weaving, and therefore has implications for how we listen and tell stories in and from research.

The multiple elements involved in yarning as a research method, as well as the recognition that yarning in research takes place in, through and with a place, and involves humans and non-humans, intersect with methodologies of group art therapy, and more broadly, with art-based methodologies. For example, in art therapy processes, the image has a story to tell its creator. Image dialogue is one of the tools through which the story is told, and as Moon (1990) argues,
listening to and retelling the story carried by the image, provides opportunity for growth and change. In order to develop this point and explore the potential value of visual methodologies in research with Indigenous people, I will now turn to a literature review of art-based research, followed by a review of how visual methodologies have been used in Indigenous research contexts.

**Art-based research**

McNiff (in Knowles & Cole, 2008), a renowned art therapist and one of the main contributors to art-based research, defines art-based research as “the systematic use of the artistic process... as a primary way of understanding and examining experiences by both researchers and the people that they involved in their studies” (p.29). The basic purpose of art-based research is to utilise the arts as a method, a form of analysis, a subject, or all three levels put together, and it therefore constitutes an alternative form of data gathering and interpretation (McNiff, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Silverman, 2005; Finley, 2003).

Within the literature there is rich discussion of the strengths of art-based research. Weber (in Knowles & Cole, 2008) cites ten reasons for using visual-based inquiry, of which the most relevant to this research is the ability of images to capture what is hard to verbalise. This is what Eisner (1997) refers to as the capacity of the image to provide ‘all-at-once-ness’ (p.1) that reveals what words and numbers would not fully convey. Other benefits include: the ability of an image to draw our attention to things in new ways; the likelihood of remembering an image, which increases the possibility of research findings to reach wider audience; the way in which an image holds multiple layers and, as such, has a narrative quality that can provoke or reconstruct conversations (Weber in Knowles & Cole, 2008). Finally, images can: enhance empathy, which is the closest we get to understand the self of another (Weber in Knowles & Cole, 2008); allow comparison with our own views and experiences (Kramer, 1971; Arnheim, 1966; Lipps in Jahoda, 2005; Franklin, 2011); facilitate reflexivity in research design (McNiff, 1998; Huss, 2012); and provoke action for social justice (Kaplan, 2006; Sajnani & Kaplan, 2012).

Despite strong arguments for its use, art-based research also poses methodological difficulties (Eisner, 1997). Sclater (2003) classified these into issues relating to: the relationship with the research participant; the quality of the art; and the relationship between art and words. Scholars of art-based research (Mullen, 2003; Sclater, 2003) make the same argument that art therapy scholars (Rubin, 2005; Malchiodi, 1998; McNiff, 2008) do, which is that the focus is on the process for expression of relevant lived experiences, rather than on the final product. Furthermore, both domains argue that the art product is not inherent from within, but rather a part of broader social contexts, which implicate the product in interactive processes of transforming and being transformed (Mahon, 2000; Barone, 2003; Kaplan, 2006). The elitism found in the art world is replaced in both domains with art as communication, whereby our deeper reactions to artworks, as opposed to our initial reaction to aesthetic value (although this can be a valid starting point too), is the primary focus (Huss, 2012; Finley, 2008; Mahon, 2000; C. Moon, 2002). These reactions include how we respond to the process of art-making. For example, research that used drawings of family genograms as part of the method, revealed that participants anguished over where to put whom, and that the commonality of this experience became an important component of the finished genograms, and thus to how the findings were understood (Mason, 2002).

Art-based research demands the setting of standards or limits around the researcher’s role that are different to traditional research. This is because the purpose of art-based research is not just
to represent others creatively, but to enable them to represent themselves through the creative process, as an action-oriented step that is facilitated by the researcher (Mullen, 2003). Huss & Cwikel (2005) state that blurring the roles of the researcher and the research participants is advantageous to art-based researchers. They explain that handing over creativity and its interpretations to the participants, and using these elements within the research, can lead to a more intensified relationship, which in turn elicits emotions and facilitates transformation (p.46).

For example, cameras were given to rural Peruvian Indigenous participants, who through the use of the photo-voice technique were able to communicate a series of structural factors which they see as determinants of their health (Slimming et al., 2014). This example demonstrates the capacity of art-based research to empower participants and redirect the research according to their own perceptions of their needs.

Using art as an alternative method in research is complicated because there is an inherent tension between visual and verbal ways of understanding. The tension is due to contesting viewpoints on the capacity of verbal communications to translate visual communications in their entirety. At the same time as arguing that an art product is always culturally constructed and embedded, Mahon (2000) claims that art has its own language which cannot be translated into communication or be understood as direct presentations of social context. Similarly, McNiff (1998) claims that image is a more universal form of expression than words, because it possesses a discrete language that can be understood without words6. On the other hand, other scholars argue that the purpose of including images in research is that it clarifies words (Sclater, 2003; Mason, 2005; Huss & Cwikel, 2005). Since the inclusion of art in social science research is ultimately about trying to answer the research question with the goal of benefiting specific populations, theoretical frameworks for understanding works of art are connected to the reasons art is included in the first place (Mason, 2005). Researchers are required to have a well-developed understanding of why art is included and how its use assists with answering the research question. When approached in such an interconnected way, the use of non-verbal and verbal elements can be seen as a rich triangulation of data (Mason, 2002; Finley, 2003; Huss, 2005). In the *Artful Mob* research project, the use of the art is itself the subject of the research question, making it both research and meta research.

**Art-based research, Art therapy & culture**

There is a difference in orientation between art-based research and art therapy, in that art therapy utilises theoretical psychological meta-frameworks to organise the therapeutic relationship, while using the varied qualities inherent in art materials and processes (Kramer, 1997). However, the similarities between art-based research and art therapy are many, and include the use of “dialogue, observation, participant observation, and heuristic, hermeneutic, phenomenological, and grounded techniques of interpretation” (Huss, 2005, p.47). In addition, both are concerned with ethical issues of art, in particular the ownership over meaning-making, and the skills involved in working with visual and verbal modes of expression (Mason, 2002; Huss, 2012; B. Moon, 2002; C. Moon, 2002).

The most prominent similarity between art-based research and art therapy that is of concern to this research, is the focus on art as a means for expression of different cultural identities, and its potential use as a voice of different, and often marginalised and oppressed, populations (Huss,

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6 I would like to thank Yin Paradies for drawing my attention to the literature on ocularcentrism (Kavanagh, 2004; Ahlberg, 1996; Bartram, 2004). While I cannot address this topic in this thesis, I anticipate exploring this issue in future works.
Denzin & Lincoln (1998) explain that how art is understood is influenced by the culture of the viewer. A basic example of this is Aboriginal dot paintings and the range of meaning-making possibilities available from viewing such paintings, depending on the culture and inter-cultural experiences of the viewer. Whilst this project does not intend, nor does it claim, to facilitate 'Aboriginal art', it does aim to create a semi-structured art-making environment where potential participants can express their various positions in the Cultural Interface.

The art can contribute both to working with, and the understanding of, people from other cultures, because the content drawn will carry multiple understandings and conceptions that, along with verbal sharing, can lead to the rendering of new perspectives. For example, Huss (2012) discusses how cultural differences may not be apparent when the Bedouin women in her research were speaking about their houses. When tents are drawn, and verbal explanations added, the women are better able to represent their cultural perspectives, their individualised experiences within these, and the related cultural, social and political issues with the dominant culture (homes vs. 'illegal' settlements). Additionally, because art connects to individual-subjective experience, it can not only express cultural differences, but also help integrate the individual with her culture (Gerity, 2000; Campbell, 1999; Eisner, 1997; Pink, 2001).

While art can bridge cultural possibilities for misunderstanding, it can also intensify them. Researchers needs to be cautious not to fall into the ‘colour blind’ trap where participants are offered art in the name of conducting culturally sensitive research, yet the art processes and interpretations offered are derived from the dominant culture (Acton, 2001; Hocoy, 2002). The strength of using art in research should be about its potential to enable the multifaceted nature of different cultural identities, rather than claiming to provide a way to overcome cultural differences (Huss, 2005).

**Ethical considerations of visual methods**

Before proceeding to review research implementing visual methods in Indigenous research contexts, it is important to discuss the ethical considerations that are unique to the creation and use of imagery in research. Professional codes of ethical practice including the NHMRC *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (2003) contain little reference to visual practices. Recent guidelines for ethical visual research methods by Cox *et al.* (2014) provide a useful framework from which researchers can consider key ethical issues including confidentiality, ownership, informed consent, and representation and publication of visual data. Yet, further development of visual ethics discourse needs to take place as part of our ethical obligation regarding the use of visual methodologies in social science research.

Cox *et al.* (2014) offer six categories for ethical research using visual methods. The first three are: confidentiality; minimising harm; and consent, which are familiar for researchers from general professional codes of ethical practice. The remaining three categories are more closely associated with the use of visual methods and include: fuzzy boundaries; authorship and ownership; and representation and audiences. Similar to the common call to view the NHMRC *Guidelines for ethical conduct in Indigenous health research* as guidelines rather than codes, Cox *et al.* emphasize the role of the guidelines for ethical visual research methods as ‘sensitizing triggers for reflection’ (p.8).
Confidentiality is discussed mainly in relation to camera-based methods, because anonymity and confidentiality are harder to guarantee in such cases (Cox et al. 2014). Daniels (2008), states that visual data is much more susceptible to scrutiny because it is harder to hide details in visual than in written forms. Solutions such as blackening the faces of participants or third-parties is not a straightforward solution, both because such action impacts on the validity of the data and because it does not guarantee the removal of all identifiable information (Daniels, 2008; Cox et al., 2014). It is therefore important to provide easy-to-understand information in consent forms about how the visual data will be used (Daniels, 2008), and, as with any research with Indigenous peoples, gain collective consent from Elders, Key Important Persons and hosting organisations (Bishop, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith 2005; Christians, 2005). Equally important is to consider whether anonymity and confidentiality may be contrary to the needs and intentions of participants (Cox et al., 2014). The category of confidentiality is closely related to that of consent. Cox et al. (2014) suggest that the use of visual methods requires an ongoing process of obtaining consent. As I discussed in the ethics chapter, the view of ethical conduct as an ongoing process is also foundational to Indigenous health research.

Visual methods can create unforeseen harm when used to engage marginalised communities in retelling stories about their lives (Cox et al., 2014). The image as a visual record of one’s feelings can be emotionally confronting and requires the researcher to employ a range of harm minimising skills. My skills as an art therapist have been useful in minimizing such potential harms for participants in the present project. For example, reading non-verbal cues and reminding participants of their choice over whether to share with the group, can help to minimise such potential harm. Other skills such as showing empathy, stating a commonality of specific emotions, using non-verbal measures such as body mirror and the gaze, and simply sitting with the person in silence while he or she goes through the emotions are all useful in minimising harm.

According to Cox et al. (2014), fuzzy boundaries refer to the blurring of roles which is intensified in research using visual methods. This is because the researcher can spend lengthy periods of time in fieldwork, co-create images with participants, or engage participants and self in a creative process that requires great emotional investment. In addition, the visual product has multiple purposes for the participants and for the researcher and therefore involves issues of ownership and intellectual property. Ethical conduct relating to these categories requires careful consideration of how to best end the project, as well as how to clearly articulate who owns the visual products and who decides how these are used and represented. The Artful Mob project was designed to run for 20 weeks in each community, and this relatively lengthy fieldwork period was chosen, in part, in order to allow four weeks for the process of ending the project. Participants have agreed to allow me to use the digital copies of the images created in variety of publication forms; and return the original work after the Artful Mob exhibition. We have decided to give joint group artwork or unclaimed work to the hosting organisation. I will store, in accordance with my art therapy code of practice, any leftover artwork for a period of 7 years. Issues of storage are a neglected area within visual ethics in research that would benefit from further research.

There are other ethical considerations relating to the use of visual methods. For example, Daniels (2008) raises the question of how the participant’s voice becomes audible in the visual analysis. I discuss the potential for the research to misrepresent the meaning participants assign to their images, and measures taken to offset this risk, in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter of this thesis. I agree with Daniels (2008) that it is unethical to exclude the participants as analysts of their own data, and that the multiple voices of the participant-analysts have the potential to increase validity. Yet, in research with Indigenous people, the use of terms such as data and data analysis
to describe visual material should be considered carefully and in collaboration with participants and or communities. I propose storytelling, use of direct quotes from participants, and a clear, declared and regular differentiation between participants and the researcher’s readings of visual material, as ethical tools for the knowledge synthesis of the visual data. Daniels (2008) highlights that “when participants grant access to themselves by participating in research, they do not relinquish control over the information that was obtained during that research” (p.131). This again requires the ongoing problematisation of existing codes of conduct ensuring that each decision made is ethically defensible.

**Visual methodologies in Indigenous research context**

As reviewed earlier, healing is one of the four processes constituting an Indigenous decolonised approach to research (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). A body of research identifies art as a source of healing and a platform from which identity can be explored by Indigenous people (McCoy, 2008; Archibald *et al.*, 2010; Nickson *et al.*, 2011; Lu & Yuen, 2012; Macnaughton *et al.*, 2005; Anwar McHenry, 2009; Alders, 2010; Ferrell, 1998; Myers, 2012; Ingold, 2010; Gibson, 2011, 2012).

Dufrene (2002) explains that native healers in most Indigenous cultures around the world draw upon a large body of symbolism, which is passed from one generation to the next through myths, songs, paintings, dance and music, in order to restore balance within patients. McCoy (2008) explores the contemporary roles of Aboriginal healers in Western Australia through the use of narrative and art. He finds that the art is used now as it was for thousands of years as part of healing ceremonies. Furthermore, paintings made by Aboriginal healers reveal strong connections between the land and the work of healers as well as serving as a remembering tool of particular healing sites.

Similarly, Ferrell (1998) states that an Indigenous epistemology can be understood through the way in which art brings order to life; and is a vehicle for a sense or feeling of events. In interviews with Indigenous artists on Aboriginal art (Myers, 2012; Ingold, 2010; Ferrell, 1998; Gibson, 2011, 2012), numerous authors describe how paintings make the claim that the landscape does speak and that it speaks directly to the initiated, and explains not only its own occurrence, but the order of the world. Within this framework, paintings are also indices of a person’s specific modes of engagement in a sentient place. Here we can see how the art is strongly linked to the Relational concept across Indigenous knowledge systems. This link sees the use of art-based methods in research as worthwhile for generating benefits for Indigenous participants and communities. I discuss the role of art in Indigenous knowledge systems, traditional and contemporary, in greater detail in the following theoretical chapter.

Examples of the use of art-based methods within Indigenous research contexts are varied in the degree to which the art is used, the sub-groups within Indigenous populations with whom the methods are used, and the length of the fieldwork. As mentioned above, art-based methodologies can provide a useful and safe platform from which aspects of identity can be explored. For example, through a review of art history from Aztec through to Post NeoMexicanismo art in Mexico, Alders (2010) demonstrates how art affirms identity on both a national and individual level. In Australia, Moss (2009) explores identity issues for young Indigenous and non-Indigenous between 4 and 18 years, in and not in out-of-home care, as well as three Indigenous and four non-Indigenous practitioners in a regional area of Queensland. The findings reveal that Indigenous or Indigenous/Anglo children who are not in out-of-home care or those who are with relative carers, fare best in terms of sense of self and connectedness. This is in direct contrast to Indigenous and Indigenous/Anglo children in out-of-home care, where
particularly girls are experiencing identity confusion. The use of narrative art therapy (AT) as a research method is a strength but the short duration of engagement limits access to both the method and its potential benefits.

Qualitative research projects in Canada and Australia explore the use of AT as a therapeutic intervention with Indigenous women who experience violence (Nickson et al., 2011; Lu & Yuen, 2012). In the Canadian project, a Western art-based tool called ‘body mapping’ was adapted to the ‘circular life cycle’ in order to represent the Medicine Wheel teaching of Aboriginal Canadians. In the Australian project, the Anglicare St Luke’s ‘Strength based’ cards were adapted to create the ‘Yarnabout Cards’ by using photography and artwork significant to the Indigenous community. In both research projects, visual methodologies were implemented following appropriate protocol of engagement in research with Indigenous populations, consulting and collaborating with Indigenous communities and key people and organisations within these communities. A range of positive outcomes for participants and communities included enhanced self-awareness and thus increased sense of wellbeing for participating women, production of culturally appropriate cards for therapeutic work, generation of income source for the Indigenous Nungeema Corporation in QLD, increase in level of engagement with the Indigenous community, and the building and consolidation of relationships between the organisations involved.

However, both projects placed art therapy or art-based techniques first, with the primary focus being on providing a tool that can ‘heal’. In the Canadian example, the women were directed to focus on identifying positive aspects in their life journeys to “help minimise the focus on what is dysfunctional” (Nickson et al., 2011, p.195). Whilst such utilisation of an AT tool has its benefits, it also excludes engagement with painful or negative feelings and issues. Such exclusion can in itself reduce the potential of healing to take place because creating images of negative aspects invites us to safely face and work through to find a range of resolutions. Similarly, in the QLD project, the process of producing the cards as an end product became the focus as opposed to research on how such cards can be used with women experiencing physical abuse. The methodology of the Artful Mob project is different because its aim is not to present art therapy techniques (despite their modifications to reflect Indigenous cultural context) as a panacea, but rather to allow whatever lived experiences are there to be expressed in visual and verbal ways, through which internal individual meaning and cross-worldview communication can emerge over a lengthy period.

In other examples, Archibald et al. (2010) look at the extent to which Aboriginal healing projects funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation in Canada, were using creative arts and the relationship between creative arts, healing and culture, and found improved wellbeing, increased confidence and enjoyment, reduced levels of stress, increased self-knowledge and reduced denial. Power & Bennett (2015), interviewed art tertiary students, Indigenous pre-service teachers and Aboriginal community members in NT who are working together to promote community arts practice and meet art-based educational objectives. They found that art-based learning facilitates expression, communication and connections between all involved parties, as well as opportunities to inquire into and affirm personal, cultural and spiritual values for both teachers and learners. In an environmental research project, Zurba & Berkes (2014) use participatory art as an engagement method with 14 Traditional Owner participants involved in policy development through the Girringun Aboriginal art centre in north Queensland. Focus group and joint painting of Country on canvas placed focus on the process of art-making; however all the participants were artists, which made it hard to differentiate between benefits driven from the participatory art method and those that are the result of familiar engagement with art as mode of expression.
Indigenous methodologies are deployed as a deyarning is required. This suggests that further re-
mind (Castleden et al., 2014) is of specific interest to the methodology of this research, and intersects with the formal and informal visual and verbal sharing processes within an Indigenous research context (Kovach, 2010; Walker et al., 2014; Geia et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2012; Goulding et al., 2016). As a cultural form of conversation (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010), yarning has inseparable link to spirituality, making it a powerful way in which Indigenous persons connect to one another (Towney, 2005), and therefore a suitable method to reflect the value of spirit and integrity of ethical research conduct (NHMRC, 2003).

In relation to decolonising methods, yarning has been adapted as a decolonised Indigenous method across various disciplines within an Indigenous research context (Kovach, 2010; Walker et al., 2014; Geia et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2012; Goulding et al., 2016). Others have expanded on the elements constituting yarning to include visual, physical and sensual elements of dynamic conversations that occur between humans and non-humans (Wright et al., 2012). This multilayered view of yarning as well as the therapeutic, research topic and cross-cultural types of yarning (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Walker et al., 2014) is of specific interest to the methodology of this research, and intersects with the formal and informal visual and verbal sharing processes in group art therapy.

In the literature reviewed, visual methodologies are often used in ways that focus engagement on the surface-level capabilities of such methodologies. No doubt, the goals of some research require this kind of use of visual methods, as seen, for example, in the use of the photo-voice method (Castleden et al., 2008; Slimming et al., 2014). However, the literature reviewed here suggests that further re-problematisation of the use of visual and decolonised methods such as yarning is required. That is, future research could investigate the extent to which visual and Indigenous methodologies are deployed as a decolonised cover for accelerating Western
approaches to knowledge. In the *Artful Mob* project, yarning as a common Indigenous protocol is integrated to the method, but the meaning of integration far exceeds the use of one such Indigenous way of knowing-being-doing – a point on which I expand upon later in this chapter and in other places within the thesis.

Lastly, the literature emphasises the Relational essence constitutive of this Indigenous research methodology and which make it a decolonised research method. Time is an essential factor in enacting such a methodology, and much more time than is usually allocated in research is needed for building relationships with Elders, participants, and communities. Similarly, we often speak of art as a language, and therefore we need to also acknowledge the time that is required to learn how to speak it: time to (re) learn how to engage in art-making as a form of language, time to learn how our artworks speak to us, time to build relationship with the artworks, the materials and the space where we create. The intention here is not to undermine existing art-based research methods with Indigenous populations. Still, the review of relevant research shows that much of the fieldworks to enact the designed methodologies are marked by short durations. Whether using visual methods or specific art therapy directives and processes, I argue that researchers and, more often, institutions need to recognise the length of time needed if these methods are to be used to reach long term benefits for participants and communities.

**Meeting places: Indigenous Knowledge System and Art Therapy**

In the previous sections of this methodological literature review, I argue that the core aspect of the Relational in Indigenous knowledge systems resonates strongly with that of group art therapy. In both domains, humans make sense of themselves in the world by viewing others, human and non-human, as collaborators in the process of meaning making. In this section I elaborate in further detail about three locations where I see these two domains meet, and which form the basis for the methodology of the *Artful Mob* research project. In doing so, I will primarily use Law’s (2004) discussion of a method assemblage. In his inspiring book *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, Law (2004) challenges us to problematise the promise of certainty of new knowledge production that is conditional on following rules and procedures assigned to methods. Law (2004) describes a method assemblage as a process, which is about “manifesting realities out-there and depictions of those realities in-here” (p.122). From this point of view, these are ways of knowing that do not produce or demand neat, definite, and well-tailored accounts. He argues that this view means that forms of knowing are no longer independent, definite and singular, as is often imagined in what Law calls ‘Euro-American’ method assemblages, but rather interactive, indefinite and multiple. Visual methods, I suggest, lend themselves to this perspective of uncertainty.

The idea that nature is not the ultimate authority of a singular truth, but rather one type of knowledge that is produced along with social and cultural arrangement, is not new in social science. However, Law (2004) argues that this indefinite, multiple realities perspective requires us to also look for new ways of exploring the enactment of, and interaction between, these realities. Using works by Kerle (1995) and Verran (1998), Law (2004) compares and contrasts two different modes of method assemblage - Indigenous and Euro-American. My aim in the following discussion is to deviate from this contrastive, dichotomous method of presentation. Instead, the discussion below will focus on the similarities between several aspects of Indigenous knowledge systems as described in Law’s (2004) work, and those of group art therapy as a ‘Euro-American’ method assemblage. This task opens up many promising avenues for further elaboration and research, most of which I must necessarily defer for future works. Nevertheless, this argument
for deep similarities between the two domains frames my research project in general and, more specifically, forms the bedrock of its methodology. That is, the similarities I identify between the two domains are the basis for my argument about the potential usefulness of this specific integrated form of method and its suitability for research in Indigenous context. I will use the three terms Law (2004) uses, but I will approach these as the three meeting places I recognise across these domains. These are: Enactment: Agency and dualism; and Ontological disjunction.

**Enactment**

In referring to Indigenous creation stories associated with different sites across Australia, Law (2004) explains that, not only do multiple narratives exist for the same site, but that “narrative and land form together in a way that cannot be dissolved” (p.128). This joining is enacted through kinship affiliation, social differences, and enactment of the story in ceremonies, oral and visual depictions. Similarly, our personal stories, which we enact in the images we produce during group art therapy processes, are also signifiers of our connections to our physical and social environments. This can be seen in revisiting the example of Huss (2012), where Bedouin women drew tents to represent their cultural perspectives, their individualised experiences with it, and the related cultural issues with the dominant culture (homes vs. ‘illegal’ settlements).

Furthermore, Indigenous creation stories are not fixed in form at any particular site, but rather change between versions and between different moments within a site. Verran (cited in Hall & Kulig, 2004) explains that one reason for this variation is that “it is a matter for endless discussion and negotiation between those who carry it and their neighbours” (p.129). In group art therapy, members of the group engage in art-making usually over at least 8-10 weekly sessions. During such time, their stories take on multiple versions in accordance with whatever is happening in their lives at the time, but also as a result of the sharing process with other members. As members become familiar with each other, so does the level of discussion and negotiation which takes place within the group. The explicit idea of a regular and endless phase of renegotiating narratives in Indigenous practices is parallel to the primary importance of the process in group art therapy, which I will elaborate further below. The more relevant implication here is that, in both domains, the act of renegotiating stories might appear to result in some form of singularity. However, even if singularity is achieved, it is only momentarily and always in relation to a specific time and place, rather than a production of permanent, context-transcendent knowledge.

In Indigenous knowledge systems, time is not divided in a linear form into past, present and future, but rather, as Law (2004) describes it, “the past is, as it were, continuously in the present” (p.130). Similarly, in the art therapy process, the artworks contain an endless and dynamic bundle of past, present and future metaphors, working together to create and recreate meaningful narratives of the present self. Law (2004) explains that the process of re-enactment of Indigenous stories got significantly disturbed with the removal of peoples from their countries (though this loss of ways of life and form is regenerated in many places). The necessity of Indigenous processes of eternal and simultaneous meaning making is again parallel with the process of creativity in art therapy. One is most likely to benefit from engagement in individual or group art therapy, but it is the regular engagement in the process of creativity that is seen to hold the key to meaningful existence. Regular relationship with art materials, art making and the space of creation is vital for a meaningful life in ways at least analogous to the vitality of relationship with Country, ceremonies, oral and visual depictions - in order to continue the recreation of land-person-kinship-religion-ancestral beings.
This point about enactment in Indigenous terms should not be narrowly understood in terms of a socially-transcendent definition of space as a geographical area. Rather, as Law (2004) explains, Indigenous method assemblages enact a spatiality that is inextricably linked with the retelling and re-enacting of the stories of the ancestral beings. The implication is that, in Indigenous method assemblages, it is meaningless to imagine out-thereness independent of its enactments. The same is applicable to the processes of art therapy. There is no empty or global space against which to measure, and from which to identify, the local self. Adding layers of paints, reshaping the clay, destroying an artwork, and using the outcome to create a new one, as well as joint art making where one adds to another’s creation whilst having someone else adding and changing her work, are all ways through which the creative remaking and retelling of stories takes place. Law (2004) explains that to describe an Indigenous reality out-there, is “already to insert it within a Euro-American metaphysical project” (p.131), and includes his own account of such a process. Similarly, although verbal sharing is an important part of group art therapy, art therapists know and accept that no words can assign accuracy to the lived experience of engagement with the art-making process - a limitation I stress and elaborate upon in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter.

**Agency and dualism**

Law (2004) also uses the concepts of agency and dualism in his efforts to compare and contrast Euro-American and Indigenous methods of assemblage. He explains that Western method assemblages create a dualism between the out-there and the in-here in order to arrive at independence and precendency. These dualisms are also assigned an active or passive capacity, or in other words there is a distribution of agency among these sets of dualisms. Briefly, the three examples Law (2004) highlights are: human-non-human; knowing subject-subject of knowledge; natural-social. These sets of dualities interact and reinforce each other through further dichotomy. So, the human, subject and social are seen as active, while the non-human, the object and nature are generally seen as passive, acted upon and predictable (pp. 132-133). In contrast, such dualism does not exist in Indigenous method assemblages, where everything can be active, and everything has agency. I elaborate further on this in the following theoretical chapter.

I will use art as an example because some Indigenous views about the agency of art are parallel to those of art therapy. Sutton (cited in Law, 2004) explains that painted designs or sculpted forms are seen to be instances of Dreaming manifesting in the world. In this way, pictures and carved figures have healing or destructive powers over people. The other implication here is that certain artworks are types of enactment with their own agency. In art therapy processes, artworks for example, are also recognised as entities with agency, and image dialogue is one tool through which this agency is recognised. Similarly, the art materials act with their own sense of agency, and it is common to hear comments from participants about how the materials redirected the initial plan of the artists, or how certain aspects of an image are initially viewed as ‘mistakes’ and later seen as illuminating certain aspects of the self.

**Ontological disjunction**

In Indigenous knowledge systems, access to physical sites, ceremonies and narratives within and between Indigenous groups is restricted. Law (2004) explains that this restriction should not be viewed as “another kind of racism dressed up in some exotic, Other-centred clothes” (p.136). The related crucial point of difference between the Euro-American and Indigenous methods of assemblage is that, in the later, ontological universalism does not exist. Communication is not
necessarily good, and the fact of different enacted worlds not knowing each other is not a matter of concern as evident for example in women’s and men’s business. As Law (2004) puts so succinctly, “ontological disjunction is a possibility that might be, and indeed often is, quite appropriate” (p.136). Similarly, in group art therapy, verbal communication is important to promote understandings, but it is accepted that other members and often the artist herself will gain restricted access to the multilayered meaning carried by both the artwork and its process. The goal is never about reaching a universal truth or complete understanding of the stories within the artwork, but rather to work with the parts of stories which are available at that moment.

Law (2004) explains that the problem arises when Indigenous realities overlap with those of non-Indigenous people. Euro-American method assemblages are driven, at least in principle, by a clarification process. There is an assumption that, through a process of precise definition and clarification, we can reach final agreement (at times with subsequent corrections). Law (2004) argues that in this process we repress the possibility for a practice of knowing which accepts that entities are constantly and differently enacted in different locations and contexts. That is, in the pursuit of singularity, we ignore multiplicity and place everything which is vague, elusive, partial and fluid into Otherness. Because Indigenous method assemblages do not include the concepts of ‘universal’ or ‘general’, they are capable of enacting an ontological disjunction.

Verran (cited in Law, 2004) explains that this means that what is not clear, is not necessarily waiting to be made clear. At other times, what is not clear is worked through a process of discussion and negotiation. The Dreaming, or what she refers to as ‘ontic/epistemic imaginary’, is a rich conceptual resource from which Indigenous peoples engage in the eternal process of not only retelling and remaking realities, but also reconciling local knowledges. Again, I elaborate further on the concept of the Dreaming in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. Law (2004) suggests that we can learn from this Indigenous method assemblage, and keep the metaphors for reality-making open, refuse a strict distinction between the literal and the metaphorical, and reject the dualism between real and unreal - thinking instead in terms of “degrees of enacted reality” (p.139). Art therapy processes, whether carried out in individual sessions, or as part of a group, are precisely about working allegorically, refusing dualism between the real and imagination and re-working imaginaries. These three aspects are interrelated, flowing in and out of each other, and are governed by the overall concept of the Relational. The table below offers an attempt to summarise the meeting places of the two domains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indigenous method Assemblage</th>
<th>Art therapy method Assemblage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactment</strong></td>
<td>Multiple narratives enacted through kinship affiliation, social differences, and enactment of the story in ceremonies, oral and visual depictions.</td>
<td>Multiple narratives enacted through social interaction, and enactment of the story in visual and oral depictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency and dualism</strong></td>
<td>No dualism - everything is active and has agency.</td>
<td>No dualism - artworks, art materials are active and carry agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontological disjunction</strong></td>
<td>Access to knowledge is restricted, limited communication is accepted,</td>
<td>Access to knowledge is restricted, limited communication is accepted;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One possible a visual representation of the meeting places might look like the image below (Figure 11). The image represents Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems as circles in order to indicate the Relational concept and the constant re-creating processes through which we arrive at new knowledge and meaning. The shared coloured area is divided into three sections, each with letters that correspond to the three meeting places - Enactment; Agency and dualism; Ontological disjunction. Furthermore, the red, orange and yellow dots correspond to each of these three places, but also appear together in each of the three parts in order to communicate that they are interrelated, flowing in and out of each other and governed by the overall concept of the Relational. The division is an artificial one for purpose of verbal/written clarification.

The methodology of the Artful Mob research project, which I outline below, is but one possibility of an integrated method assemblage. The argument for the meeting places between Indigenous knowledge systems and group art therapy does not ignore the differences between the two domains, and these are not only recognised in theory, but are usable parts of the methodology. That is, group art therapy tools of operation, such as the implementation of a time-limited, weekly art-making program, form a necessary foundational element of the methodology. However, the art program skeleton is also designed to be flexible and to bend in various ways in order to prioritise Indigenous ways of being. What such integration looks like is discussed in the section below.

**Artful Mob – Methodology**

If I insist that Zen-like state of self-enhancing self-forgetfulness is indispensable to creativity, other vital aspects of the creative process might get eclipsed. And that is why none of our personal experiences of creativity should be held up as a model for anyone else.


I want to draw and study a few things closely by feeling, not thinking.
All the participants in the *Artful Mob* project speak English as a first language, and less than a handful speak the language of their cultural group. Nevertheless, most of the participants insert words from Indigenous languages into their conversations, including Aboriginal English, and they are often delighted to teach me these words. The inseparable connection between language and identity is not the primary focus of this research. However, a decolonised approach to research within Indigenous contexts requires attention to questions and issues around language, interpretation, translation, expression and re-presentation. Chilisa (2012) speaks of the imposed hierarchy of languages in the production of knowledge within academic institutions. Escobar (1995) highlights the colonising process involved when non-Indigenous researchers re-conceptualise the history, culture and practices of Indigenous peoples using their own languages and paradigms, and Tuhkiwai Smith (1999) speaks of the importance of reviving Indigenous languages; and integrating these into the language of research.

The attention to questions and issues around language, interpretation, translation, expression and re-presentation is the backbone of the *Artful Mob* research project. My primary argument is that the use of visual methodologies, with specific focus on the use of directives and processes from group art therapy, is both useful and suitable for research within Indigenous contexts. Firstly, the art-making process provides a primary way through which the participants can explore the multifaceted dimensions of their selves. The verbal sharing is an important part of the methodology; but is treated as secondary in importance. Such an approach carries the inevitability of restricted access to some of the new knowledge emerging for the art maker. This is partly managed by implementing the methodology in half-day long sessions over 20 weeks, which allows for developing trust between participants and researcher, as well as between participants and the method. More important is my acceptance that, by using visual methods, not all knowledge will be mine to know. This acceptance speaks to Law’s (2004) call for methods that are uncertain and modest.

Secondly, the published thesis, although inclusive of many of the artworks produced by the participants and I is not seen as the sole or even primary mode of representation. A planned Artful Mob Exhibition reflects more than just a demonstrations of an alternative way to present the research findings. The lived experience of seeing one’s artworks exhibited publicly is expected to provide a transformative experience for the participants. The exhibitions will also provide the hosting organisations with tangible and easily accessed outcomes of their effort to provide health services to their consumers and members. Furthermore, as I was told by many participants, the exhibitions will allow them to act on their relational responsibility of teaching others, particularly the young, about their stories and about the use of art for healing. Through the *Artful Mob* workshops and the exhibition, the methodology adheres to the core aspect of the Relational in Indigenous Knowledge system.

**Method**

To briefly recap the essential dimensions of the method, the participants for the *Artful Mob* research project include a women’s group at Winda Mara, and a mixed-gender group in BADAC. The age bracket of participants in both groups is between 20-60 years of age, and they have diverse cultural backgrounds and thus representations of their Indigenous identities. Each group voted to include a few non-Indigenous participants who are partners of Indigenous group
members. After extensive preparatory work with each community as described in chapter 2, I sought and obtained formal ethics approval from RMIT’s HREC, approval number 19758, prior to the start of the art-making workshop series.

Innovative forms of data collection and analysis, as well as dissemination of research results within cross-cultural research, have been encouraged in the literature (Hall & Kulig, 2004; Smith; 1999, 2005; Liamputtong, 2008, Daniels, 2008 in Liamputtong, 2008; Meadows et al., 2003). The present project uses triangulated knowledge collection and synthesis techniques drawn from group art therapy processes (Liebmann, 2004), in which new knowledge emerges in the forms of the artworks, and their ascribed verbal meanings. The method was presented for critical reflection from the Critical Friends group and the hosting organisations in order to modify processes to reflect Aboriginal cultural perspectives. This collaborative approach reflects the categories of 'negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding' and 'Participation, collaboration & partnership' with their associated principles (Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies, 2012).

After the art-making programs were co-developed and approved by the hosting organisations, the co-facilitators and I met with potential participants to explain both the program and the method. Once the formal consent process was complete, participants were encouraged to give feedback to modify and tailor the programs further, which I then discussed and reviewed with the Critical Friends group and the hosting organisations. The programs then commenced for a 20 week period, with four-hour weekly sessions. The program at Winda Mara took place between April and September 2016, and the BADAC program commenced in October 2016 and concluded in May 2017. Most sessions included: a warm-up activity; sharing; lunch; a main art-making activity; and sharing. On several occasions, we deviated from this structure because participants preferred to be working only on the main activity, to skip lunch, or to skip sharing. Sharing about the artworks included verbal and written words concerning the images, according to participants’ choice.

Discussions about the process took place during most sessions, providing valuable feedback that enabled changes to the ways the sessions were carried out, and making this a fluid and shifting methodology. Sessions were audio recorded. The artworks were kept in a secure locker at RMIT University, and photographs of the artworks and recordings were kept on a secure server on the University IT system. All artworks were photographed. The recordings have been transcribed and a journal was also kept for each site.

In order to tease out some of the new knowledge, I have engaged in multiple readings of the transcribed recordings and the journal entries, whilst simultaneously viewing the artworks corresponding to these records. In the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, I explore the methodological decisions that informed the knowledge synthesis; and explore the differences between such a synthesis and ‘data analysis’ as it is more commonly understood. New knowledge was also relayed in written and verbal forms to the Elders and the hosting organisations for feedback and approval, in order to reflect-in-action, through a collaborative approach, and avoid what Adamson & Donovan (2002 in Liamputtong, 2008) refer to as ‘ethnocentric interpretation’ of findings.

The art-yarning method is presented in figure 12 below, and an outline of the proposed Artful Mob skeleton programs for Winda Mara and BADAC appear as appendices 1 and 2 in the appendices section at the end of the thesis. For reasons I have previously discussed, the programs are referred to as ‘skeleton’ programs because we deliberately do not follow their content in a precise manner, but rather use them as frameworks in order to remain open to a more organic
manifestation of the art-making process. In addition, the appendices section of this chapter includes copies of the Recruitment Poster for Winda Mara (BADAC felt that a poster was not necessary due to their recruitment process), Consent Form, Information to Participants Form, Letter of Approval, and Memorandum of Understanding.

At both BADAC and Winda Mara, participants were recruited by staff working across the Family Services Programs. At Winda Mara, some of the women are staff at Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service in Portland. Based on relevant literature, I expected to visit communities for as much time as possible in order to build rapport and establish relationships with the hosting organisations, potential participants and the communities at large. However, the limited time afforded for research, along with time limitations placed on the organisations and demands for service, were some of the factors inhibiting the facilitation of a lengthy rapport building phase. I will provide further details about how each program played out in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter. Such factors also emphasise the need for the method to be flexible, slow and modest in order to better manage the reality of research. I now turn to highlight the various key points from all parts of the chapter, before progressing to expand on concepts from Indigenous critical writing, postcolonialism and art therapy, and inspect those with the methodology of this research in order to reinforce the argument for integration and visual methodologies in Indigenous research contexts.
Summary

This chapter presented the methodology of this ethnographic research project as slow, modest, vulnerable, diverse, shifting and above all uncertain. It is so because such characteristics best fit the diversity and complexities of Indigenous identities, the non-Indigenous identity of the researcher-participant, and the doing of research within Western research institutions. Therefore, the foundational argument communicated in this chapter is that a methodology that seeks to explicate these diverse and complex positions cannot usefully do so by emphasising the oppositional nature of the positions, but rather must regularly recognise and acknowledge their constitution in what Nakata (2007) describes as “a complex set of social and discursive relations” (p.201). That is, the methodology must enable recognition and illumination of the methodological and epistemological messiness of the research project.

This chapter reviewed literature pertaining to Indigenous research paradigms, art-based research, and the use of visual and integrated methodologies in Indigenous research contexts in order to tease out the unique characteristics of visual and integrated research methods to then present...
and justify the Art-yarning method of this research project. A substantial body of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars calls for multidirectional borrowing from various knowledge systems (Sandoval, 2000; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Alatas, 1974 cited in Chilisa, 2012; Christie, 2006), and there is a growing collection of researchers who have employed various degrees of integrated methodologies successfully in Indigenous research contexts (Goulding et al., 2016; Wright et al., 2012; De Ishtar, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2011; Kite & Davy, 2015; Cochran et al., 2008; Roy, 2014; Stewart, 2007). The common thread among Indigenous scholars who advocate for the integration of various knowledge systems is that the integration process is seen as a valuable tool with which oppressed people can reclaim power over their ways of being and doing, in the realities of their lives where the non-oppressed exists. The integration between method assemblages carries no benefit, however, when it is conceived as an act that could be performed solely by the researcher. In recognising integration as a necessary process in the development of any society, Alatas (cited in Chilisa, 2012) states that, “when something is found effective and useful, it is desirable that it should be adapted and assimilated, whether it be an artifact or an attitude of the mind” (p.24). While I hold fundamental assumptions about the healing and transformative powers of art-making, it is the hosting organisations, Elders, Key Important Persons, and participants who have found the tools and processes of art therapy (given these have undergone decolonising modifications) effective and useful. As such, they have authorised the integration and collaborated with me on the decolonising process of designing and using these visual tools.

In the literature there is rich discussion of the strengths of art-based research, above all the ability of images to capture what is hard to verbalise. Other benefits include: the ability of an image to draw our attention to things in new ways; the likelihood of remembering an image, which increases the possibility of research findings to reach a wider audience; and the way in which an image holds multiple layers and, as such, has a narrative quality that can provoke or reconstruct conversations (Weber in Knowles & Cole, 2008). Finally, images can: enhance empathy, which is the closest we get to understand the self of another; allow comparison with our own views and experiences (Kramer, 1971; Arnheim, 1966; Lipps in Jahoda, 2005; Franklin, 2011); facilitate reflexivity in research design (McNiff, 1998; Huss, 2012); and provoke action for social justice (Kaplan, 2006; Sajnani & Kaplan, 2012). Researchers are required to have a well-developed understanding of why art is included and how its use assists with answering the research question. When approached in such an interconnected way, the use of non-verbal and verbal elements can be seen as a rich triangulation of data (Mason, 2002; Finley, 2003; Huss, 2005).

Visual methods also focus on art as a way to express different cultural identities, using art as a voice of different and often marginalised and oppressed populations (Huss, 2009, 2012; De-Vault, 1999; Mason, 2002, Sclater, 2003). The creative process can contribute to both working with, and the understanding of, people from other cultures, because the content drawn will carry multiple understandings and conceptions that, along with verbal sharing, can lead to the rendering of new perspectives. Additionally, because art connects to the individual-subjective experience, it can not only express cultural differences, but also help integrate the individual with her culture (Gerity, 2000; Campbell, 1999; Eisner, 1997; Pink, 2001).

However, art-based research also poses methodological difficulties (Eisner, 1997). Using visual methods in research is complicated because there is inherent tension between visual and verbal ways of understanding. At the same time as arguing that an art product is always culturally constructed and embedded, Mahon (2000) claims that art has its own language which cannot be translated into communication; or be understood as direct presentations of social context. The methodological difficulties can present in defining issues that have to do with the researcher’s relationship with the research participant, the quality of the art, and the relationship between art
and words (Sclater, 2003). Furthermore, while art can bridge cultural possibilities for misunderstanding, it can also intensify them. Researchers needs to be cautious to not fall into the ‘colour blind’ trap where participants are offered art in the name of conducting culturally sensitive research, but the art processes and interpretations offered are derived from the dominant culture (Acton, 2001; Hocoy, 2002).

Since the inclusion of art in social science research is ultimately about trying to answer the research question with the goal of benefiting specific populations, theoretical frameworks for understanding works of art are connected to the reasons art is included in the first place (Mason, 2005). Researchers are required to have a well-developed understanding of why art is included and how its use assists in answering the research question. When approached in such an interconnected way, the use of non-verbal and verbal elements can be seen as a rich means for the triangulation of data (Mason, 2002; Finley, 2003; Huss, 2005). Here, the research question concerns the subject of art as a visual method, as much as it does the experiences born out of its use.

Anthropologists, sociologists, environmentalists, and educators who use various art-based methods in research within Indigenous context, all share a common assumption about the power of visual representations, whether to record and reflect on community issues, encourage conversation with participants, inquire into and affirm personal, cultural and spiritual values, or promote healing among Indigenous peoples in need (Dufrene, 2002; Archibald et al., 2010; McCoy, 2008; Power & Bennett, 2015; Zurba & Berkes, 2014; Myers, 2012; Ingold, 2010; Ferrell, 1998; Gibson, 2011, 2012). The varied uses of visual methods in Indigenous research contexts suggest their potential in delivering a range of benefits to participants and communities. Often, visual methods are used with adherence to Indigenous protocols, but the literature suggests that further research is needed in order to inquire as to the extent to which visual and Indigenous methodologies are deployed as a decolonised cover for accelerating ‘Western’ approaches to knowledge.

The integration of the Indigenous method of yarning is popular in existing decolonised methodologies (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Wilson, 2001; Kovach, 2010; Walker et al., 2014; Geia et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2012). As a cultural form of conversation (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010), yarning has an inseparable link to spirituality, making it a powerful way in which Indigenous people connect to one another (Towney, 2005), and therefore a suitable method to reflect the value of spirit and integrity of ethical research conduct (NHMRC, 2003). Yarning is usually adapted into more familiar methods such as interviews and focus groups (Isaacs et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2014; Kovach, 2010), but has also been used as a primary method following the protocols of specific Indigenous communities (Goulding et al., 2016). Others have expanded on the elements constituting yarning to include visual, physical and sensual elements of dynamic conversations that occur between humans and non-humans (Wright et al., 2012). Yarning is performed by people, the Country itself (i.e. rain, animals), and processes and products such as basket weaving, and therefore has implications for how we listen and tell stories in and from research. This multilayered view of yarning, as well as the therapeutic, research topic and cross-cultural types of yarning (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Walker et al., 2014), are of specific interest to the methodology of this research, and are seen to intersect with the formal and informal visual and verbal sharing processes in group art therapy. Here, yarning is utilised as one aspect out of wider ways in which integration with Indigenous knowledge systems occurs.

This chapter identifies similarities between elements within Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy through the use of Law’s (2004) comparison between Euro-American and Indigenous method assemblages. The differences Law (2004) identifies between the two domains are
grouped under his three concepts of Enactment; Agency and dualism; and Ontological disjunction. However, my work here concerns an effort to present these differences as similarities that emerge due to the centrality of the notion of the Relational across these two knowledge domains. In exploring the concept of enactment in both Indigenous and art therapy method assemblage multiple narratives are enacted through kinship affiliation, social differences, and enactment of the story in ceremonies, oral and visual depictions. Furthermore, no dualism exists, and everything is seen to be active and with agency. Lastly, in both domains, access to knowledge is restricted, limited communication is accepted, and negotiation and reconciliation of knowledge is achieved through the use of metaphors.

These similarities upon which the methodology of the *Artful Mob* project is built have two important implications. The first relates to the possibility of indigenising art therapy processes and tools in a practical way in order to conduct research which is useful and beneficial to participants, communities, and researchers. The second relates to the ability these similarities produce to carry a methodology which is shifting, uncertain, slow, modest, vulnerable, and diverse. Such an ability is desired because it mirrors the realities of life and of cross-cultural research. Being the core concept which binds Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy within this research project, Relationality requires examination across dimensions beyond methodology. In the following chapter, I continue to explore the presence of Relationality and related concepts across Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge fields. With regular awareness and recognition of differences among people and ontologies, the similarities we can find across these theoretical conceptions can be utilised to do research with added benefits on different levels - from quality, just and empowering research processes to benefits in real life and across all aspects of life.
Chapter 4: Relational Places Of Knowing Across Australian Indigenous Knowledge, Art Therapy & Postcolonial Terrains

Introduction

As I state in the introduction, a major focus of this research project concerns the development and trial of Art-yarning as an integrated form of method, and the demonstration of the potential value of this method. The interest of this chapter is to theoretically frame this focus through a review of major theoretical concepts drawn from the work of three influential postcolonial theorists, Australian Indigenous scholarship and art therapy. The goal of the review is to demonstrate that Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems share, amid different formulations, a belief in the Relational - the belief in a purposeful connectedness which relates everything on earth and beyond. More specifically, this chapter seeks to explore the Indigenous notion that human and non-human entities - geographical locations, groups of peoples, flora and fauna, earth, sky, the cosmos( including contemporaneous spirit beings like the net nets or bunyip) - are regularly involved in various forms of interaction and communication, from which existence and knowing become possible. This chapter then seeks to investigate the micro-parallels between this notion and processes of group art therapy. The image, art materials, space, what happens and what does not happen, the sharing or non-sharing with the group: all are entities which contribute to the understanding of one’s self and thus, one’s existence. By juxtaposing prominent theoretical conceptions within each knowledge system, this chapter seeks to support the argument that art therapy methods and processes have particular salience for research in Indigenous contexts.

To achieve this goal, I open with a brief and schematic discussion of three central postcolonial theorists: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. These theorists are important for their influence on the development of contemporary Indigenous critical writings, and their concepts provide a useful point of comparison and adaptation for the following Knowledge Synthesis chapter. I then review selected Australian Indigenous scholarship, with particular attention to the concepts of: Country; Art in Indigenous knowledge systems and as an inter-cultural product; the Cultural Interface; Whiteness and Sovereignty; and representations of Indigeneity. I conclude this section with an exemplary review of the growing space visual methods occupy in Indigenous Australian scholarship, which also serves as connecting bridge to a final literature review highlighting core theoretical concepts from the practice of art therapy. Here I briefly discuss: definitions; the of development; the role of art materials; the humanistic art therapy approaches of phenomenology and person-centered; Whiteness in art therapy; and the Relational in art therapy.

By engaging with these diverse bodies of literature, I aim to explore how ideas about communication and representation that originate from very different ontologies, can also produce commonalities that are useful for enhancement of one’s sense of self and thus one’s inter, intra and cross-cultural communication. Here my goal is not to strive for a perfect alignment of theoretical conceptions from the three traditions I analyse. Instead, I use theoretical conceptions from these three knowledge domains to establish two key claims: the first is that, in essence, each theory is relational to the others, since it seeks to establish its ontological identity as different to other ways of knowing; and second, through viewing the three traditions together, I identify similarities that do not make them the same, but do enable a unique form of self- and cross-cultural communication.
Postcolonialism

‘Colonialism was about the physical occupation of non-western cultures. Modernity was about displacing the present and occupying the minds of non-western cultures. Postmodernism is about appropriating the history and identity of non-western cultures as an integral facet of itself, colonising their future and occupying their being’


Postcolonialism is a vast intellectual field, and a comprehensive review of its literature is neither possible nor desirable here. Instead, this literature review briefly discusses the historical and intellectual context from which postcolonialism emerged, followed by an analysis of specific concepts from the works of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. I will selectively examine key aspects of Fanon’s and Said’s work based on relevance to my analysis in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, and I will focus particularly on concepts that Bhabha critically appropriates, as his work attends more to the question of the possibility for a critique of colonial restrictions on language and representation, which will be key points for my own analysis. I focus particularly on the impacts of colonisation across psycho-socio-cultural domains, including: Fanon’s notion of Inferior Identity Formation; Said’s concept of Orientalism as a major enactment of domination of the Other; and Bhabha’s notions of the stereotype and mimicking. With awareness of their status in the field (Young, 1990), I have chosen this brief and focused approach in order to then identify commonalities between their work and the traditions of Australian Indigenous critical writings and art therapy discourses. Among the commonalities of greatest interest to the present research, are those related to the concept of decolonisation, representation, identity, ambivalence, and authenticity. I conclude with a brief summary of the influences and critiques of postcolonialism in relation to Indigenous scholarship. Together, these critical literature reviews aim to express the most significant and productive tensions and contradictions which these theoretical bodies bring to the meeting place where this thesis is situated.

Postcolonial scholarship uses concepts from varied intellectual fields, including poststructuralism, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis and linguistics, which in turn leads to some dispute over the meaning, boundaries, and implications of the theories that can be grouped under the postcolonial umbrella (McLeod, 2000). Dissension over the term reached its height in 1990s, and remains important for understanding of how Indigenous scholarship differs from postcolonial theory. Rather than mere semantic disagreements, these arguments reflect substantive disputes over the political, economic and sociological meanings of the field (McLeod, 2000). Semantic disputes, however, also abound, with a confusing array of potential terminology that includes: postcolonialism; post-colonial; postcolonialism; postcolonial; anti-colonial; post-colonial discourse/s, theory/ies, condition, and so on and so forth. In this chapter, I adapt, with some uneasiness, McLeod’s (2000) use of the term ‘postcolonialism’ as one word that captures “historically situated forms of representation, reading practices and values, which range across both the past and the present” (p.5). This definition is common to other scholars who view postcolonialism as descriptive of both historical continuity and change (Hiddleston, 2014; McEwan, 2009; Hall, 1996; Quayson, 2000; Ashcroft et al., 1989). That is, on the one hand, the term recognises existing colonial material realities and modes of representations, and on the other, it asserts the term’s capacity to reflect the possibility of change, as well as to recognise the change that has already been achieved.
While appreciative of the optimistic, if not enabling, value in such a view, my uneasiness relates to the lasting power of the word, not only as contradicting the contemporary dynamics of colonial power in Australia (Moreton-Robinson, 2015), but also as a remaining signifier of ‘colonial’ ways of knowing - that is, the term implies that the colonial system is still in a position of power, such that what follows is defined in relation to it. Perhaps for this reason, Indigenous Australian literature does not make more frequent or explicit connections between categories of postcolonialism, Orientalism and Australian Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Since the name of the field is unlikely to change, however, my make-shift solution has been to overthrow the king without the additional sentence of exile. That is, an abandonment of the term but maintenance of purposeful and selective engagement with relevant content within the field.

Postcolonialism can be placed in two contexts - Decolonisation and Intellectual Development. The latter is inclusive of two study areas - Commonwealth Literature and theories of Colonial Discourses. The two fields together constitute the origin for the development of Postcolonialism (McLeod, 2000). Commonwealth Literature was a term assigned in the 1950s to describe English literature from countries with history of colonialism; and includes writers from ‘settler’ societies as well as writers from the Indigenous populations of these countries (Slemon & Tiffin, 1989; McLeod, 2000; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Ashcroft et al., 1989). The term was criticised for its deliberate inference of shared, valuable literature from many disparate nations, and promotion of unity in diversity, whilst reinforcing of the primacy of England among the commonwealth nations through practices such as: the assumption that texts were addressed primarily to English readership; the judgment of texts according to the English cannon of literature; and the singular use of the word - literature and not literatures (McLeod, 2000; Mukherjee, 1996; Moore-Gilbert, 1997).

More positively, the creation of this field has been viewed as helping to secure the status of literature written by authors in colonised countries, as well as playing a role in promoting artistic endeavors. It also helped to create a viable area for academic study, and served as an important political act (Ashcroft et al., 1989; McLeod, 2000). Therefore, Commonwealth Literature can be viewed as the enabler of colonial discourse analysis for the foundational purposes of critical reflection on colonised subjectivity, as well as illuminating the different forms of colonised cultural and political resistances (Kirkham & Anderson, 2002; Young, 1990; Ashcroft et al., 1995; Shahjahan, 2005). In response to charges of false representation of diversity in unity, Brydon (1984, in Ashcroft et al., 1989) argues that writing about the dangers of European critical and theoretical domination occurred within a discourse marginalised by its own status as Commonwealth Literature. Ashcroft et al. (1989) further argue that, during the early stages of settlement in the United States, Australia and New Zealand, there were voices which called for ‘native literature’ and ‘native’ critical tools with which to evaluate it.

There was an assumed interdependent relationship between nationalist representations and Commonwealth Literature, and writers were expected to create their own sense of national and cultural identity. However, the primary concern was the production of work that would transcend borders and deal with universal concerns (McLeod, 2000; Mukherjee, 1996; Ashcroft et al., 1989). This universal focus appears as a fundamental difference between Commonwealth Literature and the postcolonial critique to follow. As McLeod (2000) explains, Commonwealth Literature was driven by the first part of the paradox where commonwealth represented equal, mutually cooperating nations, while the following field of postcolonial critiques emphasised these nations’ shared history of colonialism, exploitations and dependence. However, a contemporary reflection can argue for similarities between the two discourses across humanistic, universal criteria. The debates over commonwealth literature help to situate the birth of postcolonialism.
in its literary context, but they also anticipate the contours of later critiques of postcolonialism, a point to which I return later in this chapter.

Theories of colonial or anti-colonial discourse are invested in a vast array of issues relating to class, gender, race, identity, language, body, nationalism, representation, feminism, ethnicity, history, education and knowledge production (Loomba, 1998; Ashcroft et al., 1995; Hall et al., 2000; McLeod’s, 2000). The concept of the ‘Decolonisation of the mind’ by which Ngũgĩ (1986) titles his work on the role of language in the construction of national culture, history and identity, succinctly captures the essence of theories of colonial discourses. Within this framework, colonial discourses occupy the intersection where language and power meet, and their critical analysis explores the ways in which linguistic representation and modes of perception express what Ngũgĩ (1986) terms ‘colonial alienation’. That is, an alienation from the colonised sense of self, identity, and heritage through the oppression of Indigenous languages, via forced restriction of Indigenous languages to the home, whilst making English, French or other colonising languages the formal language in all other domains.

Colonisation of the mind - and the possibility for its reversal - are central concepts in postcolonialism. The colonisation of the mind is a process that operates by convincing people (including the settlers and residents of colonising countries in Europe) to internalise the logic of colonisation and to speak its language in both literal and metaphorical ways. It is a process whereby the values and perceptions of the coloniser are taken as the sole truthful way to perceive and represent the world (Ngũgĩ’s, 1986; Fanon, 1967, 2004; Bhabha, 1992). By implication, Decolonisation of the mind concerns the task of reversing this process. Pathways include the abandonment of English or French in favor of writing in one’s own language (Ngũgĩ, 1986), or the use of English as a practical tool through which to make present Indigenous ways of being, and to call out the complex web of impacts generated by colonialism. With this foundation, I now turn to a limited discussion of Fanon and Said, focusing on the points necessary to enable a greater discussion of Bhabha, whose work attends more to the question of the possibility for critique of colonial restrictions on language and representation, which are key points for my own analysis. That is, Bhabha takes various related concepts and re-establishes these concepts as the foundation of a much better theory of critical standpoint – and thereby makes the concepts more amenable to appropriation for the kind of analysis I attempt in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter.

The works of Frantz Fanon, a Martinique-born Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist, are considered foundational to theories of anti-colonial discourses. In particular his books Black Skin, White Masks (1952 - published in English in 1967), and The Wretched of the Earth (1961 - published in English in 1963, 2004) illuminate the length and breadth of the damage, at a psychological level, that colonisation of the mind has caused to millions of colonised people. Black Skin, White Masks includes his lived-experience and observational analysis of the destructive power of colonialism in directing the colonised’s attempts to navigate his sense of self in the world through a
performance of Whiteness. For example, Fanon (2004) discusses his own failed attempts to wear the white mask as a way of achieving his ultimate desire to ‘be a man among other men’ (p.112).

The attempts of Fanon to be ‘a man among men’ (1967, p.112) fail because, regardless of his Western education and prestige occupation, his skin colour dictates the lasting socially constructed expectation to act as a black man - as he describes a rainy-day encounter with a Parisian child and her mother, in which the child declares, ‘Mama, the N*****’s going to eat me up’ (p.114). Worse than this, because of the coloniser’s construction of him, he describes developing a conception of himself in an inferior position as “the slave not of the “idea” that other has of me but of my own appearance” (p.116). Fanon uses the metaphor of the white mask on black skin to explain that inevitably the black person does not have the white mask available to him to the extent he needs in order to be perceived as a man. To paraphrase Povinelli’s (2002) term of ‘the cunning of recognition’ (similarly used to describe the falsity of various forms of recognition of Indigenous people), the attempts to wear a white mask through relentless effort, which he terms as mimicry, never result in genuine recognition of black as man, and further reinforce a sense of inferiority to the maskless White. Along with domination for purpose of capital gain, Fanon (1967) states that:

- if there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process - primarily economic
- subsequently, the internalization, or, better, the epidermalization, of this inferiority (Fanon 1967, 13).

That is, Fanon (1967) views the mimickry engaged in by the black colonised: of the White man’s ways of talking, dressing and behaving, with the extension of acts such as the persuit of a relationship with a White man/woman, and western education pathways, as hopeless. Yet, the desire he describes behind these forms of mimicry, and his own social and professional world raises the question of whether this is all inevitably forced upon the colonised? As I will discuss in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, Fanon’s view of mimicry is not evident in many of the participants’ Art-Yarings, with the evidence of few masks suggesting that mimicry is often consciously and visually manipulated to suit the individual’s representation of Indigenous identity. Fanon’s view of mimicry offers a framework from which to explore similarities and differences with the knowledge gained from the Art-Yarings. The concept of masks has been influential within the literature, and is particularly salient for my knowledge synthesis. While I discuss this at length later, briefly here I will note: in the art-making process, we have extended the metaphor of the mask to an actual creation of masks in order to explore the representations of identities, and again discovered different contemporary understandings and uses of metaphorical white and other masks.

Edward Said, a Palestinian American literary scholar, is concerned, like Fanon before him, with the colonised-coloniser relationship, but focuses on the process of legitimization of empire for the oppressor. He describes Orientalism as “a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities” (1978, p.203). In other words, Orientalism attempts to illuminate the process through which the oppressor produces knowledge through the application of specific assumptions about the Orient, which operate to perpetuate the oppressor’s superiority, and thus justify its colonial project. In relation to postcolonial theory, Bhabha states that ‘Orientalism inaugurated the postcolonial field’, and Spivak describes it as ‘the sourcebook of our discipline’ (in Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.35). Said’s pivotal book deconstructs Orientalism as applied to North African and Middle Eastern lands in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as examining its manifestation in more contemporary Western media. For Said (1978), Orientalism carries three interdependent meanings: an academic meaning, which describes an
engagement in studies of the Orient; a style of thought adapted by mass of writers that assigns
an imaginative differentiation between East and West; and a:

systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce -
the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, and imaginatively during the
post-Enlightenment period (p.3).

Said (1978) also distinguishes between latent and manifest Orientalism as the two principal
methods through which Orientalism has transmitted ‘the Orient’ to the West during these
periods. Latent Orientalism is characterised as old, unanimous, stable and durable, and its
idealisation of a quintessential Orient has been shaped by the collective work of pioneering
scholars, travellers, and poets. Said (1978) argues that, in the nineteenth century, this form of
Orientalism was interconnected with biological ideas about racial inequality; and reinterpreted to
conform to a Social Darwinist binary of advanced and backward races. He therefore claims that,
while texts from this period might be differentiated by style, they are united in conserving the
idealised Orient as separate from Europe. In the early twentieth century, latent Orientalism was
conveyed through universities, professional societies, exploration and geographical organisations,
and anywhere else where knowledge production took place. In other words, latent Orientalism
serves as the unconscious justifying framework which makes any emerging discourse concerning
the Orient appear sensible. Furthermore, because of its conservative, self-preserving, qualities,
latent Orientalism was able to maintain its existence through “its internal, repetitious consistency
about its constitutive will-to-power over the Orient” (p222), where misrepresentations and
distortions are transfored into authoritative truths.

Manifest Orientalism includes the vast array of ideas about Oriental society, literature, language,
history, sociology, culture and so on. It is the sphere within which certain surface-like changes to
these ideas take place. Bhabha (1994) explains that Said’s manifest Orientalism refers to the
learning, discovery and practice of imperialist politics — those signifiers of stability that constitute
a static system of rule and discipline, and the logic of governance. On the other hand, latent
Orientalism is the site of dreams, images, fantasies, myths and obsessions that are manifested
through literature and the arts, cultural geography, and a myriad other means of informing the
unconscious.

Furthermore Said (1978), describes the role of the Orientalist as an expert trusted with the task
of interpreting, translating and portraying the Orient to fellow Europeans, whilst maintaining his
position as outside the Orient, and thus the position of the Orient as beyond the Occident. Said
(1978) theorises that, due to the rise in economic, political and other forms of encounters
between Europe and the Orient, tensions were born between advocates of latent Orientalism and
people such as travelers, pilgrims and statesmen who brought back contemporary, modern
constructions of the Orient. Such people upended constructions related to the identity, but also
the role, of the Orientalist, and thus the method of delivering Orientalism to Europe. Said (1978)
argues that, in the early twentieth century, tensions between the two forms led to a convergence
resulting in a new form of Orientalism, and one which also equipped the expert Orientalist as an
agent of Western power who was able to construct ‘true insider’ knowledge of the Orient.

Here Said (1978) makes two further points. The first is that such experts were not academics, but
they have contributed to the lubrication of the latent Orientalism machine through regular use of
the available scholarly frame of reference. The second point he raises is that both British and
French Orientalism share common elements, including: certain generalisations about the Orient;
the distinction between Orient and Occident; and the desire of the Occident to dominate the
Orient. The difference between the two lies in style, but as Said (1978) reminds us, style is a
product of “specific worldly circumstances being molded by tradition, institutions, will, and intelligence into formal articulation” (p. 225).

In summary, in Said’s account, Orientalism: constructs binary divisions; is a Western fantasy; is an institution; is a literary form; is legitimising; and includes latent and manifest forms (Said, 1978). The manufacturing of the Other for purpose of domination and as a political act for capitalist gain is achieved through stereotypes of the Orient, which act as loyal soldiers who deliver, reinforce and maintain Orientalism. Such stereotypes include the inability of the Orient to accept or maintain civilised, democratic forms of government; and hence the necessity for colonial rule – to school them in exactly such civilised or democratic norms. There is also the notion of the Orient as timeless in the sense of being trapped in antiquity far behind an ever-progressing Europe. The Orient is also strange, unusual, fantastic and bizarre - which appears at first as a positive, attractive quality, but ultimately serves to reinforce its inferiority. Orientalism constitutes the racial characteristics of the Orient, defining them within a negative framework - i.e., the violent Arab. Orientalism performs a similar act through stereotypes of Oriental men as unmanly and of women as immodest and sexually promiscuous in order to ‘prove’ the Orient’s failure to live up to Western, and thus ‘appropriate’, gender codes. Similarly, as an overall portrayal of the imagined relationship between Orient and Occident, the former is framed as feminised - weak, submissive, exotic, mysterious and tempting - against the masculine - active, dominant, heroic, and rational West (Said, 1978; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Marcus, 2001; Clifford, 1988; McLeod, 2000; Hsu-Ming, 2013).

The concept of Orientalism has generated a large body of responses, including support and expansion, as well as critiques. Said offered his own visitations and reflections (1988, 1994 in 1978, and 2004), but elaboration of these debates is beyond the scope or goal of this chapter. It is worth noting, however, that contemporary responses to Orientalism move beyond the for-or-against debates, to instead emphasise themes such as the contextualised linking of art, land and voyage with the Orientalist, as well as discussions of Occidentalism (Netton, 2012), or Orientalism’s contemporary relevance to current debates across multiple fields (Elmarsafy & Bernard, 2013).

Orientalism also receives criticism from feminist scholars for various gender-based aspects. For example, Lowe (1990) points out that Said’s thesis about the construction of the Orient as the ‘other’ is problematic when one considers the role of ‘other’ women have fulfilled in Europe long before Occidental contact with the Orient. Similarly, Mills (1993) makes the point that Orientalism ignores women’s writings from these historical periods; but adds that the issue of gender in Orientalism is far more complex because many European women were at once empowered by colonialism and disempowered by their lower societal rank. Marcus (2001) explains that, whilst Orientalism provides a starting point for feminist writings on the intersection between gender, sexuality and moral critiques of Oriental women, Said did not understand the vital gender interplay in the discourse of Orientalism and the politics of representations.

Said (1978) makes a foundational link between Orientalism and Foucault’s Discourse Theory. He employs Foucault’s argument that discourse is the site where, and through which, power is exercised to create the subject of its knowledge - in order to present Orientalism as a discursive structure (Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Young, 1990; Kennedy, 2000; Adib-Moghaddam, 2012). However, many scholars who criticise Orientalism do so through questioning its validity as a discourse. There are claims that Said’s understanding of Foucault has evolved gradually (Racevskis, 2005) and that Orientalism is infused with the foundational paradox between Said’s humanistic stand and his influential figure - Foucault - who is a radical critic of humanism (Clifford, 1988). The better-known examples of such a critique include Porter (1994) who highlights the
incompatibility between the two theorists most clearly associated with Orientalism - Foucault and Gramsci - while Ahmad (1994) further develops the contradiction embedded in Said’s attempt to fuse Foucault’s Discourse Theory with humanism. Sapra (2011) argues that Said’s advocates, starting with the influential Bhabha and Spivak, despite their critical interrogations of Orientalism and their intellectual departures from it, are nevertheless engaged in remolding this discursive framework without challenging its validity.

Regardless of one’s position in relation to the book, *Orientalism* has become an influential text across literary, cultural, and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as anthropology, art history, history and politics. *Orientalism* is recognised as the pioneering work in appropriating French theoretical methods of textual analysis - generalisation often used as reference to Said’s main influential French theorists, Foucault and Deleuze, into Anglo-American academia in order to reveal Western constructions and interpretations of the Orient-the Other constituted through the imperialist project (Young, 1990; Moore-Gilbert. 1997). Turner (2004) claims that, whilst *Orientalism* opened a door to further studies about the complexities within the binaries of Orient and Occident, Said’s greater purpose was to overcome those. In the later added chapter to *Orientalism*, Said (1994) emphasises the overruling humanistic goal of Orientalism to move beyond the Orient-versus-Occident, and into the reduction of “the effects of imperialist shackles on thoughts and human” (p.354).

Responses to *Orientalism*, particularly from the 1980s and 1990s, have generated a two-camp position across the literature. The following quote from Elmarsafy & Bernard (2013) usefully captures the core issues around which these two camps of Orientalism are formed and which identify their positions:

*Orientalism* is a Foucauldian book, or it is a challenge to Foucault; it made possible a textualist and dehistoricizing postcolonial studies, or it set out very different points of theoretical and political allegiance; it essentialized the West in much the same way that it accused Orientalists of doing, or it emphasized the agency of individual thinkers and writers and the fundamental imbalance of power between Western and Eastern sites of knowledge production in the modern period (p.2).

Because *Orientalism* critically investigates the colonised-coloniser relationship, with a focus on the process of legitimating of empire for the oppressor, it is useful for developing an understanding of how the colonial settler project in Australia has manufactured the Aboriginal Other for the purpose of domination and as a political act for capitalist gain through a range of stereotypes. For example, Moreton-Robinson (2004) is a well-known example of an Indigenous scholar who uses the concept of White possessive logic to deconstruct how white sovereignty maintains its superior position. The concept of Orientalism has also been useful for exploration of perceptions held by some of the participants about dot painting as constitutive of Aboriginality, which I elaborate on in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter. Finally, Orientalism has been useful in the processes of critical reflection on the pitfalls embedded in the ontologies, axiology, epistemologies and methodologies which I inadvertently bring into the research project. Orientalism contributes to my growing understanding of Whiteness as a challenging process that requires regular critical reflections in order to expose and minimise the theoretical and practical places where experiences are understood from an overarching White logic. Similarly, it is valuable in the identification of *Aboriginalism* (Attwood & Arnold, 1992) - a national discourses that invents ‘the Aborigine’, instead of incorporating Indigenous persons’ own “explanation of one’s position in the more complicated web of the interface” (Nakata, 2007, 2010).
Homi Bhabha, an Indian American literary scholar, situates his theory of colonial discourses within the textual analysis of the representation of colonial subjects in forms beyond literary texts (McLeod, 2000). Bhabha (1994) is influenced by Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, and he uses Said’s concept of the construction of knowledge about the Other as a launching point from which to investigate resistance to such representations from the colonised. At the same time, as stated earlier he is influenced by Fanon’s (1967, p. 221) concept of mimicry, and Lacan’s work on the anxious and ambivalent space of Otherness – as in Mitchell & Rose’s comment that “the Other is thus a dual entry matrix” (1982, p. 164). Bhabha (1994) is known for a number of foundational concepts in postcolonial theory, including: hybridity; mimicry; difference; and ambivalence; and he uses these concepts to treat colonial discourses as inherently incapable of succeeding in instilling colonial values. In this section, I discuss his treatment of these concepts in relation to Said and Fanon, in order to set up for some of the analysis to be carried out in the following Knowledge Synthesis chapter.

Fry (2009) explains that Orientalism works in an historical moment we call structuralism because its primary concern is with the neutral and interdependent binary opposition of central self and decentralised other. The Saussurian idea that one cannot know something positively but only negatively is what shapes the binary argument of the kind proposed in Orientalism. Fry (2009) argues that Bhabha (1994) distinguishes himself from Said’s project by openly criticising the premise of binaries of this kind. He goes on to explain that Bhabha (1994) takes a deconstructive attitude, such that his sense of the coloniser-colonised relation breaks down into, at the very least, a re-doubling sense of what he calls ‘Double consciousness’. That is, one cannot clearly identify coloniser and colonised in terms of a binary opposition. Rather, the relationship is far more complex and hinges on a highly Derridian sense of what one might mean by difference.

Bhabha’s (1994) original contribution to the field of postcolonialism lies in his observation of how the inherent politics of binaries is played out in colonial discourse which “produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and “(p.101). In presenting his case for an anti-binary approach, Bhabha (1994) also refers to Said’s (1978) dichotomy of latent and manifest Orientalism. In appropriating Said’s dichotomy, Bhabha (1994) argues that latent Orientalism is a static system consisting of the lexicographic and encyclopaedic as its ‘signifiers of stability’ (p.102). This stability, however, is always under threat from manifest Orientalism, which incorporates signs of instability by tracing historical and narrative developments over time. Thus, whilst he regards Orientalism as a pioneering theory, Bhabha also argues that this division undermines the effectivity of the concept of discourse by what he calls ‘the polarities of intentionality’ (1994, p.103).

Bhabha (1994) views such conceptual dichotomies as falling into the trap of the inherent politics of binaries, which Bhabha regards as conforming to the assimilationist strategies of imperial power. However, Chakrabarti (2012) reminds us that Bhabha (1994) is able to identify these pitfalls of binary logic, and to uncover a differential quality which allows him to move across concepts without adopting a fixed position, due to postmodern tools that were not available within Said’s framework. This anti-binary approach is made clear in Bhabha’s discussion of the space between theory and political practice - an exciting, yet intellectually neglected, space that is “neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides” (p.41). In discussing the existing space in between binaries, Bhabha (1994) also takes one of Fanon’s (1967) sentences – “The negro is not. Any more than the white man” (p.58) - in order to illustrate that the awkward prose which divides the sentence allows a healthy disturbance to the binary of Black/White, which is where Bhabha (1994) sees Fanon’s and his own wishes to “keep alive the dramatic and enigmatic sense of change” (p.58). This is an example of how postcolonial theorists deconstruct and reconstruct.
language to communicate ideas about resistance to English as the most powerful literary tool of colonial dynamics.

In exposing the politics of representations, Orientalism works to deconstruct stereotypes as the imperialist’s categorising tool for the purpose of domination. However, while Said reaches an understanding that a complete denial of stereotypical representation might not be possible, he does not proceed to further investigate this insight (Chakrabarti, 2012). On the other hand, Bhabha (1994) shifts his focus from the political to the psychoanalytical, further developing Fanon’s discussion about the positioning of the subject in the stereotypical discourse of colonialism. Bhabha (1994) begins by deconstruction of the stereotype - the double-edged sword of colonialism. He explains that the stereotype translates the unfamiliar into coherent or meaningful ways of understanding the colonised - the Other. In his argument, by recognising the Irishman as stupid, the Chinese as inscrutable, and the Arab as violent, the distance between the coloniser and the colonised is lessened by ‘knowability’. On the other hand, the stereotype simultaneously maintains distance, as the coloniser cannot admit that the colonised is not that different (after all stupidity, inscrutability and violence exists among all groups of humans) in order to maintain its domination.

Bhabha (1994) further argues that the stereotype is a simplification, not because it represents a false reality of the colonised, but rather because it is a fixed form of representation that, “in denying the play of difference, constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations” (p.107). Bhabha (1994) identifies narcissism and aggressiveness as the two forms being exercised through the stereotype which “as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it” (p.110). Bhabha (1994) continues to construct the stereotype as a tool for the operation of his central concepts of ambivalence, anxious repetitions and mimicry, in order to illuminate how colonial discourses generate the possibility of their own critique.

For Bhabha, the quest to justify conquest through the construction of assumptions about the other is never achievable because of the dual and contradictory pull of colonial discourse. Bhabha (1994) explains that, on the one hand, the colonised Other is always outside the Western world because he is bizarre, eccentric, strange and so on, and, on the other hand, the goal of colonial discourse is to civilise this strange Other and bring him into the Western world, as evident in the unpacking of the imperial education project in India in the early nineteenth-century. This ambivalent position of the colonised becomes a threat to the authority of the coloniser through the effect of mimicking. Here, unlike Fanon (1967, 2004), Bhabha (1994), views the act of mimicking as a source of power and resistance.

The coloniser is thus caught in a contradictory split - on one hand, the coloniser engages the colonised in a project that aims to civilise them, to teach them how to act English; on the other hand, the coloniser ensures that the colonised is never accepted as English. It is a project in which “to be Anglicised is emphatically not to be English” (Bhabha, 1994 p.125). The colonised must not succeed in the project of resemblance, as this will lead to the collapse of Orientalism as a site where knowledge of the self is produced by distinctions from the Other. Bhabha (1994) explains that the stereotype unsuccessfully attempts to fix the sliding of the colonised between similarity and difference, and the result is an anxious repetition in Bhabha’s words “as a form of splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes” (p.110). By attending to the ways in which colonial discourses are problematised by the very people they claim to represent, Bhabha (1994) thus avoids the criticism that attaches to Said’s theory of Orientalism – that the theory neglects the possibility for multiple levels of resistance (literary, behavioural and others) - by analysing how
such resistance is produced by the very phenomenology of colonialism in both the practical and intellectual spheres.

Bhabha’s work has attracted criticism itself, including the charges that he posits a singular discourse of colonialism, thus weakening his work through a generalising strategy, that his use of the terms ‘colonising’ and ‘colonised’ are problematically gender free, and that his particular style of writing leads to limited readership (Davies, 1994; Parry, 1987; Dirlik, 1994; Moore-Gilbert, 1997). Others such as Young (1990) pose challenging questions about Bhabha’s work, of which the most relevant to my work concerns whether we can discuss the resistance or compliance of the colonised, who appear in Bhabha’s writing as a singular, neutralised male who exists outside time and space, “within the demands of an overall schema of the conditions of colonial discourse” (p.152). As I will show later, some participants expressed versions of resistance in which some carried an apparent visual appearance of compliance, making discussion of the resistance or compliance of the colonised somewhat attainable, yet multilayered and complicated. While Bhabha’s work might not be limitation free, it attends more to the question of the possibility for a critique of colonial restrictions on language and representation. Furthermore, because the methodology of the Artful Mob project is predominantly visual, his concepts of mimicry, anti-resistance, ambivalence and the space in between become fitting for the analysis I undertake in reading the Art-yarnings.

With regard to the relationship between language and reality, rather than asking which one constructs the other, I propose a temporary bracketing or suspension of language as the primary mode of engagement with reality through engagement with the art-making process. In this respect, Bhabha’s concepts of ambivalence, mimicking, anxious repetition and representations can also be utilised to inform critical reflections about the research processes and structures. Examples of questions in this vein include: what are the possibilities and limitations associated with the presentation of this project as decolonised research? How can mimicking be understood in terms of the images mimicking the internal worlds of the participants? How can it be understood in terms of asking participants to mimic a particular Western practice of art-making? How does ambivalence on my part as a non-Indigenous researcher manifest in terms of wanting the participants to benefit from engagement with visual expression embedded in Western epistemology, and what actions can minimise this hidden [post]colonial attitude? Who and what do the artworks produced in the workshops represent? Are multi-representations possible? I explore these and other questions in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter of this thesis and, in doing so, I also inevitably reflect on other possible interpretations for these postcolonial concepts as well as question their relevance and/or usefulness within this research project.

Since a main goal of this chapter is to review the notion of integration in order to utilise it as the overall framework of the research project, I now briefly review below some general areas of influence of postcolonialism on Australian Indigenous critical writings. I will continue with a review of Indigenous critical writing in Australia through a discussion of theoretical conceptions which differentiate this field from postcolonialism and constitute its own substance. Bhabha’s concept of ‘the space in between’ can take on another useful appropriation when thinking about the relationships between the various theoretical bodies presented in this chapter. That is, when the space in between is seen to include awareness of both areas of influence and the differences, more focused reflexive processes can occur and in turn lead to more effective decolonised research - one that regularly inspects the ways we inspect the space in between and questions our capacity to do decolonised research.
Core postcolonial concepts from Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and Spivak are embedded in the works of Indigenous scholarship. Rigney (2001) states that these postcolonial scholars have provided valuable theoretical approaches to the contemporary Indigenous Australian Intellectual Movement in its interrogation of dominant research tendencies that assume central positions of power and truth (p.7). Moreton-Robinson (2007), for example, analyses the denial of Indigenous sovereignty as the “ontological condition that shapes patriarchal white sovereignty’s investment in itself and its anxiety about dispossession” (p.9). Langton (2003) discusses the collection and classification of Aboriginal artefacts as proof of the benefits of colonialism, its ability to encompass the peoples of the outer realms in the great project of civilisation and its narrative of progress, Education, Science and so on (pp.81-82).

Nakata (2003) claims that the 1989 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy should be understood as a regulatory device to discipline the ‘Savage’, by presenting educational empowerment as a result of maintenance of traditional identity, and “drums up an image of islanders only as different, exotic, traditional” (p.142). The result, claims Nakata (2003), is that Islanders who do not represent themselves by these ‘traditional’ standards appear as non-authentic, while those who do, appear as always lacking the progressive status of Western culture. Other Indigenous scholars highlight evidence of similar influence by postcolonial themes through discussions about languages (Bell, 2003), place names (Birch, 2003) and wilderness (Bayet-Charlton, 2003).

From at least the early 1990s, however, Indigenous scholarship has also challenged the value of postcolonial theory in an Indigenous research context. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), for example, argues that many non-Indigenous academics use postcolonial theory as a recolonising strategy to justify their position as researchers in the field, because postcolonial theory still excludes in various ways the voices of Indigenous peoples (p.24). Similarly, Moreton-Robinson (2007) says that, instead of addressing the wrongs of colonial history, postcolonial theory “reproduces white history” (p.320). Trees & Mudrooroo (1993) argue that, in Australia, where Aboriginal sovereignty is not legally recognised,

postcolonialism is not merely a fiction, but a linguistic maneuver on the part of some ‘white’ theorists who finds this a comfortable zone that precludes the necessity for political action (p.1).

Fielder (1992) adds that the postcolonial emphasis on the aesthetic and textual tends to mask power relations that are still present in Australian society, and Ardill (2013) suggests that many non-Indigenous scholars use postcolonial theory to write about Indigenous peoples without accepting their sovereignties, which constitutes a form of colonialism because “it mutes the voices of those who have been marginalised by colonialism” (p.318). The overall goal of the following review is to respond to such critiques by seeking to centre core conceptions relating to Indigenous knowledge systems and their role in contemporary Indigenous epistemologies. In addition, the review pursues the overall aim of identifying the Relational spaces of commonality between Indigenous and art therapy systems of knowledge.
Indigenous Critical Writings

‘The past and present work...has built a ground concentrated with the resources that will allow Indigenous peoples of the future to exercise our right to define and create ourselves and our lives, to write and sing and paint and tell ourselves, from the past into the future’

Dodson 2003, Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians, p.42

Introduction


In this section, I will review key conceptualisations from traditional Indigenous ontologies as well as from contemporary Indigenous critical writing in order to further highlight and establish meeting places across knowledge systems which can then provide justification for the integrated methodology of this research project. I begin with discussion of Country - a core foundational and inseparable part of Indigenous identity for many Indigenous people. Next, I provide a brief review of the development of Indigenous Standpoint theory, and then continue with discussion of the Cultural Interface as an overarching central concept that runs through Indigenous Critical writings. It is the basis for any insight into the complex web of what Indigeneity can be and mean. Following this I will discuss Whiteness. As the review will demonstrate, Whiteness is one central concept against which the case for the Indigenous speaker is being built (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, 2004, 2007; Huggins, 2003; Andersen, C. 2009; Rigney, 2001). My goal in this review is to examine how current literature re-problematises the questions of who can speak and how to speak, and then to reflect on what these discussions mean for the in-between position of the immigrant scholar/researcher. This position still seeks to fall out of perspective (Nicoll, 2004) whilst also critically reflecting its uniqueness as one which is not easily located within Whiteness.

The other major concept within Australian Indigenous scholarship is sovereignty, and together with other concepts and themes, this intellectual domain is inherently linked to the political in inseparable ways. Other significant concepts within a non-exhaustive list include: presentation and representations; racism; Whiteness a priori; Indigenous identity; land rights; native title; cultural alterity; ontological relations to Country; essentialism; power knowledge; authenticity and inauthenticity; politics of difference; hybridity; invisibility; neo-colonialism; and reconciliation. In addition, this review also analyses several Indigenous scholars who use visuals to elucidate specific Indigenous ontologies (Martin, 2008; Arbon, 2008, 2008b; Foley, 2008). This visual scholarship also foregrounds the importance of the Relational as an ontological and epistemological commonality between Indigenous Knowledge Systems and art therapy.

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7 The term scholarship here relates to specific theory written by Indigenous scholars while acknowledging Indigenous scholarship produced in other areas of interest.
Country

So, we following this story, keeping, telling people.
Telling youngfellas to look after in your feeling.
They put paint and they told us, those old people.
‘we’ll be going, you’ll be look after.
Don’ rub it off’
So, we look after.

Kakadu Elder Bill Neidjie, Old Man’s Story, 2015, p.4

Relevant literature suggests that, in its essence – or, according to the Yanyuwa people, by its Ngalki (Bradley, 2010) - Country is a highly complex matter because of its constitutive and intricate links to ancestral beings, people, other species, physical and spiritual environments, songs, story, art and more. Country is outside my experience and knowledge of the world, which therefore fundamentally limits my capacity to understand it as those who know it in these ways. However, as the literature suggests, and which I discuss later, there are pathways to develop some understanding of Country, not merely for the sake of one’s interest but in order to promote cross-cultural communication with Indigenous Australians, and subsequently our relationships with everything in our environment.

Despite discursive changes within scholarship over time, much of the relevant literature refers to Country in a ‘traditional’ sense, drawing its knowledge from ‘remote’ areas. The incorporation of early anthropological constructions into perceptions of Indigenous identities - including Indigenous self-perception - has led to a growing Australian scholarship which engages with reframing discourses to inquire and include contemporary expressions of Country. It is therefore important to acknowledge here that, although a great part of the review concerns understandings of Country in a ‘traditional’ sense, I do not view Country in an imagined original or pre-contact sense, which earlier research tended to use as a benchmark against which to understand living Indigenous peoples and cultures (Hinkson & Smith, 2005).

From the 1960’s, literature on Country was focused on themes such as ‘continuity and change’, or ‘accommodation and resistance’. While this work served an important role in advocacy for land rights, emphasis remained on continuity and change as opposite sides of a binary dichotomy (Sahlins, 1985 cited in Hinkson & Smith, 2005). As Povinelli (2000) states, such approaches often result in essentialisation, and with it the judgment - including self-judgment - of Aboriginality or its lack, a phenomenon that Wolfe (1999) terms ‘repressive authenticity’. The following decades saw the heavy promotion of intercultural analysis in a bid to mend the then-established notion of ‘culture and identity loss’ (Merlan, 2005; Sullivan, 2005; Cowlishaw, 1999; Meyers, 2002). Later, I return to such approaches in more detail, particularly in relation to ‘Aboriginal art’ and identity. For present purposes, however, I note only that such approach to Country in a traditional sense have left lingering imprints in present-day views that Indigenous people outside the ‘bush’ are potentially ‘fake’, ‘non-authentic’, and that these views carry political and social implications (Hinkson & Smith, 2005, Fredericks, 2013).

\[8\] All content pertaining to Indigenous knowledge about Country, Songlines and painting reflects outside knowledge.
Mindful of these complexities, the first part of the review of Country in a ‘traditional’ sense seeks to understand what Country means to Aboriginal people from different Countries on the continent known as Australia and its surrounding island. This is based on earlier anthropological work by non-Indigenous scholars (forever problematic but far from useless) with Aboriginal people in Central, Western and South Australia, interwoven with discussions about Country by Indigenous scholars and Elders. While some literature refers to these areas as ‘remote’, it is important not to assume that Indigenous people from rural and urban (as opposed to ‘remote’) locations, won’t share these understandings of Country. Similarly, we should not assume that the ‘traditional’ view of Country is lost to any Indigenous person regardless of their location. Later in this literature review, I explore more contemporary understandings of Country for Aboriginal people in both ‘remote’ and urban locations. In every section, however, it remains important to avoid assigning specific understandings of Country to a simplistic schema of continuity and change – this review seeks at least to remain critical of how such terms are presented. At the same time, the review draws attention to a number of key limitations on the capacity to understand Country. The first relates to the limits of translations in communicating exact meanings of Country and the embodied nature of its relationship with its first people (Stanner, 1969, in Gammage, 2011; Bradley, 2010). In trying to explain Koondarm (Nyungar Dreaming), for example, Nyungar scholar Mia (2008), says that “there is no English word that truly captures this concept” (p.186). Ingold (2000) similarly explains that Myers (1986) assigns the word ‘country’ as rendition for the Pintupi word ‘ngurra’, yet the word can also mean a temporary camp. As I will discuss later, these distinctions are not merely terminological, but reflect substantive differences in forms of relationship between Country and people.

The ability to speak and understand in context the language of a particular group is therefore vital for enhancing understanding of Country, and since most scholars do not speak or have limited understandings of Aboriginal languages, translations provide limited knowledge. The task of first understanding, and then communicating, about Country carries an immense responsibility. As Aunty Iris Lovett-Gardiner (1997), a Gunditjmara woman, stresses, “communication and interpretations must be fully understood by the person that tells the story of the area” (p.5). Because in Aboriginal languages things can possess more than one essence, it is common to have several words to describe the ‘same’ object, and the appropriate word to use will depend on context. In reference to the renditions of the songs of the Yanyuwa people, Bradley (2010) suggests a useful metaphor of the key and keyhole to communicate this fundamental point, stating:

> each kujika verse is like a keyhole through which other ways of knowing can be glimpsed, and the commentary becomes the key - only to lead to another keyhole, for which only further teaching will provide the key (p.37).

Further, hearing or repeating words is very different to gaining knowledge of their meaning. Permission to learn is given by Elders and learning is experiential, communicated through practices such as ceremonial performances, painting, and guided travel over Country (Bradley, 2010). An implication is that the most accessible knowledge about Country carries an ‘outside’ meaning, while ‘inside’ meaning is available to only a selected few9 (Bradley, 2010). Elders, directly or through others, also deliver public or ‘outside’ knowledge about Country, and although it is unsurprisingly less common, such written works provide extremely rewarding reading, as in the work of Jeremy Beckett (2014) who documents Country in the context of an Aboriginal

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9 Even once learning permission is granted, a deeper level of knowledge about Country requires a lengthy time investment. Examples of this can be seen in the seminal years-long works of Deborah Bird Rose (1996, 2000) and John Bradley (2010).
stockman who is also lawman but uses the economics of pastoral to maintain knowledge of Country and Kin and inter-relationships with other Aboriginal groups from western NSW to the Bight country of South Australia. Other examples include Kakadu Elder Bill Neidjie (2015) and Aunty Iris Lovett-Gardiner (1997). In the former, reflections on the limitations of translations are simultaneously informative of different ways of knowing, being and doing. The latter provides an account of the rich complexity of Country, understood as inclusive of mission and reserves.

All of these issues require acknowledging here the severe limitations of this brief literature review of Country. At the same time, genuine cross-cultural communication cannot afford to view these challenges as an excuse for continuing ignorance, and there is a rich space between not making the attempt and falling short in spite of concerted effort. As Bradley (2010) explains, the Yanuwa’s word for ignorant, manji, always carries the potential to learn - ‘to become lingi - ‘keen of hearing’ or ‘knowledgeable’ (p.24). Given the interest of this thesis, the review will reach for this potential, with a particular focus on understanding more about the Relationality of Country and its people.

Country is a living entity. Bird Rose (1996) states, “Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun” (p.7). There are several implications for this status. The primary one is that Country can: feel; talk; listen; smell; suffer; rejoice; give; take; and therefore, albeit differently to humans, Country also knows (Bird Rose, 1996; Gammage, 2011). A further implication is that the relationship between Indigenous people and Country is reciprocal (Mia, 2008; Winch, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Bird Rose, 2000; Povinelli, 1993) and exhibits a mirror-like quality - one is existentially reflected in the other. This mutually-embedded relationship is often communicated through bodily metaphors. Stanner (1969, in Gammage, 2011) explains that, among the multiple Aboriginal words available for Country, one would use the word to mean one’s ‘shoulder’ or ‘side’ (p.143). Watson (2009) uses the word ‘intimate’ to describe the relationship between the nungas (people) of Ngarrindjeri Country in South Australia and their ruwi (land or place). Similarly, a fellow Country woman, Tjukonia (2003), states,

\[\textit{Ngarrindjeri ruwi/ruwa is the ‘living body’ of the land and waters, creatures and peoples...}\]

Here is kurangk, ‘the neck,’ here is ngiakkung, ‘the armpit,’ here tipping, ‘the lips (p. 71).

Moreton-Robinson (2015) describes the relationship between people and Country as ‘synonymous and symbiotic’ (p.84), which means that Indigenous people are manifestations of their Country and “carry title to the land through and on their bodies” (p.84). Bird Rose (2000), drawing on her long-term connections with the Yarralin Aboriginals in the Victoria River Valley in the Northern Territory, also refers to the relationship between people and Country as reflexive - damage to one brings damage to the other. Similarly, McQuire (2018) explains that Country is lifeblood, which connects the living to their ancestors, and therefore, she plainly asserts, “destroying our Country means destroying us as people. If you don’t value our country, you can’t value our lives” (p.26). The intensity of this bond is not merely symbolic, and literature is rich with concrete evidence of its manifestations (Bird Rose, 1996, 2000; Bradley, 2010; Tjukonia, 2003; Taylor, 2012). For example, in an excerpt from the transcript of a land claim hearing, one Yarralin man explains to the court the impact of knocking down a sacred rock. When the barrister asks him why the event made him feel bad, he says “well, that’s when we tell the old falla, Old Dan, that’s when he died from the Dreaming” (Bird Rose, 2000, p.108). Similarly, Tjukonia (2003) reports exacerbation of diabetes and heart disease among the Ngarrindjeri women following the 2002 Goolwa Wharf ‘redevelopment’ project on Kumarangk, “the Island heart of the nation” (p.69) for the Ngarrindjeri people at the lower lakes of the Murray river. Aunty Cherie Watkins explains to Tjukonia (2003); “The spirit of the land is weakening. We are weakening. The
island needs us women to go back to strengthen it” (p.70). Marrinybul is a sacred site for the Mambaliya people, because of the rock-holes created there by the Crow and Wedge-tailed Eagle Dreamings. Bradley (2010) describes how, during a visit, as his teachers and friends Dinny and Isaac “moved closer to the rock-holes, they began to call out, and even weep, asking the place to remember them, expressing sorrow that they had not been back for so long” (p.48). Similarly, Cowlishaw (1999) explains that sitting in Country, walking through Country and ceremonial performance are reflective of a productive relationship between people and Country. This interactive relationship is vital for continuation of life, as a Rembarrnga woman candidly communicates to her, “if we don’t do this, we will all die” (p.239).

Country and identity are therefore interrelated (Birch, 2007; Langton, 2002; Corntassel, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2003), and representations of identity, although these vary, cannot be understood separately from Country. Morgan (2008) and Winch (2008) both identify the notion of Country as central to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and history, and argue that it contributes to overall health and wellbeing, while Pascoe (2014) develops an economic understanding of Country. Dodson (2012) teaches that the Yawwuru term Liyan, “describes the interconnectedness between a sense of personal self with the wider community and the natural landscape” (p. 389). In describing what Kuninjku Country is for one of its inhabitants, Junun, Aitman (2013) states “Country provided his ontological grounding, his embodied sense of who he is; country sustained him and was dear to him” (p.5). Similarly, Taylor (2012) emphasises that understanding of Country is foundational to understanding of the “Kuninjku concepts of personhood, sociality, power, and health, as well as local constructions of other frameworks of human experience such as aesthetic experience” (p.26). Moreton-Robinson (2003) describes this relationship as ontological and one which “occurs through the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans, and land; it is a form of embodiment” (p.12). Here, Moreton-Robinson (2003) makes a critical point about the apparent essentialist tone some anti-essentialists might attach to this ontological relationship with Country, a point which I will return later in relation to Indigenous representations of identities.

Country is situated in the Relational web of the Dreaming - an acceptable English word to describe Indigenous belief systems. Bird Rose (2000) explains that Dreaming refers to all concepts and entities and can be thought of as both a model and celebration of life – “Dreaming is the source that which makes possible all maps and celebrations - life in its variety, particularity, and fecundity” (p.44). Country is where ancestral beings have created species, geographical features and the law ascribing rules of existence for the relationships among those. Yet it is important to note that the Dreaming is considered to be both the ancient time of creation and the present-day reality (Bird Rose, 1996, 2000; Stanner, 1989). Mia (2008) explains that, for Nyungar people, the Koondarm Dreaming reflects an understanding of an overall creation and a “continuum of Then, Now and Tomorrow” (p.186).

Gammage (2011) explains that each Aboriginal group view themselves as equal to all other parts of the environment which is shaped in the Dreaming. This idea of lack of human control or power over surroundings is fundamental to understanding of the Dreaming. Bird-Rose (2000) summarises four rules that the Dreaming has set for all its creations, which aids understanding of this critical point. The first is balance and refers to the responsibility of each part to sustain itself and balance others. The second refers to reciprocal communication between parts - communication which is facilitated by acute attention and constant learning. The third includes symmetry and refers to acts of opposing and balancing in order to produce further balance. The fourth rule refers to the absolute autonomy of each part - ‘no species, group or country is ‘boss’ for another; each adheres to its own law. Authority and dependence are necessary within parts,
but not between parts’ (p.45). During creation, Dreamings changed between ranges of shapes until each reached its final form (Bird-Rose, 2000; Myers, 1986; Ingold, 2000). However, the ancestral beings, rather than leaving trails of impressions behind them, have ‘metamorphosed into the forms of the landscape as they went along’ (Ingold, 2000, p.53). At some stage, each Dreaming focused its power in a particular direction “becoming an ongoing life of species (including humans) that now live according to its prescribed Dreaming law” (Bird-Rose, 2000 p.46).

Myers (1986) states that “the invisible framework of this world, the Dreaming is its cosmic prototype” (p.51). This is a critical point for revealing the nature of the relationship between people and Country. The outcomes of Ancestral creation processes mean that the Dreamings are no longer here in their original form, but that their power within its related law of existence remains. In other words, everything which has been created - species and environments - have their own consciousness and responsibility as impressed onto them by their Dreaming creator. Myers (1986) explains that this ontology sees the Pintupi people view each individual as “sitting as a Dreamtime being” and then becoming visible through birth. In his discussion on how the Pintupi people of Western Australia understand themselves and their environment, Ingold (2000) explains that this ontology cannot be reduced to ‘being at one’ with nature. The Pintupi people apprehend the world through what Ingold (2000) terms ontology of dwelling. For this ontology, apprehension of the world is “not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view of the world but of taking up a view in it” (p.42).

While the power of the Dreamings remains within each human, this immanence does not cancel the autonomy of the Dreamings, and interpretations and change are possible through dreams and lived experiences (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). Ingold (2000) explains that the travel of people through the land and their engagement with everyday activities reflects a two-level constitution of the landscape. “On the first level ‘each person takes his or her primary identity from a particular named place and is regarded as the incarnation of the ancestor whose activity made the place” (p.53). On a second level, as a person goes through life, he or she acquires additional layers of identity which derive from other significant named places such as an initiation site or place of living. The outcome is identities that constitute networks of places - those of ancestral travel and those of relations between people. However, when Aboriginal people speak of social relations in terms of place relations, they do not engage in a mere comparison across social and physical worlds. Rather, “at a more fundamental ontological level - these relations are equivalent. That level is the Dreaming” (p.53). Similarly, Langton (2000) explains that place and self are connected in metaphysical ways through Story Beings - spiritual forces with unique characteristics that are present in particular places and in particular clans. Country is so important precisely because it is not marked by physical labeling, but rather “through kin and story ties that inscribe the self in place and place in self” (p.255).

Song cycles or Songlines are central and sacred pathways for maintaining relationships between people and Country, as well as teaching related laws to younger generations. Songs were brought by the Dreamings who traveled over Country and sea, painting it with their movements and voices (Bradley, 2010). The importance of song cycles cannot be understated. Yunupingu (transcribed by Watangu, 2016) equates song cycles to universities where the Yolngu people practice and master their knowledge. Furthermore, he states “it is through the song cycle that we acknowledge our allegiance to the land, to our law, to our life, to our ancestors and to each other” (p.3). A prominent example is of Songlines as markers of land boundaries, however, as Watson (2009) explains, unlike those constructed by Australian law, “Aboriginal song lines do not travel in straight lines to make absolute boundary areas between different people” (p.38). Beyond
provision of cultural knowledge, Watson (2009) links songs and related responsibility to the land, to current law around Native Title, which I discuss further under Indigenous sovereignty. With her focus on the assimilationist approach of current land right laws, Watson (2009) also reminds us of the importance of songs and Country in the ‘traditional’ sense for the survival of Aboriginality. She asks:

What happens to the land? Who will be the keeper of the languages of country, its songs, and its laws? Who will remain the unassimilated and unsettled native when the threat of the last song sung lies at our feet? And how might humanity walk the land if the singing stops? Will the possibility of an Aboriginal worldview of the now and the future be extinguished? (p.36).

Additional examples for the use of songs pertain to what secular societies might define as supernatural or sorcery, although Indigenous knowledge systems do not hold the same connotations and such abilities are rather viewed as designated roles. Here, selected persons have the ability to sing particular songs (or draw pictures) in order to kill, harm or heal other people, as well as to bring forth environmental activities such as rain or red sky, and often particular places are designated for such processes to take place (Bird-Rose, 2000, pp.65-66; Bradley, 2010, p.33). Again, these examples help to gain simpler, ‘outside’ understanding of song cycles and their connection to Country, as well as their overall place within the philosophy of the Relational. As a hint for a more complex space song cycles occupy, Bradley (2010) explains that Kujika is the Aanyuwa word for ‘ceremony song’ as well as ‘Big Business’ - the most serious activity for its people. However, as he discovers much later, the relationship of Kujika to Country and of Kujika to the paths of different Dreamings is not as straightforward as our understanding of song cycle might suggest, and “though both relate to the country they belong to, only sometimes do they relate to each other” (p.47).

The discussion so far relates to the relationship between Country and people which is understood to have existed long before colonisation. However, other expressions of the relationship between Country and people include elements that can be viewed as contemporary, although these should not be seen as contrary or as in a binary opposition with the traditional knowledge described so far. As I noted earlier, the political climate of previous decades, mainly the Northern Territory Land Rights Act in 1976 and Native Title Act of 1993, saw the emergence of literature (Altman, 1987) that emphasised the connections between people and Country in a traditional sense, as part of efforts to increase successful land claims. This emphasis on the continuity of customary connections to land continues to be present in more recent relevant literature. For example, Pearson (2004), in discussing the faulty legal processes relating to Native Title, and their detrimental impact on land rights, states that “Traditional laws and customs regulate the exercise of any and all of the rights and interests that flow from possession” (p.96).

Hinkson & Smith (2005) describe the 1980’s and 1990’s as decades dominated by two conceptual directions. The first explored the lives of Indigenous Australians in urban, rural and ‘remote’ areas with a focus on the theme of continuity with traditional ways of living amid the devastating impact of colonialism. The second sought to apply Foucault’s work on constructions born out of power relations. Here, culture and Aboriginality were understood to be constructions born out of colonial and state interventions, and research investigated their impact on the social and cultural lives of Indigenous people. For example, Altman (1987) shows how corrective governmental policies regarding housing, employment, health and so on have failed in their assimilationist approach, because they fail to account for Aboriginals’ continuing relationship with Country - evident in preference to live on Country and commute to town on an as-needed basis. Similarly, Cowlishaw (1999) describes friction between government officials and Rembarrnga people in relation to living arrangements. The former disapproves of migration from Momob, a small
outstation town, after “government funding had indulged the extraordinary, almost irrational, desire to live in such ‘remote’ place” (p.40). Meanwhile the Rembarrnga people are puzzled, first by the interference in their business, and second by the nonsensical notion of living in one place. As they explain to Cowlishaw (1999):

moving across the land, and moving among groups of people, moving to take part in ceremonies form the pattern of life which reproduces relationship with the sentient country, with its mythic associations, and with kin (p. 40).

The current intercultural framework that accompanies research with Indigenous people challenges contemporary imaginaries of original, authentic culture and its ‘loss’ among some Aboriginal people, as well as the political and social implications which draw on such understandings (Merlan, 2005; Hinkson & Smith, 2005; Sullivan, 2005). Merlan (2005) argues, for example, that adaptations to new ways of being serve to reconstruct contemporary Indigenous identities which maintain their distinctness from settler-associated identities. In a more recent example, Taylor (2012) discusses the creation of relatively permanent small settlements in close proximity to a bigger town by the Kuninjku people in South-West Arnhem Land. Taylor (2012) emphasises that these settlements should be understood as intercultural products, along with other adaptations to new types of work and the development of new economic opportunities; and have multiple servicing benefits. However, they are ultimately put in place in order to preserve obligations associated with the religious beliefs “about the enduring Ancestral energies in their Country and their manifestations as life force and human ‘spirit’” (p.33).

The review so far identifies physicality on Country as an important enactment of the relationship between Ancestral and ancestors’ named places and its living people. This raises the question of how relationship to Country is enacted for the majority of Indigenous people who live in urban locations - which according to the 2016 census reflects 79% of Indigenous populations (ABC, 2016) - particularly when these locations do not reflect their Ancestral and ancestors’ named places. Moreton-Robinson (2015) states that “the effects of removal and dislocation have resulted in different constructions of subjectivity that link people to place in multiple “(p.14), and recent scholarship calls for discourses about Indigenous identities which emphasise the centrality of Country for those living in urban national and international locations (Moreton-Robinson, 2011, 2015; Fredericks, 2013; Jacobs, 2012; Watson, 2008; Morgan, 2008). Such a call reflects a continuing effort to change lingering perceptions and self-perceptions of Indigenous people living in urban locations as somehow ‘non-authentic’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2011; Fredericks, 2013; Langton, 2003; Cowlishaw 2009).

The term ‘urban Aboriginal’ can be seen as a language of division, constitutive of the flawed ‘non-authentic’ Aboriginal (Fredericks, 2013). The context for this view relates to an ongoing symbolic violence perpetrated through politics and media, as seen in the well-known, yet by no means exclusive, examples of the 2012 Opposition Leader Tony Abbott reference to Ken Wyatt, the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives, as an ‘urban Aboriginal’ who is ‘not a man of culture’, as well as in the case of Andrew Bolt who, in two consecutive newspaper articles, refers to Indigenous academics and artists of mixed heritage who live in cities as ‘political aborigines’ and ‘white aborigines’ (Maddison, 2013; Fredericks, 2013; Aikman 2012). While the focus here remains on expressions of relationships to Country for Indigenous people living in urban locations, this critical point serves to highlight the importance of the language we use, and more importantly, the intricate and complex political, cultural, social, and spiritual dimensions of relationships to Country.
Fredericks (2013) explains that many Aboriginal people live on the Country of their Ancestral and ancestors, where urban centers have grown, and so amid different pathways, they maintain connections to Country through physical presence. Others have families who have lived on reserves, missions and in urban areas, and whose Country is different to their current place of residence. Fredericks (2013) explains that “in some forums it can be common for Aboriginal people to articulate their connection to Country and then their historical connection to a former reserve community, and then talk about home being a big city or regional center” (p.6). Regardless of the living contexts brought about by colonisation, connections to Country are present for many Aboriginal people who live on the Country of other Aboriginal people (Fredericks, 2013; Watson, 2008). As Morgan (2008) succinctly states, “our country is alive, and no matter where we go, our country never leaves us” (p. 263). Furthermore, Moreton-Robinson (2015) makes the foundational point that everybody living in Australia is an occupant of Aboriginal space. This critical point reflects again the ontological relationship to land which serves to ground the cultural identities of all Indigenous people, including those who live in urban locations built on Countries of other Aboriginal people.

In their inquiry about the meaning of belonging for Aboriginal people living in Sydney, Harrison & McLean (2017) interviewed nine Aboriginal people, of which five live off-Country in Sydney. They found that belonging and listening go together in the participants’ enactments of relationship with Country – “Belonging teaches us to listen; listening teaches people to belong” (p.364). Recollecting affective experiences and listening to Country and Elders are ways through which the participants not only enact their relationship with Country, but also recognise their place within this network of relations. In similar research, Harrison et al. (2016) collaborated with Darug artists to produce three outside murals with 90 pre-service teacher students as a method to learn, through practice, how to teach local Aboriginal art. The Darug artist engaged the students with local creation stories which they then painted. Through this process, the Darug artist explained that she is affected by Country through active observations where “We’re not observers watching it we are actually immersed in it and are part of it and we need to be aware of that, so we can take care of it” (p.1331). Similarly, Moreton-Robinson (2015) discusses the writing of life-stories by Aboriginal women removed from their Country and families as a contemporary enactment of relationship to Country. She explains that these stories are based on memories of intergenerational relationships with families and communities, and therefore “These relationships are underpinned by connections with one’s country and the spirit world” (p.14).

Fredericks (2013) explains that the focus on variations of the Welcome to Country protocol locks Indigenous people living in urban locations into a romanticised pre-colonial cultural paradigm, which in turn ignores the continuing presence of Aboriginal people in cities and the diverse ways in which they use spaces to enact their relationship with Country. She notes several examples of sites in Brisbane and Melbourne where Aboriginal people proclaim and re-assert their belonging. Child, health and legal services, radio stations and street art are sites where, along with the use of signs, symbols and images, Aboriginal people “have undertaken a process of reclaiming, belonging, attachment and Indigenous landscape-shaping for and by Aboriginal people” (p.10) and enact sovereignty through assertion of connection and ownership.

Similarly, McGaw et al. (2011) discuss the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra, and the corner of Smith and Stanley Streets at the boundary of the Melbourne inner-suburbs of Fitzroy and Collingwood, as sites that, amid ongoing struggles, represent “a mode of Indigenous place-making that challenges the homogeneity of Euro-centric notions of place and its constitution” (p. 300). The Tent Embassy, as a well-known land rights protest site, and the corner of Smith and Stanley streets, as a meeting and socialising place between local Indigenous as well as Indigenous persons
from other places, highlights the political and social/cultural dimensions of relationship with Country. While McGaw et al. (2011) focus on those sites as enactments of ‘spatial Justice’, they also highlight expressions of belonging to Country through protocols of storytelling, keeping fire, caring for a special eucalypt (which has since been removed by the council and replaced by art depicting Aboriginal culture commissioned by a non-Aboriginal artist), and an overall physical presence.

Similarly, in reference to the Tent Embassy, Muldoon & Schaap (2012) highlight a strategic discursive use of contemporary expressions of relationship with Country which join together belonging and refusal to belong. They explain that, by

making symbolic capital out of the oxymoron ‘indigenous aliens’, they conjoined a primordial right to belong with a political refusal to belong in order to rupture the assumed unity of the people and mark out a dissensus (p.195).

The corner of Smith and Stanley Streets is a familiar neighborhood site where I also witness a similar conjunction of right to belong with refusal to belong by the Indigenous locals who, in recent years, have expanded to create another meeting spot on the opposite side. Paintings enable a similar conjured position of the right to belong with refusal to belong. As both process and outcome, painting is deeply related to Country – both are central ways for Indigenous people to know their Ancestral and ancestor named-places and, thus, their own identities. Yet like Country, painting is a complex terrain inclusive of various forms of integration between the local Indigenous knowledge and non-Indigenous knowledge domains most noted through Aboriginal art as an intercultural product. I continue below with literature review concerned with art and Indigenous knowledge system and art as an intercultural product.

Art in culture and as intercultural product

‘What European call art is sacred law that becomes manifested through ceremonial performance…in creating beauty, Yolngu are creating ancestral power’ p.100.

I found it most productive to approach Yolngu art, in the first instance, as a communication system and hence to seek explanation of form in relation to the ways in which meanings are encoded in painting; my main aim is to show how Yolngu art works as a meaning creation system’ p.6

Morphy 1991, p.6

In reviewing relevant literature, it has quickly become apparent that the majority of the discourse about art in Indigenous contexts, refers to ‘Aboriginal Art’ - the inter-cultural product also known as Acrylic painting, Dot painting, and Western Desert art. Its origin can be traced to trade with missions in the 1930s (Morphy, 1991; Myers, 2002), but its formulation as an inter-cultural product began in the 1970s through collaboration between a group of displaced Pintupi, Luritja, Arrernte, Anmatyerre, and Warlpiri men in Papunya - a government-initiated assimilation project, and a hierarchy of governmental and art world representatives. The selection of this particular intercultural art to represent ‘Aboriginal art’ has created a space so rich with contradictions, it can be viewed as a ‘wicked’ social product (Rittel & Webber, 1973). It is a colonial construction, but the paintings do hold rich Indigenous knowledge; it creates a false Authentic Aboriginality which

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10 Myers (2002) explains that Pintupi is not the original name of the clan he works with, but rather a name acquired by Western Desert people of various groups whose paths of travel on Country and kinship ties had brought them into contact with white Australia at Papunya. The same can be assumed for the rest of the group names mentioned here.
damages those living outside the ‘remote zone’, but it encourages others to reconnect with their own traditional designs for both identity and financial ends (Gibson, 2013). Whiteness and resistance operate within this inter-cultural product across a range of dimensions, which has propelled this representation of Aboriginal art into a wide range of social, political and economic institutions and contexts. The Papunya Western Desert painting movement had been celebrated for making visible and valid an Indigenous understanding of the landscape (Perkins, 2000), yet Short (2012) describes the center of the movement, Alice Springs, as a postcolonial paradox of cultural prominence alongside residential marginalisation.

The view of Aboriginal art as an inter-cultural product is far from a simplistic postcolonial articulation of Aboriginal art as a colonial commodification of the spiritual, and ‘Aboriginal art’ is as multifaceted and as problematic as Country. Like Country, there are also lingering stereotypes about Aboriginal Art being the dots and cross hatchings older, ‘real’ Aboriginals do, sitting on the red sands of Central Australia. Art also occupies spiritual, cultural, political, educational and economical spaces but in different ways, or in similar ways but with different weight with regard to Country. This is perhaps because Country holds a different space in the Relational ordering of the Dreamings, or perhaps it is due to the immediate link Country holds to land rights and sovereignty. It might also be because this conception of Aboriginal art is a prescribed and approved form to demonstrate continuity with a traditional culture worthy of “sympathy and state resources” (Povinelli, 2002, p. 33).

Associations between art and identity have been, and are being, constructed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and institutions in complicated ways and for various purposes. A deeper investigation of these pathways and their implications is well beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead I refer to different dimensions of art in Indigenous contexts as relevant in later sections of the thesis. Later in this chapter, I review the growing Indigenous scholarship on the use of art ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically as one pillar of an Indigenous research paradigm, as seen in the works of Karen Martin (2003, 2008), Kathleen Arbon (2008) and others.

In this section, I briefly engage with two artificial divisions of 1) art in Indigenous knowledge systems, and 2) art as an intercultural product. This structural announcement, in similar fashion to the introductory discussion of Country, requires a recognition that the role of art in pre-colonial times cannot be completely understood from a postcolonial (as a conceptual term) position. The impact of colonisation means that distinct lines cannot be drawn between what Graburn (cited in Morphy, 1991) terms ‘inwardly directed arts’ and art as commodity. Morphy (1991) makes the point that since, for the Yolngu people, a consequential relationship exists between things on the inside and on the outside (but not in a coloniser-colonised sense, which I explain further below), both dimensions of the art belong to the same system and understanding them should be interrelated.

The literatures reviewed here discuss, to different degrees, the various dimensions of art in Indigenous contexts as an intercultural product. Earlier work (Morphy, 1991; Myers, 2002) analyses the space of art within the ontology of the Dreaming, although it is localised to ‘remote’ Aboriginal clans in Centre and North of the Australian continent. Consequently, conclusions cannot be drawn from its content about art in the knowledge systems of other Indigenous groups. Art as a signifier of cultural identity maintains its focus on ‘remote’ communities through the art world, anthropological and public attention, and approvals, which then leaves the cultural identity of other Aboriginal groups under-theorised and undervalued (Gibson, 2013). Yet, it is the notion of having to ‘prove one’s Aboriginality’ through art that requires further reproblematisation.
One might be tempted to start by deconstructing the now well-accepted term, Aboriginal art, yet taking an anti-essentialist approach might carry risks of its own “because of the inherent bias and contradiction within the antiessentialism argument” (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p.422). While research pathways might vary, there is the fact of the presence, utilisation and celebration of (the right) Aboriginal art alongside the existence of racism, and the poor wider conditions of the lives of Aboriginal people. This co-existence of sharp extremes suggests that current discourses of art, culture and their intersection with ideas of Aboriginality and race require further interrogation beyond the scope of this thesis. For present purposes, my focus therefore remains on commonalities between art in Indigenous contexts and art therapy - how art works, art talks, and art-making as relational processes are evident (amid differences) in both domains, and how these processes lead to the assertion and formation of personal identity, of cultural identity, and of meanings overall.

**Art in Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

Prior to beginning this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that the following discussion reflects local examples rather than any overarching description and understanding of art in Indigenous knowledge systems as a general category. This recognition enables a decolonised approach to engagement with relevant literature which in turn reinforces diversity among Indigenous knowledge systems.

On some entry-level paintings are maps of Country, depicting its Ancestral Dreaming creations (Myers, 2002). Gibson (2012) explains that the practice and content of painting reflect both sign and source of connection to Country. Body and artifact paintings can be also understood in terms of sacred law that becomes partly manifested through ceremonial performances (Morphy, 1991). However, as Myers (2002) explains, painting ‘is neither myth nor ritual’ (p.45) and, thus, such entry-level cultural translations of Indigenous iconography are problematic. Like others, he argues for the central role of the social organisation of the production and articulation of paintings. One of the clearer manifestations of this social organisation can be seen in the differentiation of ownership rights. The rights to produce, reveal the meanings, and approve or restrict the use of paintings are each held by different men (or women). There is also an overall ownership of paintings by one or several clans, because paintings are part of the ancestral inheritance of clans (Morphy, 1991).

Much like the song cycles, the form of paintings is of knowledge transmitted from one generation to the next, but they are also one of the main ways Indigenous people gain knowledge about the Ancestral past and its creations (Myers, 2002). Morphy (1991) explains that Yolngu art, as a system of communication, is closely related, and therefore helps to reproduce two central systems - the system of restricted knowledge, and the system of clan organisation. ‘Inside’ and ‘outside’ (not in an Indigenous-non-indigenous sense, but rather in much deeper ways that make distinctions between everything) are foundational organising principles of the Yolngu knowledge system, and art enacts as one significant ordering system of these principles. Morphy (1991) explains that Yolngu art “orders knowledge by the way it is encoded, and, as an institution, it orders the way knowledge is acquired” (p.8).

Yolngu and Pintupi art, as an ordering system, is reproduced through its use, and in the context of change. Changes relate to the types of meanings and methods of encoding those, as well as to how art articulates with wider cultural structures through the use of the paintings. This foundational epistemology and methodology has two significant implications here. The first is that, although highly structured, this system provides specific trained individuals with power to
make decisions which change the relationship between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. This means that both the meanings encoded, and the ways these meanings are articulated within the broader sociocultural system, are produced and reproduced by trained individuals. The second implication is that, because art has been a pathway for interaction with the coloniser, it reflects how the Yolngu and the Pintupi reproduce themselves within the changed context of postcolonialism (Morphy, 1991; Myers, 2002).

Utilising sets of paintings made by one family from the Manggalili clan, along with explanations and interpretations provided by the artists, and knowledge gained from the overall time spent with particular other Yolngu clans, Morphy (1991) provides what he calls a template through which meanings and interpretations of Yolngu art takes place. He acknowledges that the template has no validity or even physical form, except as an analyst’s construct. He then provides detailed explanations of related processes which I summarise as follows: chosen individuals first learn the outside meanings of painting. Then, through a gradual process facilitated by a limited set of people with the right authority to instruct on particular sets of paintings, the initiates come to know inside knowledge. New meanings are born through commentary which is taught through verbal communication, dance actions and in the words of songs, and which adds or modifies previous meanings. The result is a productive structure that can be worked on, and that learners can relate to their own experiences.

The template works as an evolving mechanism where meanings are given to different elements on the painting depending on their relative position and form. With time, the initiates learn to recognise structural similarities between paintings of the same set, and then meaning can be applied across the set. However, it is equally important to understand that, in learning how elements of painting fit together in different ways particular to a set of paintings, the learners are also obtaining a possible template from which to generate new representations to enrich the same set. The most important function of the template relates to specific designs that operate as abstract generative structures that all other paintings are derived from, and to which songs, dances and land forms can be referred. The painting below (Figure 13) is the abstract generative structure for a particular set of paintings. In a very similar way to discussion in the above literature about the essence and function of Ancestral beings and their reflections within Country and songs, such designs fit perfectly with the Yolngu ontology and the structure of their representational system. Morphy (1991) explains:

the ideology is that everything stems from ancestral past, that surface forms are generated by underlying forms, that ancestral designs which are a manifestation of the ancestral beings should be able to produce surface forms. The geometric art is inherently multivalent; it both conceals and accumulates meaning. The geometric painting is the inside painting and has logical precedence over all paintings: it is the one that all others can referred back to (p.243).
Art as an Intercultural product

Morphy (1991) explains that Yolngu entered into exchange with Europeans partly for economic returns and partly to communicate about their cultural values. As seen from the above discussion, art has a high internal value, and at the beginning of exchange with Europeans, this value sustained only minor changes. For example, Yolngu men created paintings for trade with missionaries, who brought and became part of a new social and economic landscape and thus were, to some degree, incorporated into the Yolngu kinship classificatory system. These men would deliver the artworks covered to maintain meanings hidden according to traditional ways. Later on, as Yolngu art expanded, it became clear that external trade could not continue to be treated as if it were internal exchanges. Yet, as Morphy (1991) claims:

these changes happened as the result of a process that remained in continuity with the past: for what Yolngu art was once and the properties it had as a system were, with other factors, codeterminants of what it subsequently became (pp. 4-5).

Similarly, Myers (2002), who first arrived at Papunya in 1973, reports the urgency expressed by local Aboriginal people to educate outsiders about the sacred dimension of the paintings. Pintupi people explained to Myers (2002) that the prime importance of the painting is not derived from the quality of execution, and that the paintings are not an abstract art form. Although from a completely different position, these two ideas, about process and meaning of visuals regardless of their shape and form, are fundamental to the process of knowing in art therapy.

The best-known form of Aboriginal art as an intercultural product refers to acrylic paintings by a range of Australian Western Desert groups from Papunya and other communities across Central Australia, the Pilbara and East Kimberly regions of Western Australia. Papunya in the Northern Territory is an assimilation project and colonial outpost initiated by the Australian government’s
welfare branch in the 1950s, although dislocation of various Aboriginal groups into the area began with the establishment of missions and reserves in early 1930’s. In 1971, a group of Pintupi, Luritja, Arrernte, Anmatyerre, and Warlpiri men began transferring traditional designs into acrylic painting on flat surfaces, producing work for sale only as opposed to local use. Megaw (in Myers, 2002) argues that this work cannot be described as traditional since it was initiated through interactions with Geoff Bardon, a local Anglo-Australian art teacher. This argument can be understood as rooted in the anthology of Whiteness - that is, there are assumptions within the argument that the artworks cannot be described as traditional pertaining to the separation of the product from the meaningful content its makers claim, and the coloniser as the decider on the definition and status of traditionalism, or the lack thereof.

Nevertheless, this small-scale activity was initially funded by the federal Aboriginal Art Board, and later, under the leadership of the Aboriginal controlled corporation Papunya Tula Artists, grew to claim its distinct space in the wider Australian and international art worlds. Aboriginal art exhibitions at the New York’s Asia Society in the late 1980’s starring acrylic paintings from Central Australia are repeatedly mentioned in relevant literature as a symbolic moment where art with the idea of Dreaming became entrenched in its marketing and valorisation, and became representative of Aboriginal culture and of Aboriginal identity (Sutton, 1988; Moore & Muecke, 1984; Myers, 2002; Povinelli, 2002; Gibson, 2013). Myers (2002) explains that the dramatically increased attention to representations of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal identity was a result of the political interest of Aboriginal peoples and the economic interest of the Australian state. While problematic for its essentialisation of Aboriginal peoples as free of economic interests, his point is that Aboriginal peoples were and are active agents in the production of art which is as much about politics and identity as it is about art.

Myers (2002) asserts that Aboriginal aspirations of political social and cultural autonomy have emerged over time, but that these forms of self-determination were never conceived in separation from the presence of European goods and services. Therefore, he argues that

Acrylic painting should be reckoned on a continuum of Aboriginal productions of culture that we would ultimately understand as forms of activism within a multicultural context (p.5).

Myers (2002) argues that Aboriginal acrylic painting objectifies political aspirations and identity through an older pre-contact social production process of yurtininpa - making visible. The use of paintings, particularly during ceremonies, was always a central pathway through which to make social identities visible. Therefore, he argues, the commodification of traditional designs into Aboriginal art does not reflect the supposed liberal discourse of Aboriginal people as victims, but rather represents them as politically attuned people who engage the settlers and their colonial state in reciprocal recognition.

However, this claim of conscious and purposeful exchange, risks portraying Desert art as an intercultural product free of power relations, as well as obscuring its complex beneficial and detrimental impacts on Aboriginal persons. Perhaps the most prominent indicator of the subordinate position of Desert or Aboriginal art pertains to the myth of authenticity. Sutton (1998) reveals the far-reaching impact of white dominance when he argues that, if authentic

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11 The political and cultural success of the Papunya Tula Artists Cooperative and subsequent exhibitions holds a political paradox when it is inspected against the overall poor quality of life among Aboriginal people (Myers, 2002; Langton, 2000), and this success is also located within the Australian Culture Wars which lie beyond the scope of this chapter.
means that the only real, true, and proper Aboriginal art is that which is made outside the influence of capitalist markets, Western governments, and the influence of outside art traditions, it is of little relevance to most of what attracts attention to Aboriginal art (p.204).

It can also be argued that the power of white dominance is so entrenched that, decades later, it remains a significant point of condensation. For example, Hoban (2002) argues that, in acrylic Desert art, the cultural identity of the artist is the criterion for its authentication, but the same criterion does not apply to the production of Western art, which in turn naturalises Western art in a dominant position. This focus on the Aboriginality of the painting indicates that “the artwork be legitimated though the Aboriginal culture embedded in the artwork” (p.181), and in this way shifts focus away from the role Western art plays in this construction. In discussing race relations in the NT, Cowlishaw (1999) uses a Foucauldian lens to explain that, in the exercise of white power, specific practices developed as pragmatic responses to the changing circumstances. She speaks of governmental policies for Aboriginal advancement as a program with logic that derived from local responses to particular conditions rather than by a coherent set of ideas. Yet, this description also appears fitting to the development of Western Desert art as an intercultural product. The representation by anthropology and other social studies disciplines of Desert art, Acrylic or Dot painting (each title reflective of its owner’s position with the discourse) as an intercultural product, risks a false sense that power is shared equally among the cultures involved in the enterprise. Yet, a number of key issues - forgery or fraud; discrepancies between the amount of money Aboriginal art fetches in auctions and the poverty of the painters; the infringement of Indigenous cultural rights in the appropriation of paintings; and the keen interest in paying top dollars for early acrylic paintings as a publicity stunt by auction houses to strategically channel sales across domestic and international art markets (Myers, 2002) - appear as gaps and contradictions in such a representation, which as Cowlishaw (1999) states, get “obscured by an enfolding faith in progress” (p.133).

Greer (1997) protests market pressures on artists to produce, and the resulting loss of process, and speaks of Aboriginal painting as a process rather than a product. She also deliberately compares these pressures from the art market to the exploitation of lands, emphasizing the colonial practices in place:

    Our desperate haste to get the visions out of Aborigine heads and into a saleable form could be compared with the way we rip the guts out of the country to overload the market with cheap iron ore (p.4).

The generation of such of gaps and contradictions cannot be regarded as a relic from the past, separated from state actions or representing only ignorant and greedy art dealers. For example, in analysing Alice Springs, the city of Aboriginal art, as a postcolonial paradox of cultural prominence alongside residential marginalisation, Short (2012) argues that

    from its role as a colonial control center the town has become more of a postcolonial collaboration center for indigenous art production and sale; however, the colonial legacy lives on the unequal exchanges (p.142).

But even if we focus on the Myers’ (2002) point about the exchange as a well-known pre-contact Aboriginal practice, through which knowledge is made visible, the differing ontologies as to the fate of the art after the exchange took place, bring a set of new challenges. For example, in her discussion on the complex space Aboriginal art occupies in museums, Gibson (2012) notes that, in spite of being sold, some Aboriginal art carries inviolable connections relating to subject matter, the content, and the cultural authority and knowledge of the artists who created them. The
differing ontologies brought to the exchange, raise challenging questions about appropriation, ownership and associated rights.

Referring to earlier colonial practices, Langton (1996) argues that the radical opposition of brutal assimilation, on one hand, and depicting Aboriginals as ‘fascinating primitives’ through the arts, reflected “the ambiguous need of the older colonists for security and their need for emblems of cultural uniqueness and difference from Europe” (p.15). Later, Povinelli (2002) explores how multiculturalism is used by the state and public to avoid the challenges capital, postcolonialism and human diaspora pose to national identity. Through this lens, she presents Aboriginal art as commercial culture, and traditional cultural forms as uneven cultural fields which attract a range of challenges for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons and their relationships. Briefly, Povinelli (2002) argues that, by the mid 1980’s, Indigenous culture and politics had received public recognition, political legitimacy and an economic base at levels not previously seen in Australian history. Aboriginal art became divided into high and low cultural forms, evident in ‘Good Aboriginal art’ exhibited in international galleries, and ‘Bad Aboriginal art’ sold in tourist market stalls and souvenir shops. Both cultural forms, she claims, have contributed significantly to the national GNP.

In the process, “particular indigenous knowledges were generalized into a natural commercial product, and they contributed to a global resignification of the “indigenous” in relation to social struggle” (p.24). The outcome was ‘Indigenousness’ far removed from actual Indigenous struggles, their social agendas, and from the challenges these struggles, and agendas posed, and still do, to national governmentality and capital. In other words, Povinelli (2002) believes that liberal supporters of Indigenous traditions, commercial art being one, really want those to have survived, at least in part, because such survival fulfills their deeper desire to celebrate a purified traditional order where all traces of bad settlement history have been extracted.

Similarly, Cowlishaw (1999) views art as one of the cultural forms which have received legitimisation by the dominant government and society. She explains that this legitimacy has encouraged bold assertion in some contexts,

but in the main these expressions are symbols at the margins, set aside from the ‘steamroller of progress’ and able to flourish only when they interrupt nothing more important (p.286).

Correspondingly, Moore & Muecke (1984) view multiculturalism as a framework through which the ‘positivisation’ of Aboriginal culture takes place under the ploy of ‘common humanity’. Here, the authors argue, the practice of spotlighting Aboriginal art, dance and languages offers a promised land of social harmony, whilst rejections of extended family forms, aspects of Aboriginal law, ‘undesired social habits’, ‘unhealthy’ environments, and economic independence, among other examples, are safely concealed in the shadows. In effect, they state, multiculturalism “makes for new constructions of Aboriginal culture which should not be uncritically accepted as the result of progress or humanitarian leanings” (p.45).

Furthermore, Povinelli (2002) explains that this calculated desire for the preservation of certain cultural forms has detrimental impacts on many Aboriginal persons’ sense of identity, because it makes it even more difficult for “men and women not to see the failure of cultural identity as their own personal failure rather than as a structure of failure to which they urge to identify” (p.54). She argues that Liberal multiculturalism requires that the subaltern be ‘inspected, examined, and investigated’, but “this inspection always already constitutes indigenous persons as failures of indigeneity as” (p. 39). This is because the logic of recognition forces the subaltern to account for themselves in way that suits the national imaginary. Similarly, Moore & Muecke (1984) discuss
the production of conceptions which, instead of delineating the specific characteristics of a given group in a specific situation,

construct Aborigines and their lifestyle as unitary in relation to some essential (and unknown) principle such as the ‘spirituality of the dreaming’ or ‘closeness to nature’ which ultimately engenders all action (p.41).

Gibson (2008, 2008a, 2011, 2012) discusses a similar sense of identity and culture loss among Aboriginal residents of Wilcannia, a country town in NSW. She argues that the Papunya art movement through ‘traditional artists’, curators, exhibitions, art dealers and many anthropological texts, has centred the Dreaming “as a settler culture authenticator of ‘real’, ‘traditional’ Aboriginal culture” (p.124).

This notion has been internalised by Aboriginal persons in places like Wilcannia, where many residents hierarchise their identities - they wish to learn from ‘real tribal people’, but they believe that they can teach urban Aboriginals who are taken to be more deprived of connection to authentic identity. Yet this constructed essentialisation of Aboriginal cultures and thus identity has also led to beneficial consequences for some Aboriginal persons outside the ‘Desert art zone’. Gibson (2011) describes how a well-known Elder and artist from Central Australia referred to the loss of culture by many Aboriginal persons elsewhere in the continent. In spite of the need for critical care in evaluating such views, they remain intimately connected to the interpretation and production of art as an intercultural product in Wilcannia. Barkindji artists, whom Gibson (2008a, 2011) identifies as ‘cultural brokers’, educate other Barkindji and the wider public about lines as visual markers of their unique identity. In the welfare economy of Wilcannia, their advice, for example, to paint freshwater turtles rendered with lines, acts to identify, consolidates and preserves Barkindji Dreaming as much as it also represents a wise economic move. Similarly, Taylor (2012) explains that, for the Kuninjku people, the market for bark painting provides an important source of income, and equally important, a ‘new’ expression of identity “in order that the aesthetic force of their paintings ‘opens’ balanda viewers to a new way of seeing the world which has Ancestral presence at its center” (p.34).

In related work with Barkindji artists, Gibson (2012) further discusses the role museums play as contemporary pathways for the enactment of Aboriginal identity. Such enactments conjure beliefs about Ancestral Dreamings and Relationality which include the museum as a gathering place for enactments of identities. Rather than a form of displacement, “the museum is itself inhabited and made across and through layers and modes of belonging” (p.218). The artworks are imbued with the life force of their creators, and in this way make connections between past, present and future. The artworks act as sort of indices of the person as part of a network and variety of relations, and their viewing by Aboriginal people in museums makes up this contemporary experience of Aboriginal place and identity-making, and “space is privately claimed and discursively claimed; these claims are at times acts of resistance” (Gibson, 2012 p.215).

Similar processes are witnessed in the co-construction of three murals by Aboriginal artists, a teacher-student cohort and researchers on the grounds of Sydney University (Harrison & McLean, 2017). The authors here explain that Aboriginal art cannot be understood on the basis of visual and social scientific reading alone. Rather, artworks perform the work of connection vital to construction of identity because of their affective and experiential aspects.

The exhibition in 2000 Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius – a collaboration between the Art Gallery of NSW and Papunya Tula Artists cooperative - provides another example of the complexity entailed in the display of Aboriginal art in national galleries and how this is received by other Indigenous people. For example, Myers (2002) argues that the curation of the show by well-
known Hetti Perkins, whom he introduces as an urban cultural activist with little knowledge or contact with remote Aboriginal people, represents ‘another kind of reversal of the historical separation of more remote, traditional people from their bicultural, urban dwelling indigenous compatriots’ (p.343). In a related radio interview (2000, in Myers, 2002), Perkins highlights the significance of the Papunya Desert painting movement in making visible and valid (through valorisation) ‘an indigenous understanding of the landscape’. Along with her statement that “The Papunya Tula movement allowed Aboriginal Australia to reclaim the continental interior” (in Myers, 2002, p.343), she treats this art as both a collective and location-specific representation of Aboriginal people.

In the same interview, Marcia Langton also discusses this multiple-edged sword when she explains that endless debates about authenticity of Aboriginal art reflect an excess of appropriation which involves both policing of Whiteness and trivialisation of Indigenous culture. Critically, she insists that

if you stand in front of some of these paintings, it is surely not possible to walk out of the gallery with the low level apprehension of Aboriginal art that is now circulating in Australia popular media. It is surely not possible (in Myers, 2002, p. 340).

The literature so far suggests that identity is reproduced, reconstructed and represented through art as an interactive process with and through people and things. There is thus a significant body of literature about Aboriginal art and the Aboriginality born from the intersection of art with race, culture and politics. Myers (2002) explains that advocation of Dot acrylic painting as fine art implies that “no special pleading is needed for Aboriginal art” (p.338). That is, that Aboriginal art is art in a modernist sense. However, he argues that Indigenous peoples from Central Australia reject this position because, for them, designs are inalienable dimensions of a specific Aboriginal identity. Myers (2002) thus argues that although “special pleading for an ethnic category of art may fly in the face of theories that emphasize the formal features of art” (p. 338), where the artist’s identity carries no weight, the Indigenous people of Central Australia do give the artist’s identity great weight, and this carries past the point of sale because knowledge is not free and the painting is a visual representation of personal and clan knowledge.

The categorisation of Aboriginal art raises questions such as where will such a category leave art by Indigenous artists? Furthermore, would the apparent benefits outweigh or disguise such a category as another mechanism of Whiteness? For all its strengths and detriments, Aboriginal art is, for many Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons in Australia and overseas, an expression and demonstration of Indigenous cultures. I use the plural ‘cultures’ here not simply to acknowledge the diversity of first nations, but to indicate developments within art as an intercultural product in various contexts outside the ‘Desert art’ of individuals and groups who assert their signifying cultural identities within dominant institutions including art markets (Gibson, 2008a, 2011, Taylor, 2012), museums (Gibson, 2012) and galleries (Myers, 2002), universities (Harrison & McLean, 2017), Aboriginal controlled health services and street art (Fredericks (2013), and Indigenous Controlled Art Corporations (for example, the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne). Whether Aboriginal art is an art category, such developments indicate multiple notions of art created by Indigenous peoples which are constantly forming and reforming. To extend Gibson’s (2012) identification of museums as spaces of reclaiming identity and resistance, these developments within the existing notion of Aboriginal art can be seen as nonphysical spaces from which acts of resistance take place.

To summarise, the discussion above has shown that, while there is significant scholarship about art in Indigenous cultures, the content generally sits within two categories. The first is
The sis: Artful Mob

anthropological and, although rich knowledge can be found about visual designs and their varied meanings and usage, these are earlier publications whose focus is on ‘remote’ specific groups. In the second category, discourses center on the inseparable links of art to culture, race, identity and politics in contemporary Australian race relations, although, with minor exceptions, art is discussed as just one of the pathways through which these larger notions are discussed. The essence of the criticism Povinelli (2002) assigns to Liberal multiculturalism, seems fitting to Aboriginal Art. This is because the term Aboriginal art, which due to many complex factors has become synonymous with Desert acrylic paintings, and the discourse about it, clearly demonstrate the paradox of the desire to both recognise otherness and to subject that otherness to a critical scrutiny. More research is required to further clarify the term Aboriginal art and explore the use and meaning of visual expression across other Indigenous groups in Australia. Such research can promote a more heterogenic knowledge of Indigenous groups and their use of art-making processes in ways that might radicalise the current tendency to generalise primarily from Desert Art. Regardless, art, art viewing and art-making are presented as significant expressions and demonstrations of Indigenous cultures and social identities. Indigenous voices within the relevant literature regularly present art as a tangible and accessible expression of particular forms of Aboriginality, whether for others from the same group, other Aboriginals or wider domestic and international societies.

Before moving to the next section in this review, it is worth noting characteristics that Indigenous art possesses which seem to overlap with art therapy. For example, the ontology of dwelling (Ingold 2000) shares key commonalities with art therapy. Indwelling, for example, is a common tool in art therapy, which consists of focused gazing with the purpose of allowing deeper levels of engagement with the artwork (Douglas & Moustakas, 1995). It is a significant way to engage with the artwork in order to find a view of the self within it. This similarity sits within the overall commonality between Indigenous Knowledge Systems and art therapy as pertaining to the Relational. Another example pertains to Langton’s (Myers, 2002, p. 340) vital point that meanings from artworks do not magically appear, but require the work of scholarship, research and attention. Although in a different way, analogous processes through which the meaning is gathered through interactions between the artist, art therapists and group members are fundamental to the practice of art therapy - one can therefore never tell what images mean by mere viewing. Overall, a number of common factors - including: the importance of the process; the complex imbedded meanings which can only become apparent through conversations; and the notion of making relationships visible in order to produce social relations and connections to places and knowledge systems - are all evident, amid context-dependent variations, within the practice of art therapy. The overarching thread of commonality of art in Indigenous cultures and art therapy practice is that

art and culture and their importance become relational. That is, art and culture and how these categories are constructed and perceived are about relationships: relationships between people and relationships between people and things (Gibson, 2008a, p.295).

The rest of this review concerns other significant themes in contemporary Australian Indigenous scholarship and include: the Cultural Interface; Whiteness and sovereignty; representations of identities; and visual theoretical conceptions of Indigenous paradigms. As in the preceding discussion of concepts such as Country and Aboriginal art, the discussion to follow aims to explore these conceptions in relation to decolonised research and in order to explore further similarities between the two knowledge domains which can then critically inform all phases of the research.
Indigenous Standpoints Theory – a brief overview

The term ‘standpoint’ often appears in the literature in a singular form. Here I deliberately use the plural form in order to reinforce the notion of diversity of standpoints. In this section, I will briefly introduce the various streams of Indigenous Standpoints Theory within Indigenous scholarship – outlining their development and influence - before continuing to explore the key framing concept for the Artful Mob research project: the Cultural Interface. Standpoints theory has been developed along different pathways by several prominent Indigenous scholars and their followers. Moreton-Robinson, a Geonpul scholar, in her now well-known response to Bell & Nelson’s 1989 article ‘Speaking about race is everybody’s business’, removes the focus from who has the right to speak and places it onto the relations of power associated with speaking. Thus, an analysis of privileges and power can enhance understanding of the various forms through which the state of being different is experienced. Nakata (2007) demonstrates how Western scientific methods empower hegemonic racist descriptions of Torres Strait Islanders, while Rigney (2001) focuses on the development of Indigenist research methodology as a strategy for Indigenous research which includes the principles of resistance, political integrity and the privileges of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Many Indigenous scholars draw on Feminist Standpoint Theory (FSP) as a framework for the development of Indigenous Standpoints theory (ISP) (Nakata, 2007; Rigney, 2001; Minniecon et al., 2007). Ardill (2013) situates the development of ISP within FSP and argues that the objective of FSP is more a political strategy, aiming at achieving social transformations, rather than an epistemology. He explains that this idea was taken up by Indigenous scholars because it enables an investigation into sovereignty in terms of power, which in turn leads to critically examining how research contributes to the reinforcement of crown sovereignty, as well as rethinking more ethically accountable ways towards Indigenous people within research contexts.

As I will discuss further below, for Nakata (2007), IST provides a method to critically assess the construction of colonial knowledge about Indigenous peoples. Minniecon et al. (2007) bring together IST and the Cultural Interface in order to examine the possibility of prioritising Indigenous voices and epistemologies. Recognition of Whiteness, as will be discussed later, is foundational to this process. Rigney (2001) and Martin (2008) view IST as enabling a paradigm shift rather than falling into the trap of applying a Western method which subordinates Indigenous knowledge.

Minniecon et al. (2007) stress that the diversity found in Western standpoints is also present in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders standpoints, which leads to the wicked question of: whose standpoint? Ardill (2013) explains that, because Standpoint theory is concerned with the commonality of experiences shared by a group, the question of whose standpoint becomes one of power rather than identity. Furthermore, because the roles of oppressed and oppressor can take on many forms in contemporary societies, and both can be played out by the same person depending on the varying structural contexts, what is important is the relation of those structural powers involved, rather than the identity of those involved. While I recognise the importance of examining relationships to structural powers, Ardill (2013) seems to suggest another binary between individual and community standpoints. In the review of art therapy within this chapter, I will discuss further the tension between the individual and collective domains, and in the Knowledge Synthesis Chapter I discuss how the Artful Mob research project has produced a different experience in that participants have expressed both individual and collective standpoints.
For Rigney (2001), the overall rise of Indigenist scholarship in Australia is another form of epistemological theorising in social science much like feminism, postcolonialism and postmodernism. He argues that this theorising enables the ‘undisciplining of the disciplines in science’ (p.7), which means that space is created for Indigenist scholarship as well as to multi-methodological qualitative research which recognises ‘the ‘crisis of representation’ (p.8). Rigney (2001) concurs with Nakata (1998) that Indigenist theory is vital in order to achieve the goals of Indigenous political sovereignty, and that such theory must avoid hegemonic generalisations. It is important to engage with critiques of standpoint theory such as Nakata’s (1998, 2007, 2007b) central concept of the Cultural Interface, constitutive of this notion of diversity, to which I now turn.

The Cultural Interface

Nakata (1998, 2007, 2007b) is a prominent Torres Strait Islander scholar known for his significant contributions to the development of ISP. In his influential book, Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines (2007), Nakata argues that colonial texts are useful in teaching ISP theory as it provides opportunity to rediscover methods of knowledge production and the legitimacy of one knowledge over others. He further argues that contemporary theories of Islanders are both culturally different, yet equally useful to explain the Islanders’ positions, because these both capture worlds and allow links with the past, while insisting on equality in the present. The main point Nakata (2007) communicates here is that the Islanders have not changed from inferior to equal or from savage to culturally different. Rather, “the thinking around them has constituted them to cohere with the evolution of change in a Western order of things” (p.196).

Nakata (2007) believes in the possibilities of change through the development of a theoretical framework which helps Indigenous peoples understand their constitution within the broader society, as well as the complexity of social and discursive relations that impact on the positions of Indigenous peoples. ISP must account for both the complex political and social terrains that are the result of generations-long interactions with the colonisers, as well as the Islanders’ own analysis of their experiences within this history. ISP thus entails dual efforts to maintain tradition, as well as theorising development and adaptation in light of colonialism. Nakata (2007) summarises the three critical interests associated with ISP, which include: ongoing continuity with pre-colonial lives and traditions; equal status to other Australians; and determination and management of possible futures.

Nakata (2007) coined the term The Cultural Interface to describe these complex political and social terrains within which Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) peoples are positioned. He describes it as a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people with different histories, experiences, languages, agendas, aspirations and responses... it is also a space that bounds with contradictions, ambiguities, conflict and condensation of meaning that emerges from these various shifting intersections (p.129).

He uses Foucault’s notions of continuity and discontinuity as a framework to better understand the connections between traditional practices of past and present. Social organisations, and economic and religious aspects of culture have been discontinued as a result of colonisation, yet there is also continuity with the former selves, histories and narratives of who and what the Islanders are. He argues that people construct and reconstruct their stories, if necessary, into different forms and practices. Nakata (1998, 2007) also argues that looking at cultural preservation in terms of continuity and discontinuity can free Islanders from proving the evidence...
of past/tradition in the present and instead focus on the process of maintaining continuity with
the past along with a constant view to the future. He emphasises the importance of theorising
the significance of everyday experiences for the interface, in order for the positions of the
Islanders to be understood.

Lastly, Nakata (2007, 2007b) warns against over-idealising the level of agency the Islanders hold
at the interface and suggests that restrictions of various sorts impact the constitutive and
derivative ways in which the Islanders make sense of their positions. This means that the
important goal is not to simply understand experiences from the Islanders’ standpoints, but also
to “the politics of those relations by including the conflicts, the contradictions, the incoherence
of contesting positions as people make sense of their existence” (p.209). This political aspect
resonates with many other Indigenous scholars (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, 2007; Andersen, 2009;
Rigney, 2001; Martin, 2008; Paradies, 2006) and, while views vary on who can speak, the goal
remains exposing how and why there are different ‘realities’ constructed for the collective of
Indigenous peoples, compared with the rest of the society as well as individuals within the
collective.

Nakata uses Foucault’s notions of continuity and discontinuity as a framework to better
understand the connections between traditional practices of past and present and enable a more
integrated position from which Indigenous peoples can navigate their identities and born
practices in daily lives - a position which accepts both continuity and discontinuity of traditional
ways of knowing-being-doing. The navigation of identities in such a way utilises the construction
and reconstruction of stories into different forms and practices. It is this insight which the Artful
Mob project uses to frame the use of visual methods. Visual expression is offered here as one
possible alternative form and one which can be viewed as both old and new. As a practice of
maintaining continuity, visual expression enables the ongoing transformations of identities. In
other words, visual expression compliments the complex, multidimensional identities of
Indigenous people, allowing both the distinctive characteristics, as well as broader social roles
such as citizen, worker, woman, students and so on, to emerge.

Nakata (2007) stresses the importance of telling stories, not just as examples of a diversity of lived
experiences, but rather as forms in which Islanders are active agents who analyse and interpret
change as it manifests in their lives. Significantly, Nakata (2007) cautions about the need to
regularly ensure this process is not governed by the colonisers. This vital point of self-
management links to Moreton-Robinson’s concept of ‘White possessive logic’ which I will discuss
in the following section. Yet, as the following discussion about Moreton-Robinson’s processes of
Whiteness reveals, it is a challenging process that requires regular critical reflections in order to
expose and minimise the (theoretical and practical) places where experiences are understood
from an overarching White logic, instead incorporating the Islanders’ “explanation of one’s
position in the more complicated web of the interface” (Nakata, 2007, 2010).

**Whiteness & Sovereignty**

Whiteness and Sovereignty are inseparable terms across the Indigenous critical literature and
discussions are inevitably bound to Australian politics. In the following subsection, the discussion
will introduce ‘White possessive logic’ as a central tool from which to examine these interrelated
concepts of Whiteness and sovereignty including examples of Indigenous resistance to some of
its manifestations. Moreton-Robinson (2004) argues that White possessive logic is the central
conceptual tool which white sovereignty uses in order to maintain its superior position. Using
Foucault’s recognition of the importance of differentiation to the process of knowledge
production, Moreton-Robinson (2004) unpacks how race has been used for knowledge production about modernity, turning it into some kind of a reassuring indicator that White ways of knowing, being and doing are the most ‘true’ or most ‘reliable’, often under sophisticated disguises such as claims about the universalisation of humanity. In a similar fashion to Bhabha (2004), Moreton-Robinson (2004) explains that, within this claim for the universalisation of humanity, processes of othering continue to position the Indigenous other in the liminal/animal space and, thus, s/he is never one or the other.

Moreton-Robinson (2004) explains that engagement with the concept of White possessive logic requires intellectual analysis and exposure of Whiteness in texts in order to disrupt its claim for normativity. Australian Indigenous scholarship is evidence of such an engagement. For example, Birch (2003), a Koori scholar, discusses how the refusal of the white Grampians community to endorse name changes to reflect Aboriginal connection to place, represents white dominance - yet one which meets with resistance by Indigenous people who continue the practice of placenameing. Similarly, Bayet-Charlton (2003), a Bundjalung scholar, demonstrates how the concept of wilderness divides the black and green political alliance, since it embeds the idea that such land is people-free, disregarding the nature of relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land. For Bayet-Charlton (2003), resistance appears in the argument that Indigenous people are capable of assigning new meanings to inherited cultural forms which remain expressive of both living traditions and changing conditions.

In discussing Whiteness in literature, Trees & Mudrooroo (1993) argues that postcolonial literature operates to eat up Indigenous writings, ‘digest them, and shit them out as turds of colonial bullshit’ (p.1). Thus, the postcolonial problem is so deeply embedded in language, academic and colonial processes that “even if you deny the postcolonial beast, your discourse still continues to feed its voracious appetite” (p.2). On the other hand, Bell (2003), a Jagera/Dulingbara scholar, and Kurtzer (2003), a Kokatha/Mirning scholar, both examine the paradox embedded in the use of English by Indigenous writers. Whiteness works here to require that Indigenous writers conform to a style of writing that will be understood by a white audience. This, the authors argue, can be useful to our expansion of Indigenous authenticity to include conformity to the white regime as a form of resistance in itself. That is, as suggested by Bhabha (2004), the stereotype created by the colonised about the coloniser can in fact be used by the colonised as a resistance tool. As Bhabha (2004), the noted example pertains to mastery over the English Language, so too here the authors suggest the use of English by Indigenous writers operates as resistance.

Moreton-Robinson (2004) stresses that, as long as academia continues to place representations of Aboriginality in the center, Indigenous persons are prevented from critical engagement with Whiteness, including that which appears in the everyday and is not specifically Aboriginalist in nature. She argues this outcome, which distracts Indigenous academia from critical engagement with Whiteness through pushing the topic of indigenous representations of identity to the foreground, requires academia “to accept that the dominant regime of knowledge is culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial” (2004 p. 88). Andersen (2009) calls on Indigenous scholars to master their understanding of concepts such as ethnicity, race, nation and postmodernism because these represent part of the diversity which makes up contemporary Indigeneity: ignoring reproblematisation of such concepts reinforces the power of Whiteness. Andersen (2009) criticises academic calls (Champagnes, 2007) to separate Indigenous Studies from academia, despite benefits associated with the pursuit of distinctive agency of Indigenous peoples. This is because positions which separate Indigenous peoples from society risk marginalising Indigenous knowledge of Whiteness. That is, this separation creates a form of
intellectual boundary which limits Indigenous academia’s access to the structures and mechanisms of Whiteness. Such a separation also masks the extent to which white academic power shapes knowledge production through Indigenous Studies. To claim the perceived ‘need’ to create separate area of Indigenous Studies in order to increase Indigenous agency (despite the truth it holds) deflects attention from the power of White academia to make such a decision in the first instance, as well as the powers it affords the dominating culture in gatekeeping the production of knowledge.

Similarly, Judd (2014) calls for continued questioning of the ability of Indigenous Studies to know and then represent Indigenous peoples and their perspectives within academia. Following Spivak’s reflections on the colonial construction of the informant native, Judd (2014) argues that his status as both an academic and an Indigenous man situates him as “a contemporary representation of ‘native otherness’” (p.154). He argues that the future of the discipline lies in recognising the concept of a native informant as a hybrid of traditional and modern spaces, where stereotypes and differences hold no meanings. In other words, Indigenous scholars are viewed or expected to act as modern-day informants, who tell all the non-Indigenous what and how things are from some form of an imagined homogenising view of Indigenous peoples and Indigeneity. To avoid this diminishing view, compounded by its historic connotation, Judd (2014) mobilises a concept similar to Nakata’s (2007) notion of continuity and discontinuity: he suggests altering the way we view the concept of the native informant, invoking a mixed field of traditional and contemporary spaces free of the debilitating impact of stereotypes. Judd (2014) views the claim for expertise by the discipline and its scholars of Indigeneity as expressing characteristics that we have come to associate with colonial power. Rigney (2001) uses the term ‘journey of academic contradiction’ to capture what he views as an inherent contradiction within social science: on the one hand, social science has played and continues to play a significant role in the oppression of Indigenous people; on the other, it possesses a power to contribute to decolonisation. He believes that, without this contradiction, “emancipation from neo-colonial discourse falls victim to ongoing epistemic and cultural hegemony” (p.8). Several non-Indigenous scholars also follow this call to name Whiteness, advocate for sovereignty and recognise the colonial privileges and limitations of their voices and works (Ardill, 2013; Puch-Bouwman, 2014; Lampert, 2003, Knowal, 2015).

The most significant ways in which Whiteness is exercised, relate to programmes and policies and their embedded concepts of self-determination and land rights in order to make Indigenous sovereignty invisible (Rigney, 2001; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Trees & Mudrooroo, 1993; Watson, 2007). That is, the political discourse pertaining to Indigenous people, and the structures and constitutions of various laws pertaining to Indigenous people, are powerful ways through which White possessive logic operates to maintain the dominating powers of Whiteness. For example, Trees & Mudrooroo (1993) view the Government policies of self-determination as hollow, ‘postcolonial rhetoric’ (p.2) because these policies target education and employment rather than go through ‘a negotiated process of political decolonisation’. Similarly, Watson (2007), a Tanganekald and Meintangk scholar, argues that lack of recognition continues to expose Indigenous peoples “to the genocidal policies of the various states in which they “(p.24). She argues, like Povinelli (2002), that the Land Rights and Native Title Acts function as cunning recognition, incapable of providing a real home for the sovereign Aboriginal subject because, as she rhetorically asks, “Who is the native subject, and what is its status, outside native title recognition? The untitled native? The “unsettled native,” left to unsettle the settled spaces of empire?” (p.36). In other words, the decision to ‘recognise’ Native title for selected Indigenous peoples excludes many Indigenous people from Native Title entitlement. Furthermore, Watson
(2009) argues that, because there is no legitimate Aboriginal sovereignty, “the presence of the unsettled native is itself challenging the fiction of lawful foundation” (p.36) which, in turn, sees Aboriginal resistance being articulated in illegitimate spaces such as prisons, mental institutions, and the parklands of the state. Similarly, Moreton-Robinson (2007) states that “the protocol of recognising Indigenous ‘traditional lands’ is simultaneously a reminder and a denial of the existence of Indigenous sovereignty” (p.98).

Modern political campaigns for sovereignty had emerged by the late 1920s and gathered momentum during the Aboriginal resistance movements of the 1960s, yet some scholars argue that Indigenous understanding of their own sovereignty predates colonialism (Burgmann, 2003; Foley, 2011; Birch, 2007). Moreton-Robinson (2007) defines Indigenous sovereignty as embodied, ontological and epistemological. It is grounded in “complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land” (p.2). Here, she distinguishes between Indigenous and Western perceptions of sovereignty, where the former is embodied, whilst the latter is externally situated in the idea of social contract model. Similarly, Watson (2007) sees Indigenous Sovereignty as different to State Sovereignty because the former focuses on inclusivity. Brady (2003), a Wiradjuri scholar, discusses the lived experience of two states of sovereignty: one of living in Australia – a country which regards itself as a sovereign state; the second is as a ‘functioning sovereign Indigenous being’ (p.140). Indigenous sovereignty is discussed in the literature in such multiple, often blurred, forms, including intellectual (Rigney, 2001), legal (Watson, 2007) and political systems of sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2007).

Hage (2003), a non-Indigenous scholar, uses the term paranoid nationalism to argue that, for Indigenous peoples, Western sovereignty represents power, imperialism and the unrelenting exercise of colonialism. He further explains that there are two sovereignties of unequal power, from which Indigenous sovereignty derives its will of resistance. Brady (2007) agrees with the notion of two unequal sovereignties; but believes that the inequality of strength is connected to the identification of each Indigenous individual with his/her Country – “our understanding of ourselves as sovereign communal being is what drives this will” (p.149). Watson (2007) challenges the proposal by Greer (2003) that repositioning the Australian State as an Aboriginal one is one way to solve the ‘Aboriginal question’. She questions whether this proposition reflects appropriation of Indigenous history and identity as ‘a site of white occupation’ (p.19), which she identifies as part of a long discussion on who can speak and the prioritisation of the white ‘commentator-expert’. Indeed, most of the Indigenous scholarship in this review engages in writing/talking back to center and reclaiming the diversity of Indigenous voices as the ones to speak and be heard (Dodson, 2003; Martin, 2008; Huggins, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Brady, 2007; Nakata, 2003; Rigney, 2001; Bell, 2003; Morrissey; 2003).

Moreton-Robinson (2007, p.4) groups various land rights regimes, as well as The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and its associated failings, with Self-Determination, Traditional Land and other similar concepts as expressions of the ‘possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2007, p.4). For example, Watson (2003) argues that attributing the failings of ATSIC to Indigenous peoples is but a neo-colonial process aimed at reinforcement of the legitimacy of the coloniser, because its whole structure is based on Western colonial concepts of hierarchy and patriarchy. Similarly, Moreton-Robinson (2007) and Morrissey (2003) argue that the dismantling of ATSIC was due to a shift of policy to Indigenous rights advocacy which was different to Howard’s ideas about reconciliation. The management of ATSIC by two bigger mainstream departments allowed the Howard government to charge ATSIC with delivery failure across policies which are governed by these two departments.
This silencing of advocacy for Indigenous sovereignty operates through other aspects of the nation such as the regulation of security, economy, immigrants and refugees (Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Watson, 2007; Brady, 2007). For example, Nicoll (2004) argues that the government’s security discourses to justify alliances with England and the USA, represent how “by establishing a proprietary relationship to virtue, white people steal this capacity from Indigenous people” (p.381). That is, the whole political discourse to justify investments in security through alliances with dominant Western countries demonstrates the ‘proof’ of white sovereignty through landownership. Thorough deconstruction of Howard’s speeches, Moreton-Robinson (2007) argues that these alliances represent John Howard’s, Prime Minister of Australia from 1996-2007, refusal to recognise Indigenous sovereignty “which operates discursively to placate anxiety about dispossession” (p.91). Similarly, for Watson (2007), Indigenous sovereignty poses a threat to the assumed rights to territories, which results in Indigenous peoples becoming the ‘internal enemy’. Brady (2007) argues that some Indigenous peoples, in particular communities identified as eligible for funding, have to give up certain benefits or rights to land in order to obtain access to fundamental resources. The best-known example is of communities in the Northern Territory forced to live under the government’s Intervention policy - a strategic manipulation of some allegations of child sexual abuse in order to implement wide range of oppressing policies which Judd (2017) argues position Aboriginal men as internal aliens, and include the forced leasing of lands in exchange for basic infrastructure and council services (Hinkson, 2007; Partridge, 2013).

Furthermore, like Watson (2007), Moreton-Robinson (2007) also refers to the issue of immigrants and refugees as a tool in the reinforcement of the White patriarchal sovereignty but links it to history. Thus, the assertion of sovereignty via the perception of ‘illegal immigration’ and other slogans which reinstate white patriarchy as the decider of who enters the country, are again symptoms of anxiety about dispossession. These, she argues, are situated in a future and past and connected directly to the unsolved issue of Indigenous sovereignty, which in turn continues to “physically disturb patriarchal white sovereignty and shape the possessiveness of its foreign policy” (p.93).

To summarise here, relevant Indigenous Australian scholarship discusses the concept of White possessive logic and its centrality as conceptual tool which white sovereignty uses in order to maintain Indigenous scholarship in an inferior position. Indigenous scholarship calls for intellectual analysis and exposure of Whiteness in texts in order to disrupt its claim for normativity. Furthermore, academia is required to shift its focus from Indigenous representations of identity, in order to make space for Indigenous scholars to access and demonstrate their mastery of Whiteness, through a critical engagement with the validity and purpose of Indigenous Studies as a separate discipline in academia. This section has also highlighted discussion by Indigenous scholars of some of the ways Whiteness is exercised – in particular through programmes and policies and their embedded concepts of self-determination and land rights, but also through aspects of the nation that superficially appear unrelated to Indigenous policy, including regulation of security, economy, immigrants and refugees. Lastly, this section has explored notions of Indigenous sovereignty in contrast to forms of sovereignty associated with Whiteness.

These insights serve to inform and frame various aspects of the Artful Mob research project. Engagement with the concept of White possessive logic develops our understanding of the complexities involved in Indigenous and Non-Indigenous relations, both overall and with specific reference to how research in Indigenous context ought to be considered in light of the presence of White possessive logic. It has encouraged me to name Whiteness at different phases of the research process, and to recognise the colonial privileges and limitations of my voice and work.
The call of Moreton-Robinson (2004) for a shift of focus from Indigenous representations of identity in order to make space for Indigenous scholars to access and demonstrate mastery of Whiteness, has proved more complicated when reflected upon in relation to the Artful Mob project. On one hand, the research project has the representation of indigenous identities at its forefront, which appears to go against Moreton-Robinson’s observation. However, the visual creative process has enabled (as I will show in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter) participants to access and name Whiteness through both the content of the artworks and discussion of the impact of structural forces such as the day and time of engagement with the creative process. In other words, the centrality of Indigenous representations of identities did not distract from ongoing critical examinations of the places where Whiteness could be named, and creative strategies formed to minimise its impact on Indigenous agency, whilst recognising the inevitability of it in research facilitated within Western institutions. Moreton-Robinson’s (2007) notion of Indigenous sovereignty as embodied, ontological and epistemological is useful in assuming such notions about the participants. While conscious awareness of the absence of territorial forms of sovereignty remains, an understanding and acceptance of embodied Indigenous sovereignty enhances the facilitation of a decolonised research process; and expands the diversity through which Indigenous participants express their sovereignty as non-separated part of their identities, which is the focus of the following sub-section.

**Indigeneity: Representations of Identities**

In this subsection, I briefly review literature pertaining to definitions of Indigenous identities, related challenges, and the link between definitions and sovereignty. This review highlights debates around the notion of multiple identities of Indigeneity and concludes with representations of Indigenous identities in relation to the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous in past and modern times. A fully elaborated discussion of these dimensions of Indigeneity is beyond the scope of this thesis, but their brief outline is useful in explaining research elements of the Artful Mob project.

Dudgeon et al. (2010) explain that the commonly-accepted definition pertains to an Indigenous person who “is a descendant of an Indigenous inhabitant of Australia, who identifies as an Aboriginal person, and who is recognised as Aboriginal by members of the community where they live” (p.34). In light of understanding race as a social construct which for centuries employed biology falsely to justify white dominance, McMillan & McRae (2015) make the critical point that the descent element of this legal definition demonstrates Australia has not completely demoted the notion of ‘race’ from a conception of Indigeneity. Some definitions of Aboriginality can succeed because they establish helpful categories for bureaucracies, but also because they can provide Indigenous persons perceived meanings to their notion of Indigeneity. However social, cultural, economic and political diversity necessarily makes for plural definitions, which are then devised and redevised by Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers - hence the UN’s conclusion that there can be no closed definition of Indigenous peoples (Dodson, 2003).

Who we are and how we represent ourselves are core existential questions. Yet, for Indigenous people, the absence of lawful Indigenous sovereignty makes the ongoing production of definitions critical for survival. Furthermore, validating claims to Aboriginality is difficult to police as the authority of Aboriginal nations to determine who belongs and who does not is not recongised by the Settler-Colonial state in Australia. In addition to the importance of Country and culture to
representations of indigeneity, race is another important domain in discourses pertaining to Indigenous identities. While a comprehensive review of race is outside the parameters of this review, the literature suggests that the use of race must be critically examined so that the non-Indigenous in particular do not fall into the trap of essentialism, or worse engage in epistemic violence (Moreton-Robinson, 2011). Rather than a question of who can speak, we might ask how it can be possible for a non-Indigenous academic to know Indigenous peoples and issues in order to partake in related representations. Dodson (2003) states that identity must be a self-identity and one which carries no imposed definitions, and

must include the right to inherit the collective identity of one’s people, and to transform that identity creatively according to the self-defined aspirations of one’s people and one’s own generation (p.31)

and according to the inspirations of one’s community as well as one’s own generation. For him, Indigenous peoples face the dual task of understanding the purpose behind historical constructions of Aboriginality and engaging in efforts to get rid of hegemonic practices over their own representations.

Morrissey (2003), a Murri scholar, argues that the government’s dismantling of The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (1990–2005), had led unintentionally to the restoration of equality among Indigenous people because no Indigenous voice is now being prioritised. He sees the failings of ATSIC as an opportunity for Indigenous people to rethink notions of identity. Here, Morrissey (2003) reflects a position which sees definitions of Indigeneity as necessarily taking place within spaces of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous, which in turn extends back again to the formation of definitions across Indigenous people and groups (which I do not suggest is always negative, as in the above example). Huggins (2003), a Bidjara/Birri-Gubba Juru scholar, declares her dislike of any non-Indigenous definition of what Indigenous is. She further rejects the notion that Aboriginality is fluid or in a constant process of becoming. Rather, she proclaims, “If the truth be known, fluidity is nothing less than a cop-out and a sell-out of Aboriginal heritage, values, and identity” (p.63).

Paradies (2006), like other Indigenous scholars who also racially identify as Anglo-Asian or other cross-cultural identities (Russell 2001), highlights the in-between position in which he finds himself because of the assumed binary choice between Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities which he refuses to make.

as she argues, Paradies (2006) does not provide the cultural attributes of being Aboriginal or Anglo or Asian or explain how this “multiplicity functions intra- or inter-subjectively in different cultural contexts” (p. 426). This in turn implies that the multiplicity of his identity is constituted through race and biological descent.

Russell (2001) deconstructs colonial constructs of Aborigines from past to present, as well as the development of forms of Koori modernity through its interaction with various phases of the colonial relationship. She argues that these constructions are mutually dependent and that, without colonialism, Indigenous people would have had no need, except for interactions with other Indigenous groups, to state their identities. Furthermore, she argues that, despite the binary constructions of these representations, processes of mimicry and otherness play significant roles. Of particular interest here are Russell’s (2001) findings from deconstructing the relationship between colonised/er through investigations of the establishment of Indigenous corporate identity, through the use of emblems ranging from the Koori Flag to the one-leg-standing hunter leaning on a spear. She argues that these “motifs of public identity appropriate and use pre-existing (white) notions of difference” (p.76). In other words, she found that the chosen emblems to express Indigenous social identity are reliant “on the disciplines that have marginalised them as subjects of study” (p.96). Nevertheless, Russell (2001) stresses the importance of recognising that such representations of Indigenous communities are not a simple reinstatement of the homogeneity paradigm. Rather, the contemporary Aboriginal political movement was pushing for collective voice through the use of images, stereotypes and totemic symbols to create a uniform collective identity as resistance to the imposed White self. Here, Russell (2001) finds that the dimension of antiquity which accompanies these emblems (for example the image of the hunter standing on one leg, leaning on a spear) appeals to notion of pre-contact past, and are therefore used to create a spatially homogenous Aboriginality.

To summarise, the literature suggests that Indigeneity, and so needs to be understood, across two spaces - Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Dodson (2003) encourages a dual process of understanding historical constructions of Aboriginality and resisting its essentialising features. Others focus on the spaces of interactions between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous past and present in their investigations of Indigeneity (Morrissey, 2003; Russell, 2001). The complexity of this topic is evident in the diversity of positions and the challenges relevant scholars identify in their works. Examples include the debate about pan-Aboriginality, and the question of how multiple identities of Indigeneity function in different cultural contexts.

The Art-yarning method provides ground for self-expression which accommodates such points from the literature. Art-yarning enables participants to engage with their own definitions of Indigeneity, supporting Dodson’s (2003) point about the need of Indigenous identity to be self-identity. The use of visual symbols of their choice allows participants flexible expressions of the complexities attached to their sense of Indigeneity. As I will demonstrate in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, participants were better able to express and even re-clarify dimensions of their identity through visual forms. Discussion about the spaces of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in relation to definitions of Indigeneity are particularly useful for the Artful Mob project, because its design created opportunities for participants to explore identities in relation to Indigenous/Non-Indigenous relations through the use of visual stereotypes of Aboriginality. This dimension of the Artful Mob method is similar to Russell’s (2001) deconstructions of colonial constructs of Aborigines from past to present, as well as the development of forms of Koori modernity through its interaction with various phases of the colonial relationship. Furthermore, the research is undertaken through a colonial institution, and given the non-Indigenous identities of the researcher-participants and some other participants,
has also become a space from which the representations of Indigenous participants are expressed and negotiated. The question Moreton-Robinson (2011) raises about how multiple identities of Indigeneity function in different cultural contexts, is outside the goals of the Artful Mob project. However, participants who, like Paradies (2006), attribute Indigenous and non-Indigenous aspects to representations of their identities, are offered visual expression as an alternative ground from which to explore possible replies to this complex question. The use of the Art-yarning method for expressions of Indigenous identities finds further support in Indigenous Australian scholarship that expands Indigenous theoretical conceptions through visual forms, to which I turn below.

**Visual theoretical conceptions of Indigenous paradigms**

In this sub-section, I review several examples of Indigenous scholars who utilise visual forms to communicate traditional and contemporary knowledge in an effort to further develop Indigenist theories. I then make relevant links to suitability of this approach in framing and undertaking the Artful Mob research project.

Martin (2008), a Noonuccal Quandamoopal scholar, writes about and paints the Quandamoopal worldview, and in doing so shares elements of the theological worldview of this Indigenous group, whilst also discussing its use in research. In other words, she uses both verbal and visual formats to communicate this worldview within academia and beyond. Martin (2008) asserts that art provides a useful response to Indigenous scholars’ call for harmonisation through writing and speaking Indigenous languages. The inclusion of art in a polyphonic process of harmonisation provides a tool for Indigenist researchers, particularly when access to Ancestral languages is not available. The Quandamoopal worldview (also referred to as First Story) is a view from above where both micro and macro stories can be viewed simultaneously. It contains four stories: The Ancestral Core, the Spirits; the Entities and the Filters. Below I have narrated Martin’s (2000 in 2008) visual representation of the First Story.
A second visual representation relates to the Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being, and Ways of Doing that make up the Quandamoopal epistemology (Figure 14). Martin (2002 in 2008) explains that each has a specific purpose within Quandamoopal epistemology that is achieved in the continual activities of daily life, the ongoing immersion in relatedness and fulfilling the conditions of each knowledge band (p.72).
Martin (2008) explains that the role of the filter in Figure 14 is “one of protecting and sustaining relatedness at the macro and micro levels” (p.69). More generally, the essential feature which is constant throughout the Quandamoopal epistemology is relatedness. Further developing the meanings of relatedness, Verran (2014) proposes a view which sees worlds emerging collectively, which means that distinctions such as human/non-human, living/non-living and so on “disappear [...] as givens, although they can, with difficulty and organisation, come to be enacted as real” (p.528). Thus, she proposes a shift to what she terms ‘Infra critique’ which enables this knower-known to disappear and allows other entities to surface. The Infra critique is characterised by: lack of distinction between natural and social science; the dissolves of judging observer or knower positions; and the removal of distinctions between different sorts of objects and subjects.
Martin’s (2008) work was included in a scholarly debate between Moses (2010) and Moreton-Robinson (2011) about humanism, essentialist and anti-essentialist critiques in relation to the production and access to Indigenous knowledge which are outside the scope of debate here. Relevant for present purposes, however, is Moses’s (2010) claim that the works of Martin (2003, 2008) represent a reconstruction of Indigeneity through the theory of relatedness. He describes it as a ‘fully blown re-enchantment of the world’, where “research requires a listening countenance towards organic totalities rather than their forensic dissection”, and “has less to do with capturing “truth” or drawing general conclusions, than the reconnecting of self, family, community and Entities that can be claimed and celebrated” (pp. 17-18). Moreton-Robinson (2011) argues that Moses (2010) inflicts epistemic violence through the use of dismissive language. For example, she believes that the use of the word ‘re-enchantment’, with its connotation of witchcraft, “positions Martin’s work outside his belief in the progressive disenchantment of modernity” (p.422). Moreton-Robinson (2011) notes that “Martin’s work is clearly a very powerful discursive force because it compels Moses to demonstrate his political and emotional investment in white patriarchal dominance within the academy” (p.422).

Returning to other examples of visual theoretical conceptions of Indigenous paradigms, Arbon (2008, 2008b), an Arabana scholar, and Foley (2008), a Koori scholar, are additional examples of Indigenous scholars who use visual methods to supplement their theoretical work pertaining to Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Arbon (2008) uses several visual representations of epistemologies as a central mechanism through which she presents Ularaka ontologies, and then reflects on the relationship between Indigenous philosophy and decolonisation as a means to shift Indigenous pedagogy. Arbon (2008) is influenced by the visual representations and discussions of earlier Indigenous scholars and Elders, including the Maori scholar Makere Stewart Harawira (2005), and Arabana Elder Syd Strangways. The first visual representation she adapts is by Kathleen Arbon, and it depicts the sacred as the everyday world for Arabana peoples. In discussing the circles within circles, Arbon (2008) explains that the circles depict representations of the origin of Arabana peoples, but she also links these with Western knowledge, and argues that the circles also represent Heidegger’s (1999 in Harawira, 2005) concept of ‘primordial knowing’. Furthermore, Arbon (2008) explains that the tracks and lines “signify the enduring nature of relatedness between and within all animate entities” (p.24).

Figure 16: Kathleen Arbon, The Sacred and everyday world for Arabana people (Arbon, 2008 p25)
Additionally, Arbon (2008b) elsewhere draws her own representation of the Arabana entity through her use of the Yalka as a metaphor. She explains that the Yalka represents “what it is to be, know and do as an Arabana entity - a person or the Ularaka, for example” (p.143). Her additional explanations in English provide a useful cross-cultural translation which furthers our understanding of what the know-be-do might constitute and how they be manifested into existence. In general, Arbon (2008) discusses the characteristics of each part of the triangular Be-Know-Do, where to Be Arabana, is to understand that being is embodied, reciprocal and related. To Know as Arabana, means that knowing is experienced, organised, and controlled. Finally, to Do as Arabana, implies doing is engaged, interpretive, and is understanding - all of which is governed by dialogue concerning ‘knowledge creation both in the sacred and lived world as is ‘growing’ or mentoring of an individual and one’s own responsibility in life’ (p.53).

Figure 17: (Arbon, 2008, in Gunstone, 2008 p143)


13 Ularaka can be understood as meaning history or ‘not in our time’ (Arbon, 2008b).
Foley (2008) uses three different Indigenous epistemologies to argue for a model that is “universal in its application in Indigenous theory” (p.113). Foley (2008) proposes this integrated model as a foundation for the development of Indigenous Standpoint Theory, as well as one which negates what he views as the Indigenous students’ need to make a choice between Western and Indigenous philosophies. He further argues that an Indigenous Standpoint Theory should be flexible and applicable for the existing diversity of Indigenous peoples and nations. Foley (2008) presents a clear position in relation to what he believes this theory should include, namely: the
Indigenous identity of the practitioner, who needs to be an expert in Western social theory; that the research must be beneficial to an Indigenous community; and that traditional language should be the first choice for communication when possible.

I believe that these visually supported discussions of various Indigenous epistemologies are valuable, not only for Indigenous researchers as intended by these and other scholars, but also for non-Indigenous researchers who are accepted into communities to collaborate on various research projects. There are two main points here which are particularly important for framing the work in *Artful Mob*. The first is the opportunities these visual theoretical conceptions offer non-Indigenous researchers to develop understanding of different Indigenous knowledge systems, and thus practical and theoretical ways through which to turn away from homogenisation and essentialisation of Indigenous peoples. The second, and most relevant to this research project, concerns the notions of relatedness with all which is around, and its integration with Western knowledge (Martin, 2008; Arbon, 2008a and b; and Foley, 2008). These notions reinforce the framing of the overall argument of the thesis about the commonality between Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy through the concept of the Relational, and the benefits of integration between two knowledge system to research in Indigenous context. The additional feature through which these points frame the *Artful Mob project* is their delivery in visual forms.

Further research and discussion which explores and considers the benefits of non-Indigenous engagement with visually incorporated Indigenous epistemologies, can contribute to an expansion of the meanings and possibilities of adaptation. In this way, a space is created to expand Arbon’s (2008) notion of the dialogue, so that non-Indigenous researchers in the field are also expected to become well versed in Indigenous epistemologies. This goal necessitates critical consideration of the locations of art in Indigenous critical writing, and their relationships to the location of art within the *Artful Mob* research project – a topic to which I now turn.

**The locations of art in Indigenous Critical Writing**

In this subsection, I briefly review several scholarly positions in relation to art and Indigenous people. The purpose here is to become familiar with this diversity of ideas in order to make more considered visual methodological choices. Australian Indigenous literature reveals ambiguous standpoints in relation to art and Indigenous peoples. Langton (1996), for example, examines the representations of landscape and Indigenous people in Australian art, the tourism industry, and in popular culture. She argues that depicting landscape as wilderness and Indigenous peoples as fascinating primitives reflects colonial anxiety, which is manifested through the tension between the brutality of assimilating Indigenous peoples whilst also representing them as exotic, fascinating primitives in order to differentiate settler society from Europe. By implication, if we assign validity to Indigenous art as Desert art alone, or view it as exemplary of the Noble Savage, we engage in essentialisation that prevents understanding of the multiple roles art serves within Indigenous knowledge systems past and present.

Similarly, in her review of postcolonial literature in Australia from the late 1980s, Moreton-Robinson (2004) examines the racialisation of the Other within academic discourses. She refers to an issue of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, edited by Attwood & Arnold (1988), which excluded Indigenous contribution except for a painting on the cover by Ngaku painter Robert Campbell. Moreton-Robinson (2004) argues that the journal ends up representing Indigenous cultures as visual and Western culture as intellectual, further reinforcing racialised and essentialised processes.
Martin (2008) sees the articulation by the West of the Japanangka paradigm through paintings as indicative of the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are culturally ingrained and carry multiple formats of communication. Anderson’s (2003) review of traditional ethnographic representations of Aboriginality reveals that cultural essentialism operates alongside biological essentialism in “defining ‘the ‘authentic’ Aborigines by their cultural forms” (p.47). Others have similarly discussed the manipulation of art to advance the White national identity of Australia (Grossman, 2003; Russell, 2001; Nicoll, 2004; Onus, 2003). At the same time, there is also a clear discussion of some benefits for Indigenous peoples associated with this art. For example, scholars have analysed: the increased engagement with art by Barkindji peoples and its implications for the changing form, design and content of art and the role of art in defining ideas of Barkindji Aboriginal culture and tradition (Gibson, 2008); the use of Hip Hop to engage Indigenous youth (Morgan & Warren, 2011; Minestrelli, 2016); and discussions of the financial benefits of the commodification of dot paintings, particularly in central Australia (Myers, 2012; Gibson, 2011).

This work provides a clear warning of how visual expression can easily derail into an essentialising or tokenistic approach. It is therefore useful to step back for a moment and reflect on how the Artful Mob project seeks to avoid these outcomes by using visual expressions to centre the voices of participants. The artworks are not intended to serve as an ‘aesthetic dimension’ of the thesis, but rather as its leading voice and common language. As I have discussed in the methodology chapter, since the visual expression is concerned with the process of creating and sharing, it places far less aesthetic value on the art product, and thus art is used differently to the ways described in the literature. However, the intricate terrains of the Cultural Interface also mean that complex relations to the art necessarily exist among participants and communities. I discuss this complexity in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, but, as a general example here, some of the participants have long and familiar engagement with dot paintings and value it as a reflection of Aboriginal art. These participants have therefore used this style within some workshops to communicate about their sense of self and cultural identity, even though the workshops themselves did not impose this style.

Art in Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices past and present, and how it is defined and viewed, occupies complex and multilayered spaces within academia and in the everyday lives of Indigenous and non-indigenous people. This complexity invites additional research, which appears particularly important with the increase of visual methods in Indigenous research contexts. This increase in use of visual methods means that researchers must work to avoid the possible charge that the use of visual methods as integral methodologies is another disguise for prioritising Western methodologies in research with Indigenous peoples. Since integration also means using content and tools associated with Western cultures, there will always be some truth to this charge, and it should be acknowledged and regularly reflected upon. With this critical cautionary approach in mind, I will now continue to the last section of this chapter and introduce key concepts from the literature on art therapy.

**Art Therapy**

*The fruit is blind. It is the tree which sees.*

René Char, *Leaves of Hypnos*, 1946

*Ce qui vient au monde pour ne rien troubler ne mérite ni égards ni patience.*

*What comes into the world to disturb nothing deserves neither attention or patience.*
Introduction

This review of art therapy (AT) literature begins by clarifying the decolonised position in relation to the ‘therapy’ part of the term. More than a decolonised action, the disregard of any intentional provision of therapy extends into a shift in epistemology. In this way, such an approach can represent a response to the call by Verran (2014) for the Infra critique approach, where positions of ‘knower’ and ‘known’ dissolve, and yet, with some difficulty, can claim (temporary) realness through the participants’ own representations and the collaborative organisation of the program itself. This literature review continues with a discussion of AT as a dynamic interactive process between one’s exploration of feelings through art materials, and the various emotional stimulants generated by the art materials. AT is different to traditional art-making in that the focus is on the process of creating and meaning-making, rather than on an end product. This literature review discusses the initial psychoanalytic influence of Freud, Jung and others on the development of ideas around consciousness, unconsciousness and sublimation, developed through various art therapy models such as Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy (Naumburg) and Art Therapist third hand intervention (Kramer, 2000). The Humanistic Phenomenological and Person-Centered Approaches to art therapy are then identified and discussed as a general theoretical framework for the Artful Mob project. Concepts such as intentionality and spontaneous art making, along with discussion around the position and use of art materials, which characterises these approaches, are identified as methods through which relatedness is experienced in complementary ways to Indigenous Knowledge Systems. The later part of this review discusses the Relational Aesthetics approach to art therapy in order to highlight the Relational aspect and broaden its presence to include the socio-political dimension (Moon, C., 2016). This review concludes with literature which discusses both Whiteness in the historical development of AT (Hogan, 2000), and the resultant need for ongoing critical reflections which aim to identify areas of Whiteness and invent creative ways to minimise its impact in Indigenous research contexts.

The Indigenous research context for this research necessarily dictates a clarification of the position of Therapy in the term ‘art therapy tools and processes’ as used in this project. As mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, the language of therapy carries a risk of pathologising Indigenous peoples by suggesting that the research seeks to remedy assumed positions of deficit. It is therefore vital to clarify that any therapeutic dimension claimed by participants as a lived outcome of engagement with the Artful Mob program, is neither the aim of the research design nor sought by myself as a co-facilitator and researcher. Some of the ways in which I was able to steer workshops away from the notion of providing therapy included the dismissal of tools such as specific questioning, as well as through my own participation in the art-making process. In addition, the participants, Elders and communities had complete control over the use and manipulation of these tools and processes. It can be argued that these and other strategies respond to Verran’s (2014) call for an Infra critique approach where positions of ‘knower’ and ‘known’ dissolve, because they increase equality between participants, community and the researcher and research-participants through processes of limiting my powers while increasing
their. This creates a space where everybody is, or can be, both knower and known. This dissolution of boundaries also manifests during the creative process - while creating, the artist might begin with a clear sense of knowing what and how expression will take place, but, as engagement deepens - which I will discuss later in this section as the state of ‘flow’ - self-consciousness and thus a sense of knowing dissipate, and that which needs to become known takes shape through visual content.

However, consistent with Verran’s (2014) description of the Infra critique approach, the participants, with some difficulty, can still claim (temporary) realness through the participants’ own representations, as well as through the organisational dimension of the program as one version of a ‘micro story’ where relatedness is exercised to produce knowing and being. My experiences of collaborations with Indigenous persons suggest that my participants view the act of making art - *arting* - to connect well with their enactments of knowing, being and doing through relatedness. In somewhat poetic terms, there is commonality in the duality of silence and activity in both Indigenous Knowledge systems and in the art-making process. The emphasis on process within the discipline of art therapy - the way that the term ‘art therapy’ captures the focus on process of ‘arting’ – justifies retaining the term, albeit with some care and caution.

**Art Therapy – Definitions**

Art therapy is a form of art-making that constitutes a journey of the self, into the self, and beyond the self, making it a Relational process of knowing, being and doing. Art therapy (AT), regardless of the variety of its conceptions and approaches, involves a dynamic interactive process between one’s exploration of feelings through art materials, and the various emotional stimuli generated by the art materials (Hogan, 2000; Rubin, 2001; Malchiodi, 2011; Moon H.C., 2016). With its roots in psychoanalysis, AT is essentially concerned with the therapeutic use of art-making. It uses creativity to gain insights into one’s self, to visually express hard-to-verbalise feelings and emotions, to provide positive outlets, to connect and collaborate with others, to relieve tension and more (Rubin, 2005; Malchiodi, 2011; McNiff, 2004; Argyle & Bolton, 2005). AT is practised in private, clinical, educational and community health settings with different populations, and is supported by a growing body of evidence-based research (Gilroy, 2007).

The definitions provided by the Art Therapy Associations of the USA, UK and Australia reflect the variety of theories and approaches within the profession. In recent years, the Australian and New Zealand Arts Therapy Association (ANZATA, 2015) added ‘s’ to ‘Art’ in order to reflect a shift to include the creative arts therapies of music, drama and dance/movement. As part of its comprehensive definition, ANZATA (2015) recognises the broad theoretical frameworks and the use of AT as both a therapeutic and diagnostic tool. Importantly, all three Art Therapy Associations identify AT as different to traditional art making in that the focus is on the process of creating and meaning-making, rather than on an end product. It is the process of art-making in a dynamic interpersonal relationship, with clear boundaries and goals between the client/s and the therapist, that sets it apart from the arts. Art therapy, regardless of its theoretical framing, is based on the notion that visual representations are less interruptive and distortive than verbal interpretations of sensory-based experiences (Liebmann, 2004; Weiser, 1993).

**Art Therapy - Brief History**

The more formal organisation of art therapy as a discipline took place simultaneously in England and the USA around the middle of the 20th century (Rubin, 2010; Malchiodi, 2011; Hogan, 2000).
Discourses within the field are influenced by conceptions found across aesthetics, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, rehabilitation, early childhood education, and art education. There are several foundational scholars who have developed art therapy as a discipline, and so are bound to any discussion relating to its history of development. Edith Kramer, Margaret Naumburg and Elinor Ulman are associated with the development of AT in the USA, and Adrian Hill, who also coined the term, Rita Simon and Michael Edwards are associated with its development in England.

For example, Rubin (2010) explains that Naumburg was the first to introduce art as a therapeutic modality in her work at NY State Psychiatric Institution from the early 1940s. Influenced by Freud, Jung and others, Naumburg developed Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy, which rejects the use of symbolic meaning in its Freudian rigid form, instead focusing on the creator as the knower of any valid meaning. Similarly, another founder of AT in the USA, Kramer (2000), also used Freud’s notion of sublimation to further develop the discourse of AT. Sublimation is concerned with a process whereby urges emerge from the Id through creative processes and lead to sense of gratification (Kramer, 1971, 2000). However, unlike Naumburg who advocates art-in-therapy, Kramer is known for the view of art-as-therapy. This difference also manifests in the view of the art product - where Naumburg’s model emphasises the process, Kramer’s also emphasises the product through the utilisation of her well-known Art Therapist third hand intervention (Kramer, 2000). Both view the process of art therapy as healing.

A significant influence on my own perceptions of art therapy, which I also found to be representative of many of the participants’ experiences, relates to the struggles associated with engagement with the creative process and is well articulated in Milner’s book ‘On not being able to paint’ (1983 original date, 1950). According to Robinson (2011), Milner (1983) engages in a process which is based in the assumption that, unlike Freud’s position that we are at the mercy of our unconscious, it is consciousness that prevents us from knowing the unknown, and the creative process can enable such knowing to surface. Engagement with the creative process is described by Milner as a process characterised by both successes and failures, and, also relevant here, as a chaotic process, which Robinson (2011) describes as one from which you “come out convinced by the very chaos of the ‘not knowing’ from which some ‘knowing’ can be wrested” (p.320).

This not only relates to the experiences shared by many of the participants and myself as non-artists; it also reinforces the position of art therapy as different to professional art, and as a process in which where artistic skills are not only unnecessary but can even prevent engagement with ‘spontaneous art making’ (creating without thought or plan). Furthermore, the conviction in ‘not knowing’, as described in this process, is similar to the idea of limited access to knowledge, as well as to knowing at different levels, which characterises Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Milner (1983) describes the transformation experienced through engagement with spontaneous art making as one which has led to the view of people and things as “essences existing in their own right and offering a source of delight simply by being themselves” (p.24). Here again, relatedness - among all that there is and all that one can see - emphasises the transformation of epistemology.

**Situating Art Materials in Art Therapy**

The appropriate choice of art materials is fundamental to art therapy because each material has evocative qualities. The fundamental presumption in art therapy is that art materials can affect and change human behaviour according to their characteristics. What makes art therapy different to art-making is the focus on the theoretical and experiential knowing about the effect of art materials (Lusebrink, 2012, Hinz, 2009; Hyland Moon, 2012; Lusebrink, Mārtinsone & Dzilna-
Šilova, 2013). The use of different art materials relates to their Qualities, Symbolic characteristics, Personal symbolic meaning given by the artist, and the Relational aspect and its effects on all aspects of the art experience. Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) developed the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC), as a theory that attempts to equip art therapists with knowledge of how a client interacts with art materials during the art-making phase of a session, in order to process information and create images. It is built on information drawn from various disciplines such as art education, art therapy, psychology and neuroscience. Lusebrink (1990) explains that the ETC model has four levels which are

organised in a developmental sequence of image formation and information processing. The first three levels reflect the developmental sequence and increasing abstraction in information processing in a following sequence (p.92).

The fourth level is creativity and it exists both on its own and at any of these levels.

In general, art materials sit somewhere on a continuum with ‘fluid’ on one end and ‘resistive’ on the other. For example, paint is liquid because it is easy to manipulate, while pencil is resistive because it is solid and offers more control. Then you have materials that can have both qualities like soft oil pastels, which are firm to hold but can be fluid in application. The art therapist uses the model to assess how a client uses/underuses/overuses/blocks each level in this model, and then accordingly begins to introduce new art materials, directives and discussion with goals of reducing overused functions and/or increasing underused or blocked ones. While the *Artful Mob* program shares notions about the importance of art materials, it takes a looser approach, discarding the material assessment by the art therapist, and instead considering the Relational process between participants and art materials as an individual journey that might not necessary include the goal of using diverse art materials. Below (Figure 20) is Kagin and Lusebrink’s (1978) Expressive Therapies Continuum Diagram. As Lusebrink (1990) explains, the letters represent the following dimensions: K-S Kinaesthetic-Sensory level; P-A Perceptual-Affective level; C-Sy Cognitive-Symbolic level; CR Creative level.

![Expressive Therapies Continuum Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Figure 20: Expressive Therapies Continuum Diagram, (Figure 5.1, Lusebrink, 1990 p. 92)

**Art Therapy - Humanistic Approaches: Phenomenology & Person Centred**

In general terms, there are three major orientations to art therapy which are emergent from dominant discourses across related fields such as psychiatry and psychology: the Psychodynamic, the Humanistic and the Behavioural. In its infant days, art therapy was dominated by the psychoanalytic theory central to American psychiatry at the time. As mentioned earlier, the foundational work in this area is attributed to Naumburg (1950, 1966) and Kramer (1971). The
Humanistic approaches emerged in contrast to behaviourism and psychoanalysis, with their focus on determinism, and are known for their emphasis on self-actualisation (Rubin, 2001). Since then, a variety of approaches have developed and these are grouped under the following categories: Psychodynamic; Humanistic; Psych-Educational; Systemic; and Integrative (Rubin, 2001). The Humanistic approach, where the Phenomenological and Humanistic/Person Centered approaches adapted for the Artful Mob project are situated, also includes the Gestalt and Open Studio approaches to art therapy. Dimensions of these, along with Psychodynamic approaches such as Symbolism and Object Relations, are also evident within the Artful Mob program, which adopts an eclectic approach to its appropriation of art therapy discourse as part of its theoretical framework.

Although detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting briefly that the Phenomenological approach to art therapy has its foundations in general phenomenology, described by Husserl (2002) as the ‘Science of Consciousness’; developed through Heidegger’s (1988) view of phenomenology as the approach through which both the unconscious (ontological) and consciousness (ontic) can be revealed. Betensky (1995), well-known for her contribution to the development of the phenomenological approach to art therapy, views art therapy as the closest actualisation of Heidegger’s understanding of phenomenology - that is, “revealing the hidden aspects of man’s being as phenomena accessible to consciousness and to conscious investigation” (p.124).

Intentionality is a central concept in the phenomenological approach to art therapy, and also holds strong links with the concept of relatedness. Rubin (2001) explains the dual role of engagement with art as: a means to release the burden of stress the participant carries; and a “pre-intentional record of his experience of stress and flight” (p.122). In other words, it enables the conscious investigation of the intentional perceptions of the body of work, in order to enhance self-understanding. Intentionality also means that our consciousness always relates to somebody or something. This approach includes specific considerations of art materials, warm-up exercises, the use of words and the actions of the art therapist, in order to formulate its three-sequence method of: pre-art play - direct experiencing; the process of artwork - creating a phenomenon; and finally phenomenological intuiting made up of the procedures of Perceiving and What-Do-You-See. The pre-art play aims at freeing the person engaged from feeling unskilled to do art and promote spontaneous art making for purposes of fun and release, a stage which represents the direct experiencing of art materials and processes. At the next stage the person engages in creating an artwork to express anything, and what is created becomes the phenomenon. The final step asks the person to use intuition in order to begin an exploration of the visual phenomenon created, and the What-Do-You-See tool supports this exploration by encouraging the person to first describe what they see rather than what they think it means. Attention to details such as size, shape, colour and tone is useful in leading the person to deeper relevant meanings.

The participants and Elders have modified many parts of this method. In particular, the role of the art therapist dissolved and, instead, participants substituted yarning as the main facilitator of meaning-making, and some participants have also taken an Elder in training/waiting status within the group, which meant that careful attention was given to their overall perceptions. There was little direct use of What-do-you-see and Perceiving procedures; the process instead taking a more organic form. The core phenomenological process which participants and Elders have adapted, and which they see as similar to their epistemologies, includes three steps of phenomenological integration. The first includes the artist’s reflections on the development of the artwork; the second concerns the search for similarities and differences in artworks over time; and the third searches for similarities between the representations within the artworks and the artist’s real life.
The phenomenological choices participants and Elders have made is in itself a reflection of the Person-Centered approach. Furthermore, this approach again shares the commonality of the Relational which is foundational to Indigenous knowledge systems, and thus continues to reinforce research design choices. Rogers, N. (2001) proposes Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy as an approach based in the humanistic psychology discourse of Carl Rogers (1942), Abraham Maslow (1970), Clark Moustakas (1990) and others. It differs from other more analytic or medical models of art therapy by advocating the individual’s capacity for self-direction. The goal of going inwards also means that this approach leaves out the aesthetics and craftsmanship dimensions associated with professional art. Furthermore, it adopts the same traits employed in Carl Rogers’ Person-Centered approach to psychotherapy, namely: empathy; openness; congruence; caring; and acute listening. Interpretation is rejected; in its place, the approach advocates a process which follows directions chosen by the artist.

Rogers presents her model of a Universal Energy Source to propose that the creative process, which is a journey inwards, also allows us to discover “our relatedness to the outer world. Inner and outer become one” (p.176). The model below (Figure 21) demonstrates the extent of its similarity with Indigenous Knowledge Systems with its view of being, knowing and doing as a relational form of existence for all that there is in the world and beyond. A In similar fashion to how Country and art can inform Indigenous person’s identity and the nature of her relationships with everything human and non-human, so does the Universal Energy Source AT model utilise the creative process to demonstrate different relationships between self and the world. Relationality is expressed here in the format of circle within a circle starting with the self as the starting circle and concluding with the universe as the outer circle. The use of the circle as a symbol for human and non-human entities and the relations between them is common in visual representations of Indigenous knowledge systems, as seen in earlier examples of Martin (2008) and Arbon, (2008a and b).

Figure 21: Expressive Therapies Continuum Diagram, (Figure 5.1, Lusebrink, 1990 p. 92)
The Relational Aesthetics approach to AT directly engages, and thus supports, the *Artful Mob* project’s argument about the Relational as common guiding concept across Indigenous knowledge systems. Significantly, Moon, C. (2016) defines Relational Aesthetics as the process of critical reflection on “the nature of art in which relational connections - with the self, others, art, process, product, and socio-political contexts - are fostered and deepened” (2016, p. 56). Here, we can identify an additional common ground with Indigenous critical writings in relation to the presence and weight of the political context. That is, both domains make explicit the connections between art and socio-political contexts - whether the art is harnessed for expressions related to socio-political dimensions or is itself perceived to be a political subject. She further claims that discourses on art and Relational Aesthetics can be found across performance ethnography, social work, cultural anthropology, activist art, action research and other areas. This wide acknowledgement serves to more forcefully advocate for collaborative, integrational and Relational work.

**Whiteness in Art Therapy**

Although the art therapy literature suggests these promising points of contact with Indigenous knowledge systems, it is still essential to reflect critically on the role of Whiteness in the history and development of art therapy theories and methods. In this section I therefore briefly examine ideas from Hogan (2000) about the perceived relationship between art, race and mental health state, and their influences on the approach one takes to the facilitation of group art therapy. I then discuss the implications of these ideas to the *Artful Mob* project. Hogan (2000), although without directly using the term, exposes Whiteness in the developmental history of AT. She explains that theories of degeneration, madness and artistic genius were influenced by general assumptions about the existence of hierarchy of race and biological determinism. This led to the view that the expressive art of both so called ‘primitive peoples’ and the insane, indicates a pathology of these peoples. A well-known example includes Freud and his view of expressive art as indicative of the primitive part of the psyche.

Hogan (2000) argues for a difference between art therapists who use analytic psychology and those who use psychoanalytic theory, which in turn impacts on their cultural position. This is due to differing positions on the view of art and art therapy. That is, an approach to art therapy which categorises art by the race and state of mental health of the artist, necessarily indicates a cultural position which is expressed through, and influences, the interpretations of the artworks. Hogan’s (2000) point encourages critical reflections on the ways I view the participants’ artworks. Although race and mental health status influence the artworks produced through engagement with the creative process, there are multiple other dimensions involved in this process. The Art-yarning method complements this approach because art-making leads the process, which ensures the participants’ yarn about their artworks carries the weight of interpretation. At the same time, I engage in regular meta-reflections into the ways I read their artworks. This approach aids the goal of recognising and minimising my privileged position of power relations as non-Indigenous researcher.

Hogan (2000) also discusses the current popularity of the Group Interactive model in England. She argues that this model views the individual as engaged in regular processes of reconstructions with others who, in turn, influence one’s personality structure. Yet she also highlights criticism of the model’s disregard of institutional representations of gender and race. Therefore, Hogan (2000) argues for the importance of recognising and centralising issues of control and power
within the art therapy debate. There are two relevant points here which link to the work of the *Artful Mob* project: the first concerns the similarity in the importance of recognising issues of power and control. That is, the design of research opens up regular opportunities to identify and discuss areas of power and control. For example, at Winda Mara we have engaged in discussion which recognised the constraints of the project (length and number of sessions), which then led to the reorganisation of each session to suit the changing needs of participants (longer/shorter breaks and yarn/no yarn). The second implication concerns the space from which the Indigenous individual engages in regular processes of reconstructions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous others, who in turn influence her personality and identity structures. That is, the project overall, and the Art-yarning method in particular, created a space in which participants were able to explore, through the creative process, their sense of self while interacting with other group members - a two-way process which influences the ongoing exploration and development of their identity.

The aim of this brief overview of the discipline was to present AT as a way of knowing which shares similarities with Indigenous philosophies, and is thus potentially useful for research in Indigenous contexts and beyond. The focus above was particularly on how this process takes place - how this way of knowing manifests in the *Artful Mob* project. The lived experiences of my father as an accurate judge of the weights of different bags placed in his hands, comes to mind as analogous to the essence of knowing I am interested in exploring within this research. We can claim that this ability represents our processes of internalising (Western) socially constructed ideas about weight, as well as know these constructions through the embodied physical experiences. However, it also opens the possibility of being aware of this integration process and critically reflecting on whether there are other socially constructed ideas about weight with which we are not familiar. The process of arting does much the same - that is, the creative process, materials, peers, space, time and other elements allows us to experience certain kinds of knowing through visual form, whilst they also enable us to critically reflect in relation to others and their experiences of knowing. In such way, the visual form might be the common communication tool, but the import it carries for each participant, and their usages of it, differ and multiply with experiences; some of which cannot be captured verbally, some of which remain unknown for the creator, and some which hold potential for the crystallisation of some kind of new knowing.

In summary, this review of art therapy suggests that the inclusion of visual methodologies specific to AT requires developing knowledge of the various approaches, followed by informed choices in relation to all phases of the research design. This literature review further develops the observation that the Relational emerges as a point of commonality across Indigenous knowledge systems and AT. This commonality does not, however, remove the need for critical awareness of the power relations that exist in the encounter between participants and the research process, including the institutional representations of gender and race in place, as well as the influence of interactions with others - Indigenous and non-Indigenous. With this caution, I now conclude the chapter with a summary of the overall argument about the presence of the Relational across the knowledge domains of postcolonialism, Indigenous traditional and contemporary knowledge and art therapy, and its implications for this research.

**Summary - The Relational places of knowing across Indigenous Critical Writing, Art Therapy & Postcolonial Terrains**

This chapter argues for an imagined Relational Meeting Place where the epistemologies of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, as represented through Indigenous scholarship, and art therapy
can meet to serve as both the conceptual and practical frameworks of the *Artful Mob* research project. The ground where the two domains can meet is that of the Relational. The presence of Postcolonialism in this space derives from its influence on the development of contemporary Indigenous discourse, but it also relates to the discourse of art therapy since the latter necessarily operates within, and is influenced by, the overall complex structure of power relations, race, and culture.

An example of one route through which this intellectual meeting place can be manifested, involves a return to the few core conceptions introduced by Fanon (1967). As noted in the discussion of postcolonial theory from the beginning of this chapter, Fanon (1967) uses the famous metaphor of black skin, white mask to anchor a psychoanalytic approach for investigation of the impact of colonialism on the oppressed. For Fanon, the oppressed seeks to mimic the oppressor in order to feed into the constant battle with his inferiority complex - to strive to be like the coloniser whilst knowing you never will be. Later, Bhabha argues that stereotyping the colonised is geared towards anti-resistance, but mimicking of the coloniser’s ways is nevertheless a useful resistance tool. Moving into the critical writings of Australian Indigenous scholars, discussions about Indigenous representations, some of which use White stereotypes and other cultural forms (including visual), argue for, not only diversity, but also a process which can only be driven by the Indigenous persons and their communities. In art therapy, we use the inner and outer sides of paper masks in order to explore communicated and non-communicated, visible and non-visible, represented and non-represented parts of the self. In other words, and to complete the circle back to Fanon (1967), this research takes the metaphor of the mask and makes it a kinetic, creative and visual experience from which the art makers begin to explore who they are as individuals as well as Indigenous individuals.

Core postcolonial concepts from Fanon, Said, and Bhabha, as representative figures of Postcolonialism, are embedded in the works of Indigenous Scholarship. Rigney (2001) states that these scholars

> have provided valuable theoretical approaches to the contemporary Indigenous Australian Intellectual Movement in its interrogation of dominant research tendencies that assume central positions of power and truth (p.7).

Sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2007), Indigenous cultural forms (Langton, 1989), education policies (Nakata, 2007), languages (Bell, 2003), place names (Birch, 203) and wilderness (Bayet-Charlton, 2003) are some of the concepts and areas through which the influence of postcolonialism is evident.

On the other hand, postcolonialism has also been the subject of intense critique by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars (Linda Tuhiiwai Smith, 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Trees & Mudrooroo, 1993; Robinson, 2007; Fielder, 1992; Ardill, 2013). Some critics have discussed how some non-Indigenous academics use postcolonial theory as a recolonising strategy to justify their position as researchers in the field, because this theory still excludes in various ways the voices of Indigenous peoples (Linda Tuhiiwai Smith, 1999). Others relate its use to Whiteness through the maintenance of the dominance of White possessive logic within academic research and beyond (Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Rigney, 2001). This has implications for the importance of the socio-political dimension in various Indigenous theories and approaches. The relevant insight to the *Artful Mob* has been the realisation that integration between Indigenous knowledge systems and postcolonialism requires critical attention in order to avoid the potential of reengaging in oppressive research practices.
The influence of postcolonialism on the development of Indigenous scholarship is but one combination through which the Relational manifests; and is in itself a complex zone since the cultural identities of the major figures - Fanon; Bhabha; Said; and Spivak - situate, at least by default, postcolonialism as emergent from Indigenous ways of knowing too. Another combination of the Relational across domains includes the use of Foucault’s discourse on knowledge and power by many Indigenous scholars in their development of Indigenous discourses, while on the other hand, we witness the use of Foucault in postcolonialism as well. Another significant analytical insight I achieved here, is that these, and other possible Relational combinations, reinforce the complexity of the Intellectual Interfaces from which we come to know about knowing. This insight, in turn, further supports the use of an integrational approach to theoretical combinations, in an attempt to accommodate the complexities of Indigenous identities and offer alternative grounds for its explorations and expressions.

Major concepts within Indigenous Critical writings include: Whiteness, sovereignty, presentation and representations; racism; Whiteness a priori; Indigenous identity; land rights; native title; cultural alterity; ontological relations to Country; essentialism; power Knowledge; authenticity and inauthenticity; the politics of difference; hybridity; invisibility; neo-colonialism; and reconciliation. However, Indigenous Critical writings can be viewed as discourses which focus on two major dimensions. The first has to do with exposing Whiteness (Rigney, 2001; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Trees & Mudrooroo, 1993; Watson, 2007; Brady, 2003), and in doing so, centralising resistance to dominant discourses within contemporary Indigenous scholarship to a point where resistance becomes part of the identity of the discourse. The second has to do with written and visual (Martin, 2008; Arbon, 2008, 2008b; Foley, 2008) representations of Indigenous Knowledge Systems from across the continent, as seen above, for example, with the Quandamoopal First Story (Martin, 2008). The first dimension provided insight into developing understandings of Whiteness, as well as the task of minimising instances of it within the research project, while accepting a certain level of inevitable presence of Whiteness due to a colonial past and present. The second insight relates to the responsibility a non-Indigenous researcher has in developing some knowledge of Indigenous philosophies. In a similar vein to Indigenous scholars calling for Indigenous students to master Western knowledge in order to know and resist Whiteness, some mastery of Indigenous philosophies by non-Indigenous scholars will also contribute to an enhanced awareness of Whiteness and concentrated efforts to resist it through innovative research methods.

The argumentative backbone of this chapter was to make a case for certain specific theoretical compatibilities between art therapy tools and processes, and the goals of postcolonial and Indigenous scholarship. United by the overarching philosophy of the Relational, these similarities include the belief in the existence of various ways of knowing, and various ways of expressing one’s sense of self according to one’s ways of knowing. The shared ways of knowing characteristic of AT and Indigenous knowledge systems include the belief that everything has its own entity and agency, and that interacting while recognising this condition, involves responsibilities and rights. Through using this approach, people can sharpen and enhance their sense of self while improving interpersonal and inter-cultural communications, and taking care of self, other and the environments in which we live. Yet these similarities are only part of the process, and this chapter was therefore also seeking to explore mechanisms - mainly Whiteness - through which certain ways of knowing are preferred within research. The similarities among the knowledge domains necessitate careful and ongoing considerations of differences in order to further balance power relations among the Indigenous and non-Indigenous and allow the similarities healthy space from which to manifest within the research design.
I conclude with an anecdote from my experiences of traveling from Wurundjeri Country to Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries, as a way of highlighting the complexity of the intellectual interface and situating the use of an integrational theoretical framework. The experience concerns the passing of State-issued signs which act as a type of check-point to signify the boundaries of Aboriginal Countries within Victoria. The signs sometimes carry a ‘traditional map’ showing where the specific Aboriginal Country is situated within the White State. The signs also include Aboriginal words equivalent to welcome in English. These signs clearly demonstrate the exercise of Whiteness through the language and the signs themselves as communication forms of the dominant culture. However, the signs also serve as a source of knowing about Indigenous Countries within the State - knowledge which appears useful to many of the Indigenous persons and participants I have asked about the issue – as well as to me as a non-Indigenous person.

It is perhaps possible to take on Verran’s (2014) approach of Infra-critique and attempt to shift the paradigm which anchors the signs in their current position, instead attempting to view the signs as partial representations of Aboriginality by the dominant culture. These partial representations exist in a web of other representations, and critical awareness of their Relational position can help dissolve the accuracy or priority given to these signs when they are taken to be the right or true representation of Aboriginality. What steps forward as a result, are possibilities for an array of other representations, many of which derive from Indigenous peoples, and some of which attempt, as this research project does, to integrate between visual forms of communication and the potential Indigenous participants see in visual forms as a means of making their own representations known to self and others. It is these representations that I now turn to describe in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter.
Chapter 5: Knowledge Synthesis

Small picture covers a lot of areas
Art-yarning by Gail, a Gunditjmara participant on Wathaurong Country.

It’s hard to talk about yourself, but then if you look at the island, that’s me. That’s me on paper. I don’t see I have to explain it but that’s just me on paper. Everything I love, everything I do, everything that makes me-me.

Art-yarning by Keiah, a Yorta Yorta/Mutti Mutti participant on Wathaurong Country.

Not only did I find that trying to describe my experience enhanced the quality of it, but also, this effort to describe had made me more observant of the small movements of the mind. So now I began to discover that there were multitudes of ways of perceiving, ways that were controllable by what I can only describe as an internal gesture of the mind. It was as if one’s self-awareness had a central point of interest being, the very core of one’s I-ness. And this core of being could, I discovered, be moved about at will; but to explain just how it is done to someone who has never felt it for himself is like trying to explain how to move one’s ears...

Milner (2011) A Life of One’s Own, p47

Introduction

In this chapter, I use the integrated Art-yarning method to explore the creating-into-being of the participants, as these have unfolded through the Artful Mob workshops. This chapter has two interrelated goals. First, it shares key aspects of the knowledge synthesis that the participants and I, as a researcher-participant, have gained from our engagement with this integrated method. Second, it situates this new knowledge in relation to the theoretical conceptions I presented in the previous chapter: in particular how the theoretical argument for the presence of the Relational across the two knowledge domains had manifested in, and enabled, the integrated method of Art-yarning to work effectively in generating self-expressions.

To begin this discussion, a brief reprise of the Art-yarning method is useful in order to enhance and situate the reading of the knowledge synthesis. The chapter continues with brief introductory remarks on the key findings, including the value of integration and key spaces of commonality found across the Art-yarnings. The chapter discusses the challenges associated with the write-up of the new knowledge and related methodological choices as to the chapter’s format and structure. Next, I use examples of Art-yarnings from the two communities, and I discuss those along with the general context for the session, interweaving the participants’ direct readings of their works and my own interpretations. This discussion also refers to concepts from the literature reviewed in the previous chapters of the thesis, with a particular focus on content from chapters three and four. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the new insights and their associated meanings.
Art Yarings

Yarning is a common Indigenous protocol through which some Indigenous people be-know-do the foundational concept of the Relational. As discussed in previous chapters, the concept of the Relational encompasses ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology, which are all bound by the belief that everything is governed by multiple relations and connections, binding living and non-living entities on earth and beyond (Tuhiiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Wilson, 2008; Martin, 2003, 2010; Christie, 2006; Louis, 2007; Chilisa, 2012). Yarning is a cultural form of conversation (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010), which also constitutes visual and physical elements along with the dynamic conversations that occur between humans and non-humans (Kovach, 2010; Geia et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2012; Goulding et al., 2016). Further extension of this protocol across research in Indigenous contexts has included therapeutic, research and cross-cultural types of yarning (Walker et al., 2014; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010).

Differentiation from, and integration with, Western knowledge systems are both equally important for the survival and resurgence of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Integration between Western and Indigenous methodologies is not new, but Art-yarning reflects commonalities at deeper levels of knowledge production, whilst it also allows for cultural differentiation. In the methodology chapter, I introduced the schema Law (2004) develops in his analysis of the differences between Euro-American and Indigenous knowledge method assemblages, to identify similarities between Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems. These similarities pertain to the three realms of: Enactment; Agency and Dualism; and Ontological Disjunction, which are governed by the notion of the Relational. Thus, beyond the characteristics possessed by any integrated research method, Art-yarning also seeks to capture a common visual-verbal way of being-knowing-doing in-the-world.

The Art-yarings re-told in this chapter aim to express more than reportage, and also to reach beyond intellectual comparison to existing literature. Rather, these Art-yarings are intended to serve as examples of how this specific integrated method both describes and creates social realities for participants. These personal stories include many happy, strong and positive moments in the make-up of our identities and lives, as well as stories we have shared of great pains born of past and current life challenges, failings and losses. True to the form of the Relational, many different entities and processes - art materials; the artworks; the spaces; Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries; spirits; hosting organisations; and participating peers – are all conjured to provide the support and courage to remain safely engaged as we retell and recreate our lives. The intensely personal and creative character of Art-yarning meant that the process of transcribing the recordings and revisiting the artworks was often emotionally challenging. These processes further illuminated for me the courage and generosity of the participants, and I feel privileged to be granted this view of their inner selves. These are experiences which continue to influence my own process of re-creating my being across professional and personal domains.

As will be shown below, the participants - and I, as a researcher-participant - found Art-yarings to be an effective form of integrated communication that allowed us to enhance self-awareness as Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals who exist in the complex web of the Cultural Interface. Furthermore, the Art-yarings created spaces from which variations of the Relational both enacted and transcended art-making, carrying over into embodied experiences. The Art-yarings of the Indigenous participants revealed a common thread which I have identified as the messy-whole-self, and which I expand on below. Powerful evidence for the conceptual commonalities between the two domains of knowledge came in the form of the unplanned
participation of several non-Indigenous participants. For these participants, including myself, Art-yarnings crystallised pathways of adaptation to various Indigenous ways of knowing-being-doing. The method unsettled our settler identities in both bearable and productive ways. Rather than an abrogation of our identities, these experiences of adaptation have enriched self-awareness and cross-cultural communication.

The process of writing up the knowledge synthesis was challenging because the ontology of the Relational across both Indigenous knowledge systems and art-making can never be completely attainable through words. In addition, any thematic process risks the essentialisation of Indigenous alterity. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge here that this knowledge synthesis is partial, uncertain, and inconclusive - it is in a constant state analogous to an illuminated shadow. On occasions I group, to an extent, the experiences of participants in order to explore commonalities, but I do not view these experiences as identical. I find it useful to think of commonalities, not as defined categories or themes – or still less ‘codes’ – but rather as imagined soft-edged spaces along which the participants have travelled, taking different pathways to represent their sense of identity.

The soft-edged spaces on which I particularly focus in this chapter include: messy resistance; Elders & Community - tailored constructs; Country - a bond in presence and absence; Dot painting - Australism & pan-Aboriginality; and Whiteness. For the non-Indigenous participants, including myself, I have identified the additional space of Adaptation. These spaces are governed by the Relational in the integrational method. Importantly, I have also found the messy-whole-self to inhabit these spaces. That is, the Art-yarnings reveal different, often apparently contradictory, terrains within each self, which take and reject, adapt, modify and manipulate various elements of Western ways of knowing-being-doing, whilst continuing to know and be known primarily through Indigenous knowledge systems.

Far from reflecting fragmentation or inferior identity formation, I associate the emergence of this messiness, in part with the impact of colonialism, but more with the expression of the evolving nature of the Relational in Indigenous philosophies. The messy-whole-self reflects a strong, resilient and cohesive Indigenous identity. The notion of wholeness-through-mess in representations of Indigenous identities does not dismiss the urgent need for justice, nor does it undermine the challenges the Indigenous participants face in light of continuing subjugation. It does however, illuminate and celebrate the strengths, diversity and richness of their Indigenous identities. This is a portrayal of the strengths of Indigenous identities which remain underrepresented in governmental, structural and popular communications in Australia, and which I hope this research can help to rectify.

The Art-yarnings Stories: Methodology of Representations

Any process of communication, including cross-cultural communication and translation from visual to verbal symbols, inherently presents challenges due to the differing ontologies and epistemologies inherent in each form of expression. However, an ongoing critical awareness of existing foundational differences among individuals, worldviews and forms of communication helps to navigate such challenges. Awareness of differences leads to respect of the Other - human, non-human and conceptual - and this respect is bound to our acceptance of limited access to knowledge of the Other. In groups where cross-cultural and visual communication takes place, group members use the specific characteristics of such forms of communication to help each other to directly and indirectly gain insights which otherwise might stay hidden.
Fundamentally, symbols are the words of visual language. The phrase ‘a picture tells a thousand words’ captures the ability of an image to hold multiple meanings. These meanings emerge from both the artist and the viewer, and are history-, time-, culture- and context-dependent. While symbols and words can integrate in ways that enrich meanings for both artist and viewer, a complete and accurate description of the creative experience can never be attained. Milner (2011) explains that a written description of her creative experiences not only enhanced the quality of these experiences, but also developed her self-awareness of the diverse ways through which she experiences a sense of self being-in-the-world. However, she states, “to explain just how it is done to someone who has never felt it for himself is like trying to explain to someone how to move one’s ear” (p.47)

Similarly, in Indigenous knowledge systems, access to knowledge is not equal, and there can be several knowledge productions which occur simultaneously, but not necessarily with transparency between systems. Law (2004) describes this way of knowing and being as an ontological disjunction - a practice of knowing which accepts that entities are constantly and differently enacted in different locations and contexts. Verran (in Law, 2004) refers to the Dreaming as an ‘ontic/epistemic imaginary’. That is, a rich conceptual resource from which Aboriginal people engage in what is understood to be an eternal process of not only retelling and remaking realities, but also reconciling local knowledges. The inherent challenge in translation of both the creative process, and the ontological disjunction within Indigenous knowledge systems, involves the development of approaches for relating the Art-yarnings which keep the metaphors for reality-making open, refuse distinctions between the literal and the metaphorical, and reject the dualism between real and unreal – thinking, instead, in terms of ‘degrees of enacted reality’ (Law, 2004, p.139).

In order for this chapter to reflect the various enacted realities involved in this research, I have therefore made the following structural choices. Firstly, in consultation with Elders, I have named this chapter ‘Knowledge Synthesis’, rather than more conventional titles like ‘Data Analysis’, in order to demonstrate respect and acknowledgment of my limited access both to Indigenous knowledge systems, and to insights born out of the creative processes. At the same time, this title also reflects a decolonised approach where research findings are not seen as atomised data that could be analysed from an elevated position of the non-Indigenous researcher, but rather as a joint effort, which offers possible, limited and never completely accurate or certain versions of a synthesis of knowledge. Furthermore, in order to both respect and echo Indigenous ways of retelling and remaking realities, this research project includes an Artful Mob art exhibition, which the participants, Elders, Communities and I view as at least as important as this thesis for representing this new knowledge. The art exhibition is itself an enacted entity of our knowing-being-doing.

A brief reminder of the overall structure of the knowledge synthesis will be useful here. As with many forms of intensive qualitative research, the project has produced a large volume of Art-yarnings which are well beyond what could be covered comprehensively in a single thesis. Therefore, I begin each section below with a collage of artworks produced during the session/s under discussion. These collages appear for the purposes of providing further support to the examples which I discuss in detail throughout the chapter, and also allow for a decolonised, Art-yarning space where the images and the yarning can speak for themselves. Next, I explain the relevant main art activity, and offer a general overview of how the specific session(s) unfolded - the main events which took place and their Relational positions to the whole program. I then name specific areas of new knowledge that have emerged from these events, selected because I have identified them as particularly interesting due to their impact on participants and their
relation to existing literature. The Art-yarnings include examples of the artworks and excerpts from the direct verbal sharing of the participants, in order to deliver, as accurately and as closely as I can, the first-hand experiences of engagement with this integrated method. Interwoven throughout the sections, are my reflections on additional possible meanings these artworks might hold for the participants. As a researcher-participant, I have also included examples of my own Art-yarning, along with relevant reflections on my own experience of the Art-yarning process.

The Art-yarnings of participants on both Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries revealed similarities across topics such as: Country; parenthood; womanhood; manhood; grief and loss; family; self-care; self-growth; loneliness; homelessness; anxiety; cultural and individual identities; sexual identities; community; kinship responsibilities; and perceptions of Elders and communities. While there were commonalities across this range of topics among participants within and across the two Countries, their experiences also differed in important ways. I therefore do not refer to these commonalities as ‘themes’ – a terminological choice that also reflects my commitment to avoid the risk of essentialising Indigenous identities. In order to maintain the integrity of the knowledge synthesis, the discussion aims to balance commonalities and individual experiences. This approach complements two foundational notions across both Indigenous Knowledge Systems and art therapy - the importance of both self-identity and the Relational position of the self.

Through our visual representations of things like: our names; waterways; creation stories; cakes; shapes; gifts we have and want; kitchen utensils; bridges; animals; masks; seasons; cloths/accessories; and islands, along with our yarnings, we were able to know and re-know, establish and re-establish, celebrate our strengths and face our pains. Often, as a result of these processes, we were able to also experience transformations to our ways of knowing-being-doing. Experiencing the creative process — even for one person — may be more radical and important than trying to say what it is. At the same time, while it is certainly difficult to explain how to move one’s ears, yet it never cancels our desire to attempt the task in hope of findings precious moments of intra and inter-understandings.

**The Artful Mob groups: background contexts**

The Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation hosted the *Artful Mob* program on Gunditjmara Country for 13 weekly workshops, which ran for four hours each. The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BADAC) hosted the program on Wathaurong Country for 20 weekly workshops, also of four-hour duration. The majority of participants were Indigenous; however, the hosting organisations and participants accepted two non-Indigenous partners of other participants into each of the programs - an example of a contemporary expansion of the Relational. In the discussion below, in cases where participants know of their birth Country/ies, I state the names of Country/ies when I first introduce their Art-yarnings. In all other cases, I follow the participants’ own use of the terms Indigenous, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander on initial introduction of the relevant Art-yarnings. All participants, except one woman on Gunditjmara Country, have expressed their wish to be known by first name and names of Countries within this thesis, the *Artful Mob* art exhibition and all related future publications. The participants have explained that sharing these details reflects fulfillment of the Relational – in particular, kinship responsibilities for other Indigenous people who might come across their stories and share similar experiences. The rate of attendance varied across the two Countries and I provide critical reflections on this topic in the final chapter, under the discussion of research limitations.
The participants in the *Artful Mob* sessions at Winda Mara in Heywood were women who live in the surrounding towns of Hamilton and Portland in South West Victoria. All these towns are colonial constructions on Gunditjmara Country. The women ranged in age between 25 to 56 years old. Most have children, and with two exceptions, all the mothers were single parents. Eleven women agreed to partake in the research project. Three of these women attended only one session, others attended several sessions, and, overall, we had a fairly consistent group of six women. The co-facilitator, Malachi, is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman and works at BADAC as a Family Services worker. The program began on the 20th of April 2016 and concluded on the 21st of September 2016. A total of 13 workshops took place.

The participants in the *Artful Mob* mixed-gender group at BADAC live in the city of Ballarat, which is situated in Central Western Victoria. Ballarat is a colonial construction on Wathaurong Country. The participants ranged in age between 28-60 years old. All the participants are parents, and some are grandparents. Several participants are single parents. Ten people agreed to partake in the research project and we had a fairly consistent attendance of all ten participants until week nine. The co-facilitator, Ashley, is a non-Indigenous man who works at BADAC as a Project Manager. For reasons which reflect both positive changes and difficult issues, attendance dropped, from week 9 onwards, to five participants. The program began on the 21st of October 2016 and concluded on the 12th of May 2017. All 20 workshops took place.

The majority of these art therapy tools and processes were modifications of art therapy exercises outlined in the book: *Art Therapy for Groups: A handbook of themes and exercises* by Marian Liebmann (2001). The original skeleton of the art-making program (see appendices 1 & 2) served as a guide only, and many changes took place according to the rising needs of, and in response to suggestions by, the participants. Most sessions began with a warm-up exercise, followed by a main art-making activity. The purpose of the warm-up activities was to create a transitional and preparation period for the main activity as well as a way to check-in with how participants were feeling on the day. The warm-up activities were also used in order to promote spontaneous art-making, further develop the use of imagination, and build up the capacity to use visual symbols as means of expression. In the discussion below, I include images from warm-up activities next to the main artwork when reciprocal relations between the two are directly apparent. The table below (Figure 22) provides a brief explanation of warm-up activities as supporting information for understanding of later discussion of these activities during the knowledge synthesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scribble Drawing</td>
<td>Close your eyes and ensure your hand is not rested on the table so your hand movements can be as big as they need to be. Scribble for half a minute or so on the page. Don’t worry about scribbling outside the paper. Make your movements as big or as small as you like. Open your eyes and look at the scribble from all four directions of the paper until you see something in there. Use different colours to the scribble colour to draw a picture of what you see.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you were: a shape; a body of water; a piece of clothing; a cake; a season; an animal; a kitchen utensil - what kind will you be today?

Draw the first thing that comes to mind. Please don’t think about your favorite piece of clothing, cake, animal and so on. We are looking here for the first image which pops up in your head when we say, ‘If you were... what type will you be today?’ Don’t worry if you find it hard to not think about what you will paint or draw. This will become easier with time and practice. Closing your eyes and taking deep breaths for few seconds can help clear your mind so the right image for you can come up.

Ink Blobs/ Partial images
Complete the image

Randomly choose one of these ink blobs/papers with marks. Look at the ink blob until you see something in there and then use any art materials to draw-out what you see.

Use any art materials to make an image out of the partial marks on the paper.

Figure 22: Art Therapy Table of Warm-up Activities

The art materials offered to participants included: drawing pencils; water soluble oil pastels; water colours; colour pencils; acrylic paints; A3 art paper; canvas; plaster bandages; paper masks; fabrics; journals; and all related accessories. As I discuss in the theory chapter, art therapy locates art materials on a continuum from liquid to resistive. Understanding the choices participants make of specific art materials, and their impact on their creative process, can help illuminate parts of the self. For example, the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) model (Kagin and Lusebrink, 1978) offers art therapists an assessment pathway for how a client interacts with art materials during the art-making phase of a session in order to process information and create images. When co-designing the Artful Mob program, and in our facilitations of the workshops, the co-facilitators and I made conscious efforts to rid the sessions of any elements which might suggest the provision of therapy. However, because the primary goal of this research is to test Art-yarning as an integrated method in social science research, exploring the thoughts and feelings of participants in relation to their engagement with different art materials is an important component of the research design. I therefore include discussion about the experience participants had with the art materials, and I situate these experiences in the context provided by relevant literature.

We began the programs by establishing group agreements which included the following guidelines: a commitment to treat the sharing as sacred and avoid gossip with people outside the group; respect for each group member; sharing to take place at one’s own will; no interpretations of others’ artworks; respectful and responsible use of the art materials and the space; no art-making while sharing; a sense of fun and humor are welcomed and are seen as important part of the process. Being critically aware that the implementation of formal group agreements reflects a Western method of ensuring ethical conduct, we have avoided the word contract, as well as any written format for the agreements, and instead co-constructed the agreements with participants, who were also responsible for their approval. The process of creating-into-being is both the means and the ends - we are our creative processes and these creative processes are us. I will therefore begin the retelling of our Art-yarning journeys through the lens of exploring the Processes We Are.
The Processes We Are
The two collages above depict us doing art and becoming art. These collages include images of Carpy - a non-Indigenous participant from BADAC who has since passed away. Carpy and Kym, his partner and a Wathaurong woman, attended every workshop of the Artful Mob program, and I share examples of their Art-yarning in discussion below. Carpy was informally adopted by Indigenous people at a very young age and was buried in the Indigenous section of the cemetery in Ballarat. Despite the common Aboriginal protocol around the management of a person’s name
and images for a period after their death, Kym has granted me exceptional permission to share some of Carpy’s Art-yarning, saying, “I know he’ll be real proud, real happy about that” (per. Comm., 2018).

I see Kym’s decision to allow the retelling of Carpy’s story as reflecting both expansion and continuity in her enactment of the Relational through preservation of traditional law. Yunupingu (2016) explains that, according to Yolongu traditional law, when a leader reaches the end of his journey “others who have taken responsibility and who have taken leadership must then bear the burden of creation” (p.3). Carpy’s unfinished business of sharing his story with others who might benefit somehow from such a process, has come to be the responsibility of Kym. The scale of this responsibility varies significantly from the responsibility for the creation - the ontology of the Yolongu people - yet the importance of the act remains. I am also proud and happy to be among those who carry on Carpy’s responsibility to share his story.

This yarn represents a micro example of the responsibilities born out of enacting on the principle of the Relational and demonstrates the possibility of such enactment between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Care for another is not an exclusive Indigenous value, but the more relevant point here is that, through discussion and practice of the Relational, first between Kym and Carpy over the years as an interracial couple, and in our engagements with each other, we have improved, albeit in small scale, these intercultural relationships.

Another relevant reflection to the Processes We Are, relates to the broader process of photographing participants during engagements with the creative process. When sorting through the images of us doing art, it became clear that these include only few images of the Winda Mara women’s group. During the facilitation of this group, I was writing the ethics chapter of this thesis, and had presented at a conference and published about the ethical challenges researchers in Indigenous research contexts face, due to university frameworks for evaluating ethical conduct within bureaucratic, neoliberal systems of legal accountability (Krone et al., 2017; Assoulin, 2016). I was so immersed in critically reflecting on institutional rigidity, that I overlooked what I came to view as ethical challenges that arise from a more personal space; this related to assumptions embedded deeply within me that I still needed to learn to challenge. For a long time after the program had commenced, I thought I should not ask to take photographs of the women making art, because the artworks should be their faces and voices. In reality, I felt uncomfortable about making a request to photograph the women - I worried that it would be too intrusive, or push things too far. Later, I came to understand that my discomfort, linked intimately to my assumption that I was responsible for making unilateral decisions about how the sessions were recorded, were a mechanism through which I was exercising Whiteness - taking control over decisions that were not, at least not entirely, mine to make, while also being led by Western norms pertaining to visual methods and ethics. Unlearning Whiteness is a lengthy process that can never be completely attained. This has real similarities to MacIntyre’s (1998) question - Whose Justice? Which Rationality? It is therefore critical to relentlessly employ the decisive question: whose ethics? This is because the choices we avoid making are as important as those we make for our capacity to behave in ways our Indigenous participants and collaborators deem ethical. Since this point of the discussion pertains to the various indicators of identity which participants have expressed their wish to make visible, it seems fitting to begin the stories of the knowledge synthesis with the activity, The Names We Are.
The Names We Are
**Draw Your Name**

This Art Therapy (AT) tool asks that participants draw their name by choosing symbols that represent either the meaning of the name, or the participant’s own interpretation of it. The goal is to begin engagement with visual language, play with imagination and introduce a foundational aspect of the self to other group members. We used this warm-up activity with the Gunditjмara women’s group only, whilst engaging the BADAC group in a different introductory activity. This is because our main goal was to present the *Artful Mob* program as a flexible skeleton, rather than as a prescribed method across the two Countries, which risks essentialising Indigeneity, disempowering participants and decreasing the array of creative possibilities within the program.

Art therapists usually like to explain the activity without personal examples because these can influence the creative process of participants. However, the group as a whole asked for further clarification, so I used two personal examples of engaging with this warm-up. The first was the repeated drawings of symbols depicting light since the meaning of my name in Hebrew suggests that I am, for my parents, a light from god. The second example reflects later engagements with this activity, where I started drawing elephants because of a lifetime feeling of being drawn to this animal, and because I believe I share many of its personality and behavioral traits. The women seemed to benefit from this sharing, as each moved to create her own personal space and engage in the visual creation of her name. Amelia (Millie), an Aboriginal woman, found it harder to engage with this activity, and I describe her experience in the following discussion. Overall, the group’s Art-yarnings depict either literal meanings or specific personality traits. For example, Candida (Candy), a Gunditjмara woman, became a crashing wave because she ‘crashes on people’s lives in a good way’ - entertaining and helping out.

This was the first time I witnessed the conceptual commonalities that I have identified between Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems, enacted through the method. Below are two examples of the Draw-Your-Name Art-yarnings followed by relevant discussion. I chose to start the knowledge synthesis with a discussion of this art activity because it marks the beginning of engagement with Art-yarnings in order to explore possible and diverse representations of Indigenous identities. I chose the Art-yarnings of Malachi and Millie because they offer two different enactments of the Relational through one’s sense of identity. The first does so through visualisation of the religious aspect of her identity and the second through intergenerational women’s kinship as analogous to her sense of self.

Although outside the focus of discussion here and in our related Art-yarning session, later reflection alerted me to notice that these and other examples depict blood family members as central to one’s sense of identities. Indigenous kinship differs to Western notions of family in that a blood relationship isn’t the only criterion for viewing and treating one as family. With acknowledgment and respect to this ancient familial structure, I find it interesting that these representations of the self, share broad commonalities with Western blood-related notions of family. An additional layer of commonality pertains to matriarchal Aboriginal societal structures and feminist ideologies. Far from a push towards a focus on cross-cultural similarities, further research on spaces where the two knowledge systems meet can contribute to our understanding of contemporary Indigenous identities. Not because these are products of long-lasting colonialism alone but because, at least to some degree, the interaction with the other can illuminate not only the places we differ but those where we are like the other and the other is like us. Nakata (2007) argues that the development of Indigenous Stand Point Theory (ISP) involves dual efforts to maintain values as peoples of tradition as well as development and adaptation in light of colonialism. It could be valuable to engage in further research inquiry about whether this
space of adaptation, which inevitably involves change, is in fact a space which already holds elements of continuity - a space of messy adaptation where some of the adaptations are merely new expressions of old ways of knowing-being-doing. Including non-Indigenous participants who have experiences of adapting to Indigenous knowledge systems can further enrich such inquiry by making the exploration of the messy adaptation space reciprocal.
Malachi, the co-facilitator, is an Aboriginal-Torres Strait Islander. She uses a scroll and crosses as the more immediate and familiar symbols from which to represent her name, but then goes...
further to symbolically represent her close relationship with her father. In this way, she explains, the image represents a broader and deeper meaning which extends the biblical connotation. Millie struggles with the activity and, as we talk further, we realise the history of her name dominates the conversation. She comes to realise that it is the generational element to her name which holds the most significant meaning. She finds her space in the room and produces an image of a gum tree to represent the Relational among women in her extended family.

These and other related Art-yarnings are in accord with the concept of the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007), where diverse and complex Indigenous identities exist. For Malachi, Christianity and what she later names as Indigenous spiritual identity co-exist. Fanon (1963) argues that one consequence of an inferior identity formation for colonised people is the forced internalisation of the self as ‘Other’. Bhabha (2004), by contrast, discusses the use of the stereotype as a resistance tool, while Moreton-Robinson (2015) claims that the cultural forms imposed on Indigenous people have “produced a doubleness whereby Indigenous subjects can ‘perform’ whiteness while being Indigenous” (p.11). However, here and in examples of Art-yarnings pertaining to the AT tool of the masks which I discuss below, ‘inferior’ identities were rarely evident in the participants’ representations of their Indigeneity, resistance was not a conscious task, and representations of self were rarely about performing Whiteness. Instead, there are new and messy places-in-between where the Indigenous identity of some participants reflects a convergence with elements of Western ontologies.

As Malachi’s Art-yarning reveals, she does not view Christianity as a forced internalisation of the self as the ‘religious Other’. She is not performing her Christianity, and neither does the existence of her Christian identity act as a form of stereotype which she uses to resist Christianity by mastering it as a religion alongside her Indigenous spiritual beliefs. Rather, and as will be evident in later discussion from her Art-yarning about the mask she has created, Christianity forms an equal and genuine part of her religious identity. In other words, there is an expansion of what contemporary Indigenous identities are and mean, and this expansion is not associated with a colonisation of the mind, but rather as seen as a valid expression of the self. Malachi’s religious identity is consonant with scholarship which argues against the requirement for unbroken connections to timeless Indigenous ways of life as the burden of proof for ‘genuine’ Indigeneity (Cowlishaw, 2009; Niezen, 2009; Morgan, 2006). Thus, her choice to identify with religious and spiritual elements from both cultures does not make her Indigenous identity inferior, an ‘act’, or somehow lesser than the identities of Indigenous persons who solely hold to their traditional spirituality. Similarly, some participants across both Countries generated Art-yarnings which did not include any direct reference to Indigenous spiritual beliefs, which leads me to suggest that the secular14 Indigenous identity is as valid a representation of Indigeneity as any other.

Millie’s Art-yarning accords with the foundational concept of the Relational within Indigenous knowledge systems (Tuhiiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Wilson, 2008; Martin, 2003), but with a focus on the specific micro-relational web of women in her family. The Relational can also be located in her choice of the gum tree and the connection she expresses with it. The gum tree is a non-human form, inseparable from her sense of self, and it fills its part in the Relational by acting as a vessel for her connections with women in the extended family. These, along with other Art Yarnings produced across the programs, are consistent with Dodson’s (2003) argument that identity must be a self-identity, and one which carries no imposed definitions, which “must

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14 With awareness that Indigenous religious beliefs are driven from a sense of belonging to land, sea, other people and one’s culture, I borrow the term ‘secular’ here in order to refer to Indigenous participants who do not necessarily believe in all elements which constitute Indigenous religious beliefs, and yet identify as Indigenous people. This topic suggests an interesting area for future research inquiry into Indigenous identities.
include the right to inherent the collective identity of one’s people, and to transform that identity creatively” (p.31). As I note in the introduction, the Art-yarnings have thickness or volume - akin to geological layers that the artist and group members engage in co-digging. The masks were created in both Countries, a few weeks into the program. They represent an additional layer for the exploration of the identities, to which I now turn.
The Masks We Are
Masks

Masks have been used throughout human history as mediums for changing identity and assuming new personas. In fact, the word *persona*, referring to the individual’s social façade that is presented to or perceived by others, is derived from the Latin word for mask. Differentiating it from *anima* - the true inner self - Jung describes *persona* as “that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is” (Storr, 1983, p.421). The psychotherapeutic dimension of art therapy encourages masks as a popular tool among practitioners in the field. Art therapists use masks in order to: explore one’s private and public domains; explore identity and its formation; understand and recognise feelings; express cultural identity; identify and integrate disowned aspects of self; and for engagement in two-way communication (Liebmann, 2004; Malchiodi, 2011; Rubin, 2010; Wadeson, 2000).

In the *Artful Mob* program, we used masks to explore inner and outer representations of the self. However, we approached the process differently across the two Communities. On Gunditjmara Country, the women were given paper masks of the standard type found in art supplies shops. Several women identified such masks as incongruent with their physical Indigenous identities, with one woman referring to its ‘white Roman nose’; however, this perception of mismatch was not shared among all women. These process-related experiences are in themselves rich with insights about the array of Indigenous identities, and what such diversity can contribute to broaden the ways through which the Indigenous and non-Indigenous understand Indigeneity.

The incongruence some women expressed between the mask and their physical Indigenous identities led me to critically reflect on my own starting position. From a Jewish background, I am well familiar with the stereotype of the ‘Jewish nose’. I therefore believed it was best not to offer the women plaster bandages, in order to avoid any perceived essentialisation of their physical identifying features. One can argue that I was in fact unintentionally imposing white masks over their black skins, or is this line of thought itself an exercise in binary thinking? Do I offer (essentialisation) / do I not offer (assimilation) the plaster bandages? Conceptual understanding of diversity amongst Indigenous identities is not enough to address such dilemmas.

Cultivating conscious lived experiences (through various formats) of meeting different Indigenous people, and reflections on my own lived experiences of racism, became vital for the pursuit of a realistic anti-racist approach. Based on my embodied reflections on the experiences of the Gunditjmara group, I approached the later BADAC group on Wathaurong Country differently, by offering plaster bandages dipped in water to create either mirror-like or symbolic depictions of the outer self, with the choice of whether and how to engage with these materials left to the participants. My process here reflects one interpretation of the call by Rose (2004) for non-Indigenous moral engagement which includes re-cognition of colonial violence, and acknowledgment of the ‘moral burden of that knowledge’ (p.13).

Next, I will share examples of inner and outer faces as depicted through the four perspectives of: the mask; the artist; group members; and myself as the researcher. These Art-yarnings bring insights that further expand on perceptions of Indigenous identities and reveal both commonalities and contrasts with theoretical conceptions about inferior identity formation and mimicry as a resistance tool. These Art-yarnings also further contribute to discussion of notions of essentialisation and homogenisation. At face-value, some of these examples can appear as acts of essentialisation on the part of Indigenous participants, particularly in relation to mainstream stereotypes pertaining to sexual identities, or adaptation of visual symbols belonging to other Aboriginal groups as indicator of Indigeneity. However, deeper reflections suggest signs of striving for the co-existence of both inclusion and recognition of differences. These signs echo
the broader politics of difference and inclusion within histories of Indigenous peoples since colonialisation.

Ebbie is a daughter of a Torres Strait Islander mother and Anglo-Australian father. She has lived with her father since her parents’ separation when Ebbie was a young child. Regardless of having little contact with her mother and limited knowledge of her Islander heritage, Ebbie identifies as a Torres Strait Islander. She describes a longstanding experience of cultural homogenisation which began at school, and which continues through her engagement with various institutions and other social interactions with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. At the time of participation, Ebbie is in the midst of forming her sexual identity as gay, and her Art-yarning reveals her identification with existing social constructions of gender and sexuality. For example, she refers to ‘male’ clothing - pants and flannelette shirts - and views these as the dress codes of gay women. She also views being ‘emotional’ as a trait associated only with heterosexual women.
It is important for Candy to depict her identity as a Gunditjmara woman by using visual patterns associated with this mob. However, while she highlights dots as foreign to her mob’s depicting symbols, she declares her intention of also including those on the other cheek of the mask. Candy locates the reason within the homogenisation of Indigenous cultures. In other words, even though dots do not represent her Gunditjmara identity, they are useful for both depicting and being depicted as an Aboriginal person. Here, Moreton-Robinson’s (2015) claim of performing Whiteness takes on an additional complex dimension, because the dots belong to other Aboriginal groups but have been constructed by the coloniser as a stereotype of Aboriginality – and one which Candy consciously performs here.

In addition, she uses a moustache - social construction of male’s facial feature, which she paints with the rainbow colours - a Western visual symbol of the LGBT community. Candy thus homogenises herself as a gay woman by using the universal symbol of the rainbow colours. When describing the rainbow moustache, Candy speaks about how she is identified as the one who plays the ‘butch’ or the ‘male’ role within her romantic relationship. This identification, she claims, is based on particular physical appearance and ways of carrying herself in public. Candy explains that, whilst such identification is false, she finds herself performing the same evaluation when meeting other gay women. Before her yarning, I had assumed that Candy was breaking away from the social construction of the moustache, since most women have a physical moustache and many wear it with disregard to common constructions about femininity. However, as Candy indicates, she uses the moustache to engage with a narrative that essentialises gay relationships to include roles of the ‘butch’ or the ‘male’. To her mind, this performance of essentialisation creates her belonging within the gay community.

Candy claims that, although an assigned performative role of ‘butch’ or ‘male’ is false, she finds herself evaluating the roles of other gay women she meets. In the time I have spent with Candy,
I have observed her preforming the stereotyped ‘male role’ through her management of her partner and participant, Kelly, a non-Indigenous woman. Candy would speak on Kelly’s behalf, and interrupt Kelly’s yarning to tell the group and Kelly what she believes the images say about Kelly. Kelly surrendered to such performative roles, though her non-verbal responses suggested to me that this was not a welcomed surrender. Candy sees herself, as do some women in the group, as an informal leader within and outside the group, which also serves to explain why other women did not call out Candy’s behaviors. I was acutely aware that I was not facilitating this group as an art therapist, but my ethical obligation included ensuring participants feel safe and comfortable. These circumstances meant that I had to carefully consider my response to this role performance. I chose to remind the women in following sessions about the terms of our agreement as a refresher, and then observe the space for any changes. Towards the last third of the program, a transformation took place for both women. Kelly began to resist this performative roleplay. She once stopped Candy’s interpretation of her work, clearly stating: “no, this is not how I feel”. In a response that felt genuine to me, Candy accepted this resistance and stopped all forms of interference for the rest of the program. Rather than my indirect response, I believe that the continuing process of visually recreating the self over period of weeks played the main role in creating a safe space from which these transformations had manifested.

To summarise the Art-yarning examples, on one hand, Ebbie and Candy resist any homogenisation of their identities that might be exercised through general terms such as Indigenous, Aboriginal and Koori. Their Art-yarings are similar to Dodson’s (2003) and Gibson’s (2008) observations on the dual challenge Indigenous persons face - to understand the purpose behind historical constructions of Aboriginality, and to assert one’s own representations. On the other, both Ebbie and Candy take an active part in essentialising their gay identity, and Candy also consciously participates in homogenisation of her Aboriginal identity by conscious use of the dots. If we look at the dots as a stereotype of Aboriginal art, and thus of ‘authentic Indigenous’, Candy does not use the stereotype as a resistance tool, but rather as an homogenisation tool, in ways that resemble Russell’s (2001) discussion of the use of symbols constructed by the coloniser, as signifiers of Aboriginality to create pan-Aboriginality. Like the Barkindji people in Wilcannia (Gibson, 2008a, 2011), Candy also identifies the dot as a design belonging to another group, but unlike the Barkindji people who proudly carry the mantra ‘ours is not dots, ours is lines’, Candy uses this difference in order to homogenise her identity: she is a Gunditjmara woman, but she also presents as an Aboriginal woman in order to be recognised as an Australian Indigenous woman. This position can also suggest that this multisourced visual representation expresses the relational in respect to different Countries joined by songlines so her own Mob’s and other Mobs’ visual signs are interconnected.

For Ebbie, who is in the midst of her sexual identity formation, there is an internal conflict between the parts of her which she views as feminine and masculine. In this process, she also assimilates herself to the stereotyped social construction of gay people. Her standpoint reflects a binary view where one part must take over the other completely, in order for a sense of a whole gay sexual identity to manifest. Binary logic is often associated with Western knowledge systems, yet here, there is an example of its presence within a Torres Strait Islander’s perception of her sexual self. Furthermore, Ebbie resists her homogenisation as an Aboriginal woman, yet, despite awareness of differences between native people of the mainland and the Islands, she uses the term ‘Torres Strait Islander’, which is another collective colonial construction to describe Indigenous people of this geographical part of the continent.

Some of these representational elements of her identity can be explained by reference to simply being in the midst of her sexual identity formation. Likely, she does not have knowledge of her
specific cultural group both for personal reasons and due to the impact of colonialisation. Alongside these possible factors, what appears again is the messy space where one can simultaneously resist homogenisation, and welcome essentialisation. Further self-development is likely to reposition these forms of enactment of the self, but such future possibility is less relevant to her present understanding of herself. What is relevant here is that the Art-yarning method, and all actors involved in its facilitation, have created a safe space from which Ebbie can examine her sense of identity and be empowered to be the authoring painter of all forms of representations that might appear. The Art-yarnings of Malachi below, provide additional insights into the topic of the cultural and religious aspects of Indigenous identities.

Malachi - outer & inner

The flower, wave, palm tree - they represent the other side of my culture... it’s on the outside so they’ll know that I’m not just Aboriginal - I’m Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

This is meant to be like a bible, so like the spiritual side of things, and this is the other spiritual - the cultural spiritual. They are little mookies.

All these words are the same... Koori, Murray, Nana they mean the same thing just for different areas.

Similar to Ebbie and Candy, Malachi also demands specific depiction and recognition as both an Aboriginal and a Torres Strait Islander woman. This demand emerges from experiences with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who refer to her as Aboriginal only. Similar to the Art-yarning pertaining to her name, Malachi uses the mask to continue her engagement with representations of her religious identity. Growing up in a Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal and Christian home, Malachi owns two types of religions, which she names ‘spiritual’ and ‘cultural spiritual’, as depicted by the bible and the mookies. This dyad pattern continues with a sense of belonging at two places - North Queensland and South-Western Victoria. Furthermore, Malachi also explains that her cultural spiritual identity has significantly developed after moving to Heywood. This challenges assumptions that one’s sense of identity and connection to Country is, or can solely be acquired or developed, from living on one’s Country. Another interesting element I note in her Art-yarning relates to her grouping of the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait spiritualties into one represented by the mookies. I am also uncertain whether Malachi refers to Mookies or Mimi spirits, as her yarning suggests the latter which, according to Aboriginal myth, are fairy-like
beings who live in the rocky escarpment of northern Australia as spirits, and who were responsible for teaching the first Aboriginals to hunt and paint (Australian Museum, 2018). Mookies, on the other hand, are the spirits of deceased persons who appear at time of death in the family and are seen to protect families from possible revenge by evil spirits (Burrinja, 2018). I cannot help thinking that maybe the Art-yarning caters for both spirits - the Mimi to represent her Aboriginal religious beliefs and the Mookies to protect her and her family because her father, whom she depicts as an inseparable part of her identity in the depiction of her name above, had unexpectedly passed away couple of weeks after the mask was completed.

As I have discussed earlier, these Art-yarnings have produced representations of identity which do not fit comfortably within Fanon’s (1967) notion of inferior identity formation. A closer, but still not neat, link can be drawn to Bhabha’s (2004) discussion of mimicking as a resistance tool. An example of this is Candy’s conscious use of dots to represent pan-Aboriginality, although we cannot quite name this as mimicking, since dots are indeed a representational design of some Aboriginal groups. Dot painting includes footprints that belong to both specific Aboriginal groups and the coloniser. Similarly, the participants who have used dot painting either see it as a general marker of Aboriginal identity or have consciously used it as a as a resistance tool to signify pan-Aboriginality in relation to non-Aboriginality. This complexity of perception and use makes dots a messy stereotype.

Further targeted research would be needed to draw any firm conclusions about whether an Australian version of Orientalism can be applied to the popular status of dot paintings and dot painting as a signifier of Aboriginality, but a few brief observations on this issue are relevant here. As the theoretical chapter suggested, dot painting is an inter-cultural product, and it is the co-existence of the footprints of both cultures which make it challenging to compare it to Orientalism. On the one hand, dot painting can be seen as one mechanism through which the coloniser Orientalises or Australises specific Aboriginality, while, on the other, it is a style of art which has been recognised as making visible ‘Indigenous ways of knowing’ (Perkins, 2000).

Said (1978) argues that Orientalism is the manufacturing of the Other, for the purpose of domination and for capitalist gain, through the use of stereotypes. Because of the perceived sense of Aboriginality that dot painting carries, we cannot treat it as mere artistic style but, even if we were to do so, as Said (1978) reminds us, style is a product of “specific worldly circumstances being molded by tradition, institutions, will, and intelligence into formal articulation” (1978, p. 225). Acrylic Dot painting on canvas is a social invention associated with substantial profit within domestic and international art markets that began flourishing in Central Australia during the 1970’s (Gibson 2011; Myers, 2002, 2012). Regardless of the participation of some Aboriginal people in the establishment of dot painting as an art category, Dot painting on canvas was manufactured by the coloniser (the Governmental department; art world and market; media) through investment in specific social, cultural and economic aspects of the arts. This multileveled construction has created a false notion of what is ‘original/traditional’ Aboriginal art.

The construction of Aboriginals as emblems is not a new idea. Bird Rose (2000) explains this regular construction of European-defined Aboriginality in which “their art, their archeological remains, their concepts of the sacred, and their physical presence are appropriated to fuel images of national identity” (p.2). Others have similarly discussed the manipulation of art to advance the White national identity of Australia (Grossman, 2003; Russell, 2001; Nicoll, 2004; Onus, 2003). The construction of Dot paintings simultaneously 1) created a new art movement that the coloniser can portray both domestically and internationally as a uniform Aboriginality that is palatable and sophisticated by coloniser’s standards to indicate the disciplining of the savage; 2) provided monetary gains and recognition within the art world to art dealers and galleries - gains
that constitute, at least for a significant period, an ‘arty’ version of the stolen wages scandal (Gunstone, 2014); 3) cultivated a new aspect of Aboriginality for those dispossessed Aboriginal peoples of Papunya and other places who engaged in this art form; which in turn 4) developed views of ‘loss’ and ‘lack’ of cultural identity, often held by and about Indigenous people who do not engage in acrylic dot painting in places outside the Central and Western desert regions of Australia (Gibson 2011; Ferrell, 1998).

Dot painting can therefore be regarded as one mechanism of an ‘Austrientalism’, where both the visual symbol and its painting on canvas is re-manufactured as a homogenising cultural stereotype, which often acts as a signifier of ‘authentic Indigeneity’ and that essentialises Indigeneity for the purpose of domination. Dot paintings on canvas thus become a significant mechanism through which the exotic, bizarre, regressed and feminine Other is produced. A sense of the exotic is produced through the overall colorful characteristics of this art style, yet the same characteristics also make it appear as bizarre, ancient and regressed. The dot paintings as maps, songlines and stories depict cultural knowledge, but the method also safely remains in the less-than space – treated as inferior, simplistic and ancient in comparison to the European wisdom produced by ink. Parallel to social constructions of masculine and feminine, this art style never attracts the same appreciation of artistic skills attributed to Euro-American art from Michelangelo to Rembrandt to Pollack. While the dominant categories for exhibiting Western art are by art movement or individual artists, Aboriginal art is curated and exhibited on the basis of race in ‘specialised’ Aboriginal Art galleries and dedicated ‘other’ rooms within national galleries.

At the same time, the Art-yarning of participants who have used dots in their artworks suggests another messy space where dot paintings are a tool used by both the Orient and the Occident - settler and native - to identify each other, and themselves - but in variety of ways that sometimes converge. Here perhaps Bhabha’s (1994) conceptions of the stereotype and mimicking as resistance tool, offer places for making sense of participants’ appropriation of dot paintings in Art Yarning. Bhabha (1994) explains that the stereotype translates the unfamiliar into coherent or meaningful ways of understanding the colonized - the Other. On the other hand, the stereotype maintains distance as the coloniser cannot admit that the colonised is not that different, while still maintaining its domination.

Somewhat differently, in the Artful Mob workshops, the Indigenous participants use the stereotypes themselves as meaningful ways of understanding the self. Bhabha (1994) further argues that the stereotype is not a simplification because it represents false reality of the colonised, but rather because it is a fixed form of representation that, “in denying the play of difference, constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations” (p.107). But, as we have seen with Candy above, and will explore again in the three examples below, some masks use the stereotype of dot painting in a manipulative, rather than a fixed, form of representation in order to depict pan-Aboriginality as resistance to the imposed White self. Bhabha (1994) continues to link the stereotype as a tool for the operation of his central concepts of ambivalence, anxious repetitions and mimicry in order to illuminate considerations of how colonial discourses generate the possibility of their own critique. The Artful Mob Art-yarnings do not provide a basis for speaking about ambivalence, or anxious repetitions, in the ways the Indigenous participants use dots a stereotype, as these phenomena did not manifest in the workshops. Relevant here instead is Bhabha’s view of mimicking as a source of power and resistance. As seen in the examples above, two masks use stereotypes about gay sexual identity, while the third depicts a mixture of Christian and Indigenous religious beliefs as the religious make-up of one’s identity. These are not seen as mimicking for the purpose of resistance. Rather, they are simply identified as true indicators of one’s identity.
Below we see the following examples: Candy’s use of dots as a resistance tool, where they appear in defined and oppositional space to horizontal and vertical lines - the primary visual informants of her Gunditjmara identity; Paul’s use of dots (as the Aboriginal flag and the brown skin) as the visual indicators of his Aboriginality in a messy space which includes a sense of pride as well as experiences of pre-judgments about him as a person by non-Indigenous people; Kristie’s use of dots as indicators of her identity as an Aboriginal artist; and Lisa, an Adnyamathanha woman, who uses dots as a healing tool with which she stiches her ‘broken emotions’.

These examples each depict the messiness of the space where dots are used. This space expresses clear resistance to the colonising project, as well as healing, creativity, pride, sadness, frustration and anger. Yet regardless of the functions the dot painting fulfils for the different participants who use it, its use expresses one aspect of a uniformised pan-Aboriginality. Equal in importance to how each participant uses dots is the recognition of a certain collective status that the dots have across the broad space of defining Aboriginality.

To clarify, I do not suggest that dots are a collective mark of Aboriginality amongst all participants. In fact, I estimate dots to be present in less than a quarter of all the artworks the programs have produced. However, because some participants chose to use dots as part of deliberate Art-yarning explorations of the self, I also cannot deny the role this visual symbol plays as a messy signifier of Aboriginality for those participants. This particular positioning of pan-Aboriginality in relation to the non-Aboriginal is consonant with Russell’s (2001) argument that the adaptation by Indigenous corporations of stereotypes through visual and totemic symbols does not entail a simple reinstatement of the homogeneity paradigm; but is rather geared towards creating a uniform collective identity as a form of resistance to the imposed White self.

The outcome reveals spaces of messy resistance and messy identity. Candy is a Gunditjmara, a Koori, and an Aboriginal gay woman. Ebbie is a Torres Strait Islander gay woman, and Malachi is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait woman who holds Aboriginal religious and Christian beliefs. Paul is a proud Aboriginal man who is, at times, also tired of his brown skin, while Kristie, who has fair skin, uses dot paintings to project outward her identity as an Aboriginal artist. Lastly, Lisa uses dots as she uses other visual symbols, without necessarily identifying them as ‘Aboriginal’, to heal a sense of a fragmented self as a result of the impact of mental illness. The descriptions stand for
different, often contradictory, terrains of the self which take and reject, adapt, modify and manipulate the messy stereotype, to create diverse representations of Indigeneity.

These messy spaces echo the general call across Indigenous critical writings that identity must be self-identity, and impose no definitions (Dodson, 1994, 2003). It is crucial to recognise the impact of colonialism on the formation of Indigenous identities rather than assume such an impact is a thing of the past. Generations of Indigenous people live, and will continue in the future, with complex identities which in many cases include dimensions associated or influenced by western ways of knowing-being-doing, at times to a point where differentiation between the two domains is blurred or takes a back seat in the act of daily living. In this process, the Art-yarning becomes one means of ensuring the development of an approach to Indigeneity that minimises essentialism, which in turn escapes viewing Indigenous identity as a fixed, stationary classification (Paradies, 2006; Morrissey, 2003; Gilroy, P. 1993). From this discussion of Art-yarnings which place the individual as the focus of the creative process, I now turn to share and discuss Art-yarnings which explore the self in relation to notions of family.
The Families We Are
This AT tool asks participants to represent their family members, including themselves, using symbols, shapes, colours etc. We ask artists to avoid the use of stick figures in order to encourage deeper engagement with the process by creating unique symbolic representations for each family member. We agree that family can be anyone we see as family in our lives. This point demonstrates the meeting place of Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy across the aspects of Enactment and Agency and Dualism. The multiple narratives are enacted through visual representations of kinship affiliation, and the symbols which make up the image are viewed as active and with their own agency.

We facilitated this tool with the BADAC group on Wathaurong Country. Draw-Your-Family can often generate powerful emotional responses because it mirrors the artists’ various family dynamics and their position within those. Engagement with this process for participants who are members of the Stolen Generations, or for those who have separated from their families for other reasons, can be extremely challenging or reignite traumatic experiences when not done with care. It was therefore vital to introduce the tool at much later stage of the program, after trust and rapport have been established and informed consent gained. Because one of the aims BADAC has set for this program relates to improving communication among participants with experiences of domestic violence, we decided in favor of using this tool.

Because art is a symbolic language, it has created a safe place from which the participants could express views of the self, but outside the self. The materials also provided additional support according to their inherent characteristics and the needs of participants. For example, Carpy and Kym have both used colour pencils because, as a material with great resistance, it gave them the control they needed while depicting family dynamics where they feel little sense of control. Bradley used acrylic paints because its fluidity assisted him to release both disappointment at his biological family and joy in belonging to Aboriginal families.

The session was emotionally powerful to all the attending participants and everybody became engaged with the creative process seeing it through to completion. All participants decided to share their visual families with the group and the box of tissues came near empty, but we also shared moments of laughter and tears of joy.

Following are the Art-yarings of Carpy, a non-Indigenous man who, from a young age, was informally adopted by Indigenous people around the hills of Ballarat, and of his partner of 30 years, Kym - a Wathaurong woman, who due to difficult circumstances, had been separated from her family and grew up in several orphanages. I also include the Art-yarings of Paul, a Wiradjuri/Wemba-Wemba man who is married to a non-Indigenous woman, and of Bradley, a non-Indigenous man who is married to an Indigenous woman, as well as my own Art-yarings, as a Jewish migrant and a researcher-participant. I chose the examples of Kym and Carpy for two main reasons. The first is that this couple attended each week of the 20 weekly workshops, and for most of these, they bravely engaged with visualising and yarning the most painful aspect in their lives - the struggle against childcare services for the right to care for their grandchildren. The second is that other participants across the two Countries shared similar experiences. It is my responsibility for all these participants, and particularly for Carpy, who passed away before he could see his fight bear fruit, to share the stories of individual families that are most commonly represented through yearly statistics of child removal in a country where this rate is almost 11 times higher than non-Indigenous children and has steadily increased over the past decade (Arney et. al, 2015).

I chose the Art-yarning of Paul for its direct expression of family as the Relational. That is, for him, specific living and non-living, human and non-human, physically close and far distant are
inseparable members of his family. Elements within the Art-yarnings of Carpy, Bradley and myself depict varied forms of adaptation to Indigenous people and/or ways of knowing-being-doing in the world. As I discussed in the introduction, new knowledge here can contribute to an expansion of decolonised research where varied Indigenous theoretical and methodological concepts can be adapted across different areas of inquiry in non-Indigenous research contexts. Such an expansion can see the mainstream productively responding to the writing back of Indigenous scholarship, through adaptation to Indigenous knowledge systems in ways that exceed the tokenistic implementation of traditional protocols as research methods.

Mine is like, I’m trying mmm. It’s like a family, like grandchildren, wife. I’m trying to bring them all together because we have lost them.

*Created during the Scribble warm-up for that session.

This is just you know. I gone and used the anchor. E***, she’s the sunshine, B***** - STOP, J*****- she’s the book, A***- he doesn’t know where he is at the moment. You know, he wants to be with us and you know. Meself (snake), here is Kym (a tree) trying to bring the family back together.
The struggle Carpy and Kym express in their Art-yarnings pertains to a long-lasting battle with DHS (Department of Human Services) and its constitutional power to make decisions about the care of their grandchildren. In addition, they experience difficulties associated with their own children, who due to various issues, are unable to care for their children. Furthermore, Kym was separated from her family at a young age and was raised at several homesteads. She hinted at traumatic events which took place at that time; but did not elaborate to the group further. Kym privately shared a bit more with me at a later stage; and indicated that it was a work in progress to write and publish her story. During the time we have created together, I came to learn that Carpy and Kym do not engage in any substance abuse. Their days are spent caring for one of their six grandchildren, and Kym is well known as a support person to many members in the community. We were also blessed with her nurturing through warm hugs during hard moments, as well as with several of her delicious signature dishes for our shared lunch. Their Art-yarnings raise several discussion points in relation to theoretical conceptions across relevant literature, while their stories and those of other participants also bring into view the application and implications of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Firstly, the struggles Carpy and Kym experience in relation to DHS, as well as the issues their own children face, provide very concrete illustrations of the discussion across the literature of the devastating impact of colonialism on the health and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous people (Dudgeon et al., 2010; Zubrick et al., 2010; Sherwood, 2013; Paradies, 2016; Anderson, 2009; Anderson & Humphery, 2007). More specifically, inter-generational trauma and removal and separation of relatives are stressors or predictors for serious psychological distress (Haebich, 2000; Tatz, 2011; Zubrick et al., 2010).

Secondly, when reflecting on the theoretical conception of Whiteness (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, 2004, 2007; Rigney, 2001; Birch, 2003; Bayet-Charlton, 2003; Bell, 2003; Kurtzer, 2003), DHS can be seen as a governmental body which exercises White possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, 2004) in order to dictate and implement dominant ways of knowing as these pertain to child care, and, in the process, maintain the superior position of white sovereignty. While The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle policy was developed over 30 years ago, its implementation varies between and within jurisdictions. Higher rates of Indigenous child
removal raise persistent concerns about its implementation in terms of the cultural, physical and emotional safety of children (Arney et al., 2015). Yet the alarming statistics, as Murphy et al., (2017) suggest, also feed into a common rhetorical strategy to present the problem as structural rather than the result of colonialisation. As Maddison (2013) argues, this contest over Indigenous identity drives a form of political violence against Indigenous people, while weak links between legislation, policy and practice in child protection systems, undermine self-determination, and thus constitute a form of colonial violence towards Indigenous communities. For Carpy and Kym it is stealing, rather than stolen, generations.

The Art-yarnings of Kym and Carpy suggest that the emotional and psychological damage as a result of colonisation and resistance to White possessive logic co-exist, not only for Indigenous, but also for non-Indigenous people. For example, Kym uses her childhood lived experiences of living in out-of-home care, as well as her knowledge of DHS, to resist and change the familiar and traumatic experiences pertaining to family life. At the same time, she still experiences the emotional and psychological damage Fanon (1967) describes as the result of colonialism. That is, Kym occupies a position within the space-in-between that is simultaneously empowering and disempowering. On one hand, she has a sense of empowerment which derives from her survival, reconnection to her cultural identity, and success in keeping one grandchild in her care, which also connects to her sense of capability of fighting the system. On the other hand, she also experiences profound and constant pain and a sense of disempowerment as a result of this situation. In one particular session she captured all these feelings saying:

I’ll do whatever I can... If it’s going to get any harder I think I’ll explode... I put the joker face on, but as soon as I get home I’m a different person, a different face.

Similarly, Carpy’s Art-yarning represents one possible reflection of Bhabha’s (1994) opposition to the duality between oppressors and oppressed. This is because, as a non-Indigenous man, Carpy is also experiencing firsthand this particular impact of colonial oppression. He is not a bystander in this process of child removal, but a direct victim of a system possessed by white logic. Unlike Kym, Carpy cannot hide his suffering - the anchor in his image above floats in the air rather than do its job of keeping the family together, and tears run down the outer face of his mask.

**Carpy**

Similarly, Carpy’s Art-yarning represents one possible reflection of Bhabha’s (1994) opposition to the duality between oppressors and oppressed. This is because, as a non-Indigenous man, Carpy is also experiencing firsthand this particular impact of colonial oppression. He is not a bystander in this process of child removal, but a direct victim of a system possessed by white logic. Unlike Kym, Carpy cannot hide his suffering - the anchor in his image above floats in the air rather than do its job of keeping the family together, and tears run down the outer face of his mask.

The faulty dichotomy duality of oppressors and oppressed is also reflected, for Carpy and Kym, in the parenting space. Because of both life choices and circumstances, some of their children are struggling across different aspects of life. In one case, the result places Carpy and Kym in the ironic situation of standing by DHS’s decision that their child is unfit to parent the grandchild, whilst also standing by their child in her fight to gain some access rights. Furthermore, the refusal of this child to follow specific court decisions has resulted in the removal of another grandchild from Carpy and Kym’s care. In such a context, answers to the question of who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed become challenging, and the answers blurry at best. This highly compounded position also fits Nakata’s (2007) description of the Cultural Interface as complex political and social terrains within which Kym, Carpy and other participants are positioned, and
which “abounds with contradictions, ambiguities, conflict and contestation of meanings that emerge from these various shifting intersections.” (p.199). Another interpretation of this situation refers to the 1869 Victorian Aboriginal Protection Act that defined Aborigines as Natives but also children under the age of 16 who habitually associated with Aboriginal natives. Carpy did not identify as Aboriginal via association during the workshops, but if he did, his treatment at the hands of the DHS ironically makes sense.

I ask Paul why his wife, S**, is depicted through a sailing boat, to which he replies:

Because she is not Aboriginal. She comes from that spot there. Yet, I’ve got a connection to that part far away. That’s Britain I suppose. As in England, Scotland, Ireland. So, it doesn’t matter what my feelings are towards that - colonisation, what happened, my history, which they are both connected. It’s just one land you know. And I’m a kangaroo - a bit of a nomad. You know, wander off.

Paul’s Art-yarnings demonstrate an explicit visual enactment of the foundational theoretical conception of the Relational in Indigenous paradigms (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Martin, 2003; Wilson, 2008; Christie, 2006; Martin, 2010; Laycock et al., 2011). Chilisa (2012) explains that a Relational ontology sees Indigenous peoples viewing themselves in terms of multiple relations and connections binding the living with the non-living, with land, sky, animals, and plants, with all that is earth and beyond. Laklak (cited in Wright, et al., 2012) says “Country for us is alive with story, law, power and kinship relations that join not only people to each other but link people, ancestors, place, animals, rocks, plants, stories and songs within land and sea” (p.54). Similarly, Paul does not only represent his family, both the living and those who have passed,
through the non-human environment, he also directly expresses an inseparable connectedness to all that is non-human. The children and he became animals, not just through a symbolic representation, but through deep embodied connections he feels to all that is earth and beyond. For example, on one occasion Paul shared with me at length and with great passion about his trees. He talked about each one in its turn, describing its type, age and unique history - much like one might share about his children.

These connections are also evident in his Art-yarnings from the My Island AT tool, which I discuss later in this chapter. Furthermore, he uses a familiar Indigenous art style of a circle within circle to represent the coloniser - at once far away and closely connected. Paul makes this link, not only because of his marriage to a non-Indigenous woman, but also because he is making a statement about the Relational which exists, for him, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and between Australia and Britain. This individual process of reconciling various bits of knowledge born out of his lived experiences is similar to Verran’s (in Law, 2004) discussion of how the Dreaming, with its view of the Relational, becomes a rich conceptual source from which Indigenous people engage in the eternal process of not only retelling and remaking realities, but also reconciling local knowledges. In other words, Paul uses the Art-yarning method to both express and reconcile the Relational within his personal circle, as well as the wider circle pertaining to the colonisation of not only his people, but of land, sky, animals, and plants.
This is my one, so basically issues that’s going on with me. That’s my family - my farm in Werribee... and that’s J****’s family in Cairns. That’s me neighbor that I’m close to. That’s the football club that got me out of alcohol and drug use. **And the clinic in BADAC, and the BADAC community - A lot of Aboriginal people.** I used the football club as my anger. I used my anger in playing football, frustration so I like me football. And there’s a lot of family - J****’s brother passed away, so we went up there and I’ve seen her family. **When White people came over they wiped a whole tribe out, so I was a bit afraid, but they took me in...they didn’t really look at me weird you know but took in the family, and that’s why I got a lot of respect for Aboriginal people.**

I’m going to get a portrait of Joyce and me holding the baby, I’m gonna get it tattooed on me and yeah so BADAC has been the number one who helped me get into programs, helped me get the kid of DHS issues in the past and that. And the close neighbor who offered me a job for tomorrow - he’s the closest one I can trust and basically family is pretty yeah, basically I haven’t seen my little brother and sister for a while, for eight years so yeah, the little flower represents all my other family. So, we’re not close but yeah.

When I was locked up inside as well. They helped me. Cause I almost got in trouble with the Lebanese people, and I knew of the Aboriginal blokes and he said six of them come behind and he is like straight out – you touch my little brother here, we are gonna jump the fence and you know they stuck with me and that really helped me. **Aboriginal people are one big family for me, more than what my family has done.** That’s how I feel, yeah.
The Art-yarnings of Carpy, Bradley, and myself reflect various degrees of adaptation to Indigenous ways of knowing-doing-being. Carpy’s Art-yarnings represent adaptation with roots in early adolescent years through his informal adoption by local Indigenous people. His long-term marriage to a Wathaurong woman, and his strong connection to Country, evident throughout other art activities such as My Island, further embodies his adaptation to Indigenous ways. Note for example here his Art-yarnings of Kym as a tree ‘trying to bring the family together’ - a dual recognition of Kym as an Indigenous Elder with responsibilities for family members, and acknowledgment of trees as places of gathering and learning.

For Bradley, marriage to an Indigenous woman is a similar indicator of adaptation that also brings about lived experiences of acceptance and protection by Indigenous people on his wife’s Country.
Furthermore, Bradley also shares experiences of acceptance and protection by Indigenous people while in gaol. Together, Bradley values his wife’s family and his gaol family more than his biological one. I have also witnessed similar acts of inclusion during the 18 months spent visiting a group of Indigenous men at a correction facility, whilst awaiting ethics approval to facilitate the Artful Mob program with them. Unfortunately, for reasons discussed in the ethics chapter, the research project was not approved; and we had to end our sessions. While our emotional goodbyes, and their gift of a jointly created artwork depicting a turtle laying eggs in order to both approve and bless the program, does not make us family members, I am certain our connections are still present and can easily reignite should we meet again.

In addition, for both Carpy and Bradley, membership at BADAC also acts as an indicator of adaptation and has implications for the role of Indigenous Controlled Health Services in formal and informal forms of reconciliation processes. An indicator of my adaptation is reflected through a shift in how I now think about non-humans and my responsibilities to them. For example, at Winda Mara, yarning with Elders and participants about the presence and behavior of a Plover during nesting season, shifted my view of the bird - its behavior, which at first seemed aggressive, was reframed for me as an expression of its rising parental needs. I came to acknowledge its place within the Relational and respond to this relation by altering the ways I moved around the building. My relationship with water has also changed - as I watch it flowing down taps, I feel it is living entity, and I use less of it because I understand my obligation in this reciprocal relationship. Far from ablative, these forms of adaptation enrich and compliment my non-Indigenous identity. They did not emerge from a sense of guilt about living on Indigenous lands or from an anti-racist performative persona, but rather from being open and curious to other ways of being-in-the-world.

Uncle Ted’s words, “We have adapted to white man, but white man has not adapted to us” (Per. Comm.) certainly hold true for Carpy, Kym and other participants in relation to their experiences with DHS and the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. However, there are two ways in which adaptation can be seen within this research. Firstly, as I discussed in previous chapters, adaptation includes ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological aspects that demonstrate integration with Indigenous paradigms. This approach supports Birch (2007), who argues that adaptation does not suggest abrogation of responsibility to one’s ‘intellectual and cultural knowledge base’, but rather immersion in ‘intellectual exchange’ (p.115). Secondly, the Art-yarings of Carpy, Bradley and myself, as well as those of other non-Indigenous participants, suggest that adaptation to Indigenous ways does and can occur through individual interactions. Thus, our adaptations go beyond the symbolic and into the practical. These adaptations respond to Muecke (2004), who challenges the non-Indigenous to adapt to Indigenous Knowledge systems through development of connections with the land and its first people. In keeping the focus on connections with land, the knowledge synthesis continues below with an exploration of the two integrated art activities - The Creation Stories & Waterways We Are - with the Winda Mara women’s group.

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15 Here I refer to a reconciliation process that promotes moral and political engagement with both past and present, rather than what Birch (2007) describes as the “amnesia (that) has been central to the reconciliation process, as an erasure of both past and present” (113) in order to arrive at a victorious point of having achieved reconciliation.
The Creation Stories We Are
In the following discussion, I have chosen to group together Art-yarning examples from two art activities - *The Waterways We Are* and *The Creation Stories We Are*. There are a few reasons for
this grouping. Firstly, Aunty Maude and Aunty Rose, the two Elders at Winda Mara, had identified the provision of cultural knowledge as one of the goals for the program. More specifically, the Elders wanted the women to have knowledge of local waterways, inclusive of their names in language/s, and to know the following Lava Blister/Tumuli Story\(^\text{16}\) - a creation story of Gunditjmara Country.

The Lava Blister/Tumuli Story

When Budj Bim was sent here with three of his brothers to transform the landscape for the Gunditjmara People, he became the volcano that may people today know as Mt Eccles. Budj Bim gave his blood to form Lake Condah (Tae Rak) and Darlots Creek and diverted the waterways to form our wetlands. From his blood he gave us the stone to build our houses and the many resources that we needed to live a sedentary lifestyle. When Budj Bim had finished, the Rainbow Serpent arose from his mouth and laid her eggs in the landscape and asked Budj Bim to protect them before she continued her journey. Budj Bim did protect her eggs by covering them with his blood. That is why we see these egg-shaped rock covered mounds in our Country.

Secondly, the integration between Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems is most notable across these two Art-yarnings activities in the following ways. While elsewhere we have used the art therapy warm-up ‘if you were water, what type of water will you be today?’, here we designed an Art-yarning process which gives space for both individual expressions and specific cultural knowledge. Malachi read out the Indigenous and English versions of a non-exhaustive list of local waterways (see Appendix 9), and we engaged in conversation about the location and the pronunciation of some of these.\(^\text{17}\) We then asked the women to pick one waterway, either from the list, or from their own Country/ies which they connect with, and give it visual form. Further, we also asked that each woman visually place herself on any part of the image that feels right (stick figures were suggested as sufficient in order to reduce lingering concerns about artistic skills). With the Lava Blister/Tumuli Story, integration between the two knowledge systems is reflected through our request that the women make their own interpretations of the story - the story belongs to all, as well as just for the individual. We were hoping that these processes of visual meetings between the individual self and sacred waterways, as well as the creation story, would bring out experiences that encompass and enrich both intra and inter connections.

The whole research project reflects curiosity about what might manifest in a three-way intersection of culture/s-art-identity, and so every art activity and its facilitation processes reflects integration between the two knowledge systems. However, the presence of overt cross-cultural integration in only two art activities requires a brief explanation. During initial consultations with Elders and staff at each hosting organisation, I repeatedly emphasized that the Artful Mob programs were only skeletons, and that I was looking forward to processes of integration with various aspects of Indigenous knowledge. Processes were to take two phases - one with Elders and staff, and another with the participants. Yet, instead of making substantial modifications, I found that, most of the time, Elders, staff and participants wanted to keep the original operational structure of the art therapy activities in place. In particular, Aunty Maude and Aunty Rose from Gunditjmara Country both almost instantly grasped the essence and purpose of these art

\(^{16}\) Retold by Aunty Maude at Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation.

\(^{17}\) We have also included time on Country’s important sites. For example, we used one weekly session to visit Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) (see details under the community chapter) with Aunty Maude, where we picked a specific grass and then returned to WM for a basket weaving session.
activities. There was little need for me to explain this language - the Aunties were already speaking it. With joint enthusiasm we dived into a fairly quick process where the Aunties identified which art activities would best match the specific cultural knowledge. This was a significant moment for me because the approval and enthusiasm with which the program was met was the first real confirmation I received of the strong conceptual links I have identified between the two knowledge domains in the literature reviews in previous chapters.

Interestingly, all women expressed great enjoyment from creating their own visual interpretation to the Tumuli Story, yet none of them linked their yarning to aspects of the self. Some of the women were familiar with the story, and some had heard it for the first time during the workshop. The overall tone of enjoyment associated with the experience was similar to the art-as-therapy approach (Kramer, 2000). It might be that the Tumuli Story grounded the participants, or it might have provided a needed break from engagement with symbolic art. Certainly, my expectation of direct yarning about Country in relation to colonisation did not manifest. As I explain below, Anna’s Art-yarning, with its focus on motherhood, generated a yarn about new perceptions of Community and Elders. In the spirit of the Tumuli story, this culminating yarn is a blister or egg which rolled some distance from its source at the mouth of Budj Bim.

Anna - a non-Indigenous participant - found an explicit connection between the main image and her warm-up image for this session. I chose to include her Art-yarning here because it serves as an example of how images can be linked to one another in order to depict important issues for the artist. Often, repeated themes across images are akin to physical symptoms - they indicate where focused attention should be given in order to illuminate further aspects of the self. While I always feel privileged to witness moments when an individual discovers significant meanings behind personal themes, it is what followed that provided me with a transformative experience - witnessing the Relational in action. Anna’s Art-yarning ignited a most fascinating group yarn about community and Elders which I share below.

The starting point of a non-Indigenous individual who engages with creative processes in order to depict a Gunditjmara creation story is in itself valuable for our learning about the use of art as a method through which adaptation to Indigenous knowledge systems can take place. Rather than mere tokenistic engagement with Indigenous cultures, there are opportunities here for the non-Indigenous to experience uncomfortable spaces and transcend their acknowledgment of Indigenous people, cultures and histories, moving from the conceptual to the embodied. In turn, opportunities are also present for Indigenous people to feel empowered through the dominance of their ontologies in such space. It is perhaps such sense of empowerment that led the women to alter the normal proceeding of the session and, instead, yarn at length about Community and Elders.

Either way, the fact that we got to this endpoint led me to reflect on the enactment of the Relational. As I will show below, Anna’s image relates her to a number of relations: her husband and children; to the Indigenous women in the group; and to Gunditjmara ontology. The image also relates the women to Anna in a variety of ways: as a mother and as non-Indigenous; to each other; to their notion of Community; and to Elders both past and present. There are other actors - structural threads that enable this specific relational web to form - including: Gunditjmara Country; Tumuli Story; Winda Mara; the room; the art materials; and the creative process - *The Creation Stories We Are*.

I also include the two waterways Art-yarnings examples of Candy and Kristie because they strongly depict the relationship between Country and identity and, in doing so, they highlight another aspect of the Relational philosophy. The captivating finding for me here emerged from reflections
on the two images together. It became apparent to me that the bond between Country and identity enacts itself in both present and absent spaces. For many Indigenous people, this is likely to be a trivial understanding. However, the creative process, the act of giving face to the bond in its present and absent forms, has been a significant source of healing for both women. For Candy, the waterway is physically present as an accessible place on Country, which although not free from pain, is there to feel, touch, be physically immersed in. For Kristie, such space exists in absentia - that is, due to inter-generational dispossession, exact knowledge of it is lost, and she can only imagine it. Yet the few threads of knowledge she has about her heritage enact through the creative process - making the bond between Country and identity present in absence. The reviving of the bond through art making becomes a vital source of sustenance. My identity as an immigrant allows me a different, yet closer, understanding of this bond of identity and land, and I reflect on this at the tail end of the discussion.

Doesn’t make sense to me, because I’m painting something that is against (does not complete sentence).

Well, it’s not that I don’t believe in Indigenous stories and everything but being a Christian and not hearing stories of how things were made from you guys’ point of views to hearing that God made everything. It doesn’t grasp in my head how things can be made differently to how I was taught.

Oh yes! That is me and my family. Yes, I guess I am protecting my son, don’t I?

Anna

The warm-up activity for this session was: if you were a cake today, what cake will you be? Anna drew a multi-layered cake with no topping and a missing piece. She cried as she shared with the group her constant and deeply penetrating pain over the loss of care of her older son. Anna
further explained that this traumatic event has had a great impact on her ability to cope with the more common process of ‘letting go’ related to her second son attending child-care. One woman passed Anna a tissue box, another got up from across the room and hugged her. Most of us, including myself, sat in silence allowing Anna to go through the sharing in a safe, holding space.

Later in the day Anna presented the group with her image of the Tumuli Story. Looking at it, all I could see is the family standing on top of a mountain, and Anna with her thick arms protecting her son in the space between her husband. The impact is powerful, but I have to remain quiet as I cannot decide for Anna that this is indeed what she sees, and I am curious to see if other women are seeing this too. Anna shares that the image makes no sense to her because, as a Christian she has a very different ontology pertaining to the creation of the world. The difficulties she experiences in reconciling this knowledge with her Christian mythology delivers a lived experience of walking in an other’s shoes – an uncomfortable, yet digestible, way to experience an imposed worldview. The visual method provides safety from which non-Indigenous people can engage with various experiences geared toward acknowledgment of Indigenous people and their knowledge systems. I then took the opportunity to ask Anna whether the image makes sense in relation to her sharing about the warm-up image - Anna makes the link, she sees what I see, at which point many women join this sense of revelation. The impact is significant - Anna feels empowered from witnessing her ability to protect her second son. This powerful ‘aha’ moment leads us to a valuable yarn about the perceptions of Elders and Community, to which I now turn.

**Community & Elders: Perceptions**

Anna’s Art Yarning, and the emergent group conversation about motherhood, led to an insightful conversation about group perspectives pertaining to Community and Elders. Kelly, a non-Indigenous woman and a partner of Candy, begins the yarn. Her years of living amongst an Indigenous community serve as another example of an individual who has been adopted by, and adapted to life with, Indigenous people. The formation of socio-groups within the country towns I had visited, itself would make for an interesting research project in the area of division between black and white. It is relevant to note here is that, despite my observation of silent divisions, the complexities of the Cultural Interface mean that these forms of adaptation are never total like the dichotomy of black and white might suggest. By this I mean that Bradley, Carpy and Kelly have not crossed a clearly defined boundary between the white and black camps. Rather, the fabric of their daily lives is interwoven with both colours. Whilst these examples of adaptation do not deny the deeply imbedded racism many of these country towns are well known for, I believe further exploration of such examples would enrich decolonised research. Another interesting observation is that it is Kelly as a non-Indigenous woman who starts the yarn, and at no point do any of the women challenge her on the authority to speak. I cannot be certain that her adaptation into the community is the sole reason for the right to talk, but it is certainly part of it. Kelly begins the discussion by expressing concerns about the term ‘Community babies’. Other women concur and explain that its meaning stands for peoples in their Community who, without parental permission, exercise various levels of parenting with children of Community members. Kelly explains:

> I think it’s unsafe… just because you are a Community, doesn’t mean that everyone has the best interest in heart for that kid… I don’t like community babies.

The other women agree, and I become curious about how this position fares in relation to common knowledge about kinship responsibilities, and the leadership of Elders in the
management of community life across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. On critical reflection, it occurs to me that my own curiosity about this issue reflects, as Paradies et al. (2013) argue, racist elements of the anti-racist, which are often born out of essentialisation of Indigenous peoples on the basis of the most available common knowledge. That is, I assumed that knowledge about Indigenous traditional customs pertaining to a strong kinship system, alongside the leadership of Elders, has continued or ought to continue without breaks or changes. The essentialisation of Indigeneity is so deeply imbedded in me that I felt uncomfortable with their perceptions of Community and role of Elders, and in turn I experienced a resistance to change and development which are second nature to me in the Western domain. My reaction supports discussion in the literature about the problematic nature of claims of unbroken connections to timeless Indigenous ways of life (Cowlishaw, 2009; Niezen, 2009). The length and breadth of White possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, 2007) cannot be overstated, and it is not operationalised by structures and policies of the state alone. While as an immigrant I can more easily identify it, I can as easily buy into it, which makes non-Indigenous recognition of Whiteness an ongoing process, rather than an achievable end-goal. Kelly continues to explain the reason she has come to recognise the differences between traditional and contemporary notions of community:

There were less words used then so things were more direct and more understood. There were no mishaps happen you know...

Again, the women agree with this perception about the increased use of language as a reason for existing differences between traditional and contemporary ways of knowing, being and doing in relation to Elders. Allira, a Gunditjmara woman and Candy’s sister, expresses a similar view through sharing about her grandmother and how she had used few words, but many sounds, facial expressions, and body language to communicate to the grandchildren her thoughts, behavioral expectations, and cultural teaching. Allira says:

Sometimes you’ll see her on the other side of the road, and she’ll be like making this face and you would think - what is she trying to say now? Is this the happy or the not-happy-face?

Kaya, an Aboriginal woman, speaks about a different definition of Community which includes close family and/or friends. She explains how Allira, Candy and herself are a community - each sees the others as an approved parent with her own children. For Kaya, this contemporary definition of Community has emerged from people having different sets of values. Candy confirms, and adds that values in the past were set, and this cohesiveness of values meant that the kinship responsibilities and the leadership of Elders were possible and indeed represented dominating ways of knowing, being and doing. The women continue to explain that, in their Community, Elders do not play a significant role in their lives, and that often some Elders would share personal information with others, which in turn becomes gossip and public knowledge. Allira summaries her approach to Elders in the community, saying:

You gotta sniff them out.

Candy further elaborates:
The existing literature I have read so far has not engaged with direct discussions on definitive codes and procedures associated with becoming an Elder, except the indication that ‘Elders to be’ are identified by other Elders through long and complex processes of observation. This is not surprising when one considers the limited accessibility to such knowledge. The notions expressed here, where Elders need to be ‘sniffed out’ prior to engagement, and that one becomes an Elder within her own extended family based on age and family hierarchy, are different to the more familiar traditional roles of Elders across some relevant literature. For example, Busija (2016) explains that members of a regional Indigenous Community in QLD perceive the role of Elders to include provision of support, involvement in the community, teaching and passing down knowledge, and being respectful. On the other hand, Candy’s yarnings pertaining to a two-level structure of Elders, where Elders sitting on corporation boards speak for Community, and yet there are also grassroots Elders who ‘still know what’s going on’, corresponds to Busija’s (2016) findings in relation to provision of support and involvement in the community.

Relevant literature argues that the concept of Community is often loosely used, with little elaborated discussion on what Community actually means and how one knows with whom to consult (Bailie & Paradies, 2005; Meadows et al., 2003; Anderson et al., 2003; Israel et al., 1998). The NHMRC Guidelines (2003) for ethical conduct in Indigenous research contexts define Community as cultural groups, geographic groups or communities of interest. The Art-yarnings here suggest an added definition of self-constructed Community, whereby one creates a tailored Community with trusted people in one’s life. Again, this definition of Community does not indicate a fault or decline in either traditional or other contemporary enactments of Community.

Another interesting insight pertains to the view the women take on the who-how-when aspects of becoming an Elder. Candy explains that her father will not become an Elder in his own mind, despite others treating him as one, until her aunties pass away. Furthermore, Candy and Allira view themselves as Elders-to-be, relating this future manifestation to age and position within the hierarchy of their families. The women are referring to yet another version of Elders within biological families. Together with Candy’s description of the two-level structure of Elders, Allira’s approach of ‘sniffing out’ each Elder, and Kaya’s shared definition of Community as inclusive of close friends and family members, these multiple perceptions confirm Nakata’s (2007) discussion about continuity and discontinuity pertaining to Indigenous knowledge systems.

As he argues, social organisations, and economic and religious aspects of Indigenous societies have been discontinued as a result of colonisation, yet there is continuity with the former selves, histories and narratives of who and what Indigenous people were and are. Nakata (1998, 2007) further explains that people construct and reconstruct their stories, if necessary, into different forms and practices. He also argues that looking at cultural preservation in terms of continuity and discontinuity can free Indigenous people from proving the evidence of past/tradition in the present, and instead focus on the process of maintaining continuity with the past with a constant view to the future. Here, he emphasises the importance of everyday experiences, and the need to theorise those into any analysis about the interface, in order for the positions of Indigenous...
persons to be understood. The yarnings above belong to women born long after the colonisation of their people began. Their perceptions of Elders and Community represent both continuity and discontinuity with traditional knowledge relating to these concepts. They have not lost a sense of their Indigenous selves; but have rather reconstructed their notions of Community and Elders into contemporary forms and practices. These individual experiences should be taken into account in research seeking to understand the Indigenous positions of participants in relation to Elders and Community.

The theme of continuity and change as a characteristic of representations of the participants’ Indigenous identities continues to present in other Art-yarning, including those which engage in the relationship between identity and Country. The discussion below is one of the instances in which we have explored this relationship, and additional examples pertaining to exploration of this area during different sessions is further explored in concluding sections that discuss the Art-yarnings. Through the structural dance below, between viewing one’s relation to others, to seeing one’s relations with Country/ies, I hope to mirror the overall nature of the Artful Mob workshops in both Countries.

Candy - unnamed waterway on Gunditjmara Country

I’m fascinated with this creek. Just read back on history of Gunditjmara peoples and that is where our Mob used to go when we were banished from Portland... every now and again I sneak there just to sit by this waterway... when I have a bit of a shit day - I just want this space and I feel calm and relaxed... It’s a private place so I’m kind of trespassing but I feel so connected to this place.

People will come to this place with blood on their faces being chewed off by dogs... this yarn just got stacked with me... so much for us to know.
These two Art-yarning examples first stood up to me as almost opposed representations of connections to Country. Candy is sitting against a tree by a special waterway – a refuge for her ancestors from settlers’ inflicted violence, and for her as refuge from a bad day. Kristie must imagine her significant waterway because inter-generational displacement has led to a substantial loss of cultural identity which prevents her from knowing the real significant waterway on her ancestors’ Country/ies. However, this initial binary understanding of present-absent waterways,
and any corresponding conclusions about the existence or absence of bond between Country and identity, emerges from a binary knowledge system where truth is often located in real provable facts. This insight echoes Law’s (2004) discussion about the need to engage in creative method assemblages which emerge from, and promote, notions of gradations of reality – that is, method which makes space and encourages the expression or discovery of a varieties of truths.

Through this process, I came to understand that representations of connections to Country, whether anchored in real or imagined visual representations of waterways, equally epitomise Indigenous knowing of connection to Country as inseparable to knowing their identities. Displacement is an outcome of colonialism, but it does not undo the Relational knowing of Candy, Kristie and other participants. However, it was not just me understanding this bond as an outsider. The visualisation of waterways enhanced this understanding for Candy, while for Kristie it became clear in a way not previously known. As I will show in the Art-yarning pertaining to the activity ‘My island’, for most of her life, Kristie’s indigeneity was something to hide and be ashamed of - the bond to Country was actively suppressed. Although not the sole means for this to occur, engagement with this method has been significant for the awakening of her bond to Country.

These multiple representations of connections to Country through waterways, are similar to Brady’s (2003) discussion about a state of sovereignty pertaining to a ‘functioning sovereign Indigenous being’ (p.140). Her discussion of the inequality of power between White and Indigenous sovereignties as fuel from which Indigenous sovereignty derives its will of resistance, is reflected in Candy’s trespassing to gain access to the waterway and thus enact her identity. Similarly, the vitality Kristie expresses, of connecting with Country and mob in order to know and exercise her identity, echoes Brady’s (2003) argument about individual identification with one’s Country as the instigator of ‘our understanding of ourselves as a sovereign communal being’ (p.149).

Their embedded knowing of Country also parallels visual-verbal discussions of Indigenous knowledge systems across Indigenous critical writings (Arbon, 2008, 2008b; Foley, 2008; Stewart-Harawira, 2005; Martin, 2008). For example, Candy makes connections to her ancestors by learning of her history and by physically sitting by the waterway, and Kristie makes connections through engagement with dot painting, active learning of her history and searches for living relatives from her Mob, as well as through getting her driver’s license so she can finally visit Country. These represent manifestations of the Indigenous Know-Be-Do philosophies similar to those Arbon (2008b) discusses in relation to the Arabana entity through her use of the Yalka as a metaphor. As discussed earlier, Arbon (2008) analyses the characteristics of each part of the triangular Be-Know-Do, such that, to Be Arabana, is to understand that Being is embodied, reciprocal and related. To Know as Arabana, means that Knowing is experienced, organised, and controlled. Finally, to Do as Arabana, implies Doing is engaged, interpretive, and understanding - all of which is governed by dialogue concerning “knowledge creation both in the sacred and lived world as is ‘growing’ or mentoring of an individual and one’s own responsibility in life” (p.53). Through their actions, words and images, Candy and Kristie, like other participants, understand that Being is embodied, Knowing is experienced, and Doing is engaged. Furthermore, the Indigenous knowledge of sacred and lived worlds is the driver for their growing and owning their Indigenous responsibilities in their lives. Similarly, all other participants across both Countries have expressed the meanings of Be-Know-Do of their Indigeneity through either one or both of our concluding art activities - My Island and Country - to which I now turn below.
The Islands We Are
The final two examples of Art-yarnings pertain to the activities My Island and Country. While all the art activities reflect aspects of the Indigenous knowledge systems’ foundational philosophy of the Relational (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Wilson, 2008; Martin, 2003), these two activities provided additional formats through which the Relational was enacted. Specifically, My Island reflects the symbolic transfer of the body onto paper, and Country consists in doing art together. Furthermore, we reserved these creative processes to the end of the Artful Mob programs to provide participants with the opportunity to arrive at their creative synthesis. Kapitan (2010) describes ‘Creative Synthesis’ - a foundational concept in AT - as the final creative expression of one’s sense of mastery of core themes and materials, which have led to relevant illuminations about the self.

It is not coincidental that the My Island activity was a powerful, and the most popular, activity among participants. I believe its nature enabled participants to capture the Be-Know-Do that Arbon (2008) visually and verbally discusses in relation to the Arabana Philosophy, in relation to the philosophies of their own cultural group. From an art therapy perspective, My Island is an all-encompassing tool, which explores the perceptions one holds in relation to self and environment. The creative process usually takes a few weeks to complete due to its size and content. A person engaged with this process, first lies down on thick paper in a shape that feels comfortable and right. With permission, the facilitator or another group member traces around the person to arrive at an outline of the island. The shape then becomes the person’s island and he or she begins to create it and the water around it in any way they want. It’s worth noting here that we did not provide other directions or alert the participants to a focus on the self in relation to the environment. My Island took place at the end of the programs, when participants had further developed their capacity for spontaneous art and their understanding of art making as a language. We did not want to influence or undermine their familiarity with the creative process.

On Gunditjmara Country, Aunty Maude and Aunty Rose took a liking to this art activity because they saw it as relating to both the metaphoric and physical environments. Again, I do not believe this is incidental. The process of My Island strongly parallels the philosophy of the Relational in Indigenous knowledge systems precisely because it merges, at least visually and physically, the Individual, sacred and lived worlds. It takes the individual and metaphorically places him or her outside the self - ready for exploration. Most of the participants, excluding Lisa and Kym who suffer back aches, were physically on the ground with their visual self, which heightened the embodied experiences. As the examples below show, what is then drawn or painted onto the body are elements from both the sacred and lived human and non-human worlds, making the enactment of the Relational as a dialogue concerning “knowledge creation both in the sacred and lived world as is ‘growing’ or mentoring of an individual and one’s own responsibility in life” (Arbon, 2008, p.53) all the more powerful in its presence.

In the collage above, I have included never-completed and in-process of becoming islands to communicate that, for some participants a full art-yarn exercise of personal Be-Know-Do was not available at that time, while the completed islands are only time- and context-dependent versions of knowing, being and doing. Similar to Arbon (2008), the Art-yarnings reveal that: Being is embodied, reciprocal and related; Knowing is experienced, organised, and controlled; Doing is engaged and interpretive; and all these are govern by dialogue between the sacred and lived worlds. I chose to include Kristie’s island because it highlights the impact of colonialism on the enactment of Knowing, Being and Doing from her personal family story. The Islands of Keiah, Paul and Lisa also include the impact of colonialism on their Indigeneity, but with an emphasis on their relationships to Country. Finally, I chose to include my Island for several reasons. Firstly, to discuss it as an example of the long-term benefits of engagement with AT tools and processes.
Secondly, to demonstrate an example of deeper level engagement by the researcher-participant as an expansion of the area of decolonised research. Lastly, to highlight distinctive differences to Indigenous islands. While all our islands express commonalities about us as people, my island makes no direct depictions of connection to Country. As trivial as it might be given my non-Indigenous identity, seeing its absence on my island further enhanced my understanding of its presence for Indigenous participants. This absence of Country does not eliminate the connections I have to my homeland or to Australia as my home, but acknowledging and owning differences appears vital for healthy cross-cultural communication.

The Island We Are

My family are hating on me at the moment - they disowned me because you know, they are just ass wipes, but they disowned me - my mum, my step dad, my sister. They disowned me because I went to the cops when my head got smacked open. My step dad always called me a failure.

He hated my father so I was probably down for it so... if I fail, everything he said about me growing up is going to come true... and he’s going to laugh at me... I work as hard as I can to prove that I am not a mistake, so if I fail I’m going to back down the black hole - depression you know - that is what I’m scared of anyway.

I because I have a darker skin than my sister, he used to lock me outside like a dog because I can’t talk properly... she’s my mum, she’s supposed to support me, but she never did. It’s good to have people behind you pushing you up but I got the people who meant to be behind you are pulling me down.

Kristie

I just love the freedom. I went mental... with all the colours I want mixed together. It’s the biggest canvas I have ever done. Art is the bubble that keeps me safe. I figured if the ocean is completely wild, I have to go on and beyond to make my island stick out and stand out and be more important inside this ocean. When I look at the water I don’t see something calm, I see something that can destroy me at any second of my life. I want to make my island stick out, so I can come over my fears and I will not be taken over by my fear.
Most of it is sort of natural. There’s couple of shelters there... one at the bottom... doesn’t have to be a house - it’s more a place to camp. So, there’s always a place to camp - you guys are welcome. There is always water for everyone, food for everyone. There is plenty of room for nature in my life. And people yeah. And water, and the yellow part in the centre is a beach, sort of accessible from all sides... there’s fish, there’s whales. Totally surrounded by a beach so I’m accessible from all sides. I like to think I’m a person that anyone can come to and say something.

It’s all about country - I guess I’m nothing without it. In the last 3 years as I’m getting older I sort of feel disconnected from Country (Mudi Mudi) - Was there last year for a funeral. When I see what happened to the land it’s kind of breaks my heart... you can’t afford to clear the land out there. I was thinking of doing a garden and then I thought what are you doing, it should all be undomesticated.

You get engrossed in it, like the mask... yeah. It’s not finished. You really get in touch with your feelings when you’re doing it. I can really see what’s that done to me. It made me look at what I’m doing in a sense that it made me isolate myself and become an island.

Paul
My island is literally aspects of me, so I love the beach and I’m surrounded by water. I love the water. I love camping, I love the bush, I love being out on farms and stuff... my island is what makes me, me. I’m very sort of I suppose with nature... segregated from crowd and people... away from the hassle and bustle of the city.

Out of everything, I’ve enjoyed the island. It’s hard to talk about yourself, but then if you look at the island, that’s me. That’s me on paper.

I don’t see I have to explain it but that’s just me on paper. Everything I love, everything I do, everything that makes me ‘me’ is on that bit of paper. So, it’s an easier way of expressing myself and showing people who I am without actually saying it. So yeah, the island is probably my favorite activity out of everything. It’s my last session but I’m going to bigger and better things.
My island as you can see, I’ve gone back to old school with my artwork. Representing the lost culture that I missed out on growing up with, and the language. So here we have women sitting around the fire camp with sticks, and the dots just represent meeting-up, and here the men with spears and boomerangs, and I done a big water hole here by the heart which represent life force because we need water. I done emu tracks and kangaroos tracks which the men will be hunting. And this here represents vegetation and more water. So yeah there you go. I actually enjoyed doing the island myself. Yeah, I loved it.

It’s about me missing out on traditional and cultural stuff. Being part of the Stolen Generations, and that’s probably why I gone back to painting and showing my island yeah.

Lisa
Kristie expresses her love for art and how art-making is part of the safe bubble she has created through which to manage her anxiety, and difficult relationships with family members. Kristie also brings together the central theme she expresses throughout the program - her self-determination to heal and break free from the domination of fear over her life. I chose this example because, on the one hand, it reflects an example of the long-term impact of colonialism, and on the other, it depicts art-making as a tool for healing depression and anxiety. During different Art-yarnings across the program, Kristie shares with the group that her mother, an Aboriginal woman, is a member of the Stolen Generations. Kristie does not speak of her father, so I am unsure as to whether she knows him. Her mother was remarried to a non-Indigenous
man. To add to her My Island Art-yarning above, the excerpt below further illuminates the consistent arrows of racism aiming to penetrate her sense of self from different directions.

When I lived in my town, everybody saw me as an Aboriginal because of my mum, but when I left (to a new town) everybody thought I was a white woman lying so I can get the benefits (welfare)... So being told that you’re lying when you are young really messes up with you... And then my father side believes in percentage... like if I have children there will be no Aboriginal blood left in them.

Considering the long-term attacks on her identity, there is little surprise in Kristie’s view of the environment as a wild ocean that “can destroy me at any second of my life”. What does not cease to astonish me is her self-determination to heal, to “go on and beyond to make my island stick out and stand out and be more important inside this ocean”. Individual art-making, long-term therapy, connections with Winda Mara and her enthusiastic consent to participate in this research program all constitute islands among the wild ocean, to which she connects with an everlasting determination not only to survive but to heal. Since art is so central for Kristie on this healing journey, I focus the discussion below on how she enacts the Relational with the art-making process, the materials and the images; all of which parallel theoretical conceptions of intentionality in phenomenological AT (Rubin, 2001), as well as the Universal Energy Source model (Rogers, 2001) within person-centered AT approaches, which are both based on a Relational view. For each of these, the creative process constitutes an inwards journey that also crystallises our relatedness to the outer world.

Kristie’s Art-yarnings reveal the complexities of her relationship with close family. The engagement with the island, and particularly the ocean around it (she works on the ocean for a whole session), becomes a source to both represent and release the burden of stress she carries in relation to childhood experiences of physical and emotional abuse, as well as current experiences of being abandoned and disowned by her family. The engagement with the island is similar to what Rubin (2001) describes in phenomenological AT as a “pre-intentional record of her experience of stress and flight” (p.122). However, this is not the only Relational aspect Kristie expresses. The doing of art enables relational connections with the image, materials and process which, in turn, provide feelings of protection, resilience and self-growth. As Kristie succinctly captures, “Art is the bubble that keeps me safe” - yet this is not a passive position. Similar to Moon’s (2016) analysis of Relational Aesthetics as the process of critical reflections on the Relational-building capacities of art, Kristie dives enthusiastically and purposely into making her island stand out from the troubled water surrounding it. While art is by no means the only factor driving her healing process, she clearly identifies it as a significant vehicle through which she enacts a determination to cultivate a confident worthy self.

Lisa is a member of the Stolen Generations. She speaks of art as a means through which she can connect with her loss of culture and language as a result of being removed from family, community and Country at a young age. Her Art-yarnings here resonate with Martin’s (2008) observation that art is useful in responding to the harmonisation process by Indigenous scholars through writing and speaking Indigenous languages. She argues that the inclusion of art in a polyphonic process of harmonisation is a useful communicative tool for Indigenist researchers, particularly when access to Ancestral languages is not available. Lisa expands on this conceptual process, bringing it to the individual level as both a communicative and healing tool in regard to this trauma. The notion of art as communication is also evident from an art therapy perspective.
Lisa’s island, as a product and a process, can be seen as a ritual for the purpose of communication “between the world of the profane and the sacred, between the surrounding realities and the unknown”, and for reasons which include “request for wisdom, power and healing” (Wasilewska, 1992, p.198). As her Art-yarning above shows, Lisa communicates grieving over all that is lost - family, language, culture and Country - yet these symbols are also used in order to reflect connections between the real traditional world she remembers, and the sacred knowledge of her people. Through the art making process, all these apparent separate entities - the individual grieving self, other Adnyamathanha people, Adnyamathanha Country, and sacred knowledge - mold her self-defined and become one healing body. As Lisa profoundly depicts, “I done a big water hole here by the heart which represent life force because we need water”.

The Art-yarnings of Paul and Keiah depict inseparable connections between self and environment, succinctly captured by Paul’s words – “It’s all about country, I guess I’m nothing without it”, and Keiah’s words – “I’m very sort of I suppose with nature”. This complete immersion with the non-human parallels Verran’s (2014) proposal for the Infra critique - a view which sees worlds emerging collectively, which means that distinctions such as human non-human, living, non-living and so on “disappear [...] as givens, although they can, with difficulty and organisation, come to be enacted as real” (p.528). Lisa, Paul, Keiah and other participants perform the infra-critique, which is characterised by the lack of distinction between different sorts of objects and subjects, and the dissolved position of knower-observer, through the creative process. Through art-making, they get into a state of flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990), which in turn enables the position of infra-critique to take an embodied place in enacting the Relational.

Similar parallels exist between these Art-yarning examples and art therapy literature pertaining to the Relational. For example, the lived experiences Paul and Keiah describe as a result of engaging with the creative process, align with the Universal Energy model (Rogers, N., 2001) which describes the creative process as a journey inwards, that enables us to discover “our relatedness to the outer world. Inner and outer become one” (p.176). Paul’s comment in relation to the impact of development on his Country, and Lisa’s comment on the impact of being part of the Stolen Generations, highlight the relational connections the art fosters and deepens between self and socio-political contexts (Moon, 2016).

Along with this emphasis on connections between Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy, critical awareness of Whiteness must also take place. Similar to Hogan’s (2000) critique of the Group Interactive model in AT, I, too, make two critical acknowledgments in relation to this discussion about these Art-yarning examples. The first relates to the recognition of issues of power and control. That is, Paul, Lisa, Keiah and other participants were creating their islands within the structure of an academic research project. The creative space, despite all its decolonised strategies, is enabled by the position of the researcher and an academic institution as the providers. Secondly, they engaged in processes of self-reconstructions with me and other non-Indigenous participants, who in turn influence their personality and identity structures.

As I explained earlier, I have included my island here in order to reflect on the long-term benefits of engagement with AT tools and processes, and to demonstrate one possible way for the expansion of decolonised research. The time of creating this island marks 12 years of regular engagement with creative processes where I have created many versions of My Island as part of professional practice and for the purpose of personal healing and growth.Repeated embodied meetings with art-making processes and materials greatly increase the rate at which one makes connections with the inner-self. Long-term engagement with the creative process also increases the ability to engage in spontaneous art-making where I am able to bracket consciousness and dive into the state of flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). Milner (1983) describes the transformation
experienced through engagement with spontaneous art-making as one which has led to the view of people and things as “living essences existing in their own right and offering a source of delight simply by being themselves” (p.24). Similarly, spontaneous art-making has led me to view the island as a stand-alone entity that provides new knowledge to mirror back to my conscious viewing self. For example, when creating the red area with its white center, its initial conscious definition as the outline of my thigh had dissolved, and in turn a new space had emerged for representation of physical muscular pain. The outcomes were two-fold: I was able to visually express the pain, whilst simultaneously receiving relief from experiencing it while engrossed in its creation.

Yet for all the benefits that come from individual engagement with art making, relationships with processes and materials, and self-reflections on coded metaphors, there are benefits that can only emerge from engagement with art-making within the relational connections of the group. Furthermore, because the Indigenous participants have arrived at the project with various degrees of knowing-being-doing the Relational embedded in their cultural identities, there was a repeated sense that we were speaking the same or at least a very similar language. This shared embodied knowing of the Relational became a powerful enabler for my ability to art-yarn deep personal feelings and issues. This personal sharing goes well beyond a symbolic demonstration of a decolonised methodology within research. It reflects the gift of experiencing what the Relational in Indigenous knowledge systems is about (Kuokkanen, 2007)— a gift which, in turn, contributes to re-problematisation of the wicked question: Who can speak in research? This notion that the non-human can play active role in research is shared by other non-Indigenous researchers. For example, Wright et al. (2012) discuss their transformation in understanding that their research “depends on and is constituted by a range of actors that extends far beyond the human collaborators” (p. 56). In another example, Bullen & Flavell (2017), describe the teaching approach of tertiary education to Indigenous content as ‘prevailing epistemic violence enacted on Indigenous people’ (p.584). They argue that the characteristic of this approach- a narrow and measured view of people and the world, ignores Indigenous views of the Relational as critical mean for, among others, the achievement of social order.

Lastly, although my island reflects much of my learning from participants and Elders about their philosophy of the Relational in relation to Country, and despite its similarity to the Relational in art therapy, their relations to Country/ies are not mine, and being a guest on this territory does not buy me property rights. This is an important point that cannot be understated. Cross-cultural communication is fundamentally different to cultural assimilation and often, when common language is found, it can carry the risk of over-identification with the other. The participants’ bond to Country, which I do not have, leaves me with no feelings of loss, nor does it generate any guilt for calling Australia home (although an Aboriginal passport would provide me with a complete sense of citizenship).

Their teaching and sharing the Relational through art and yarn also encouraged me to revisit the bonds I have with my homeland and with the birthland of my heritage in both physical and spiritual forms. For example, I finally visited Morocco, my father’s birthland, and found deep and instant connections with certain places and people.18 I do not offer the art-making process as enabler of a bond-in-absence between Country and identity as a panacea - not for the participants or for the colonised people of this continent. At the same time, I however acknowledge that, as evident in the Art-yarnings of Lisa, Paul, Kristie and other participants, Art-yarning holds healing

18 This is a fascinating and complex area worthy of separate exploration into identity since, for both my father as a displaced person, and for me, Morocco is not considered a home, yet it still fulfils homely functions.
potentials, which, while not the subject of the present research project, are worthy of exploring in other settings and populations. Finally, given the presence of Country in every Art-yarning story, and since ‘no man is an island’, it seems respectful to conclude the knowledge synthesis with Art-yarnings pertaining to the final art activity for the BADAC group - *The Country We Are.*
The Country We Are
At one side, ideas of participants’ empowerment, and decolonised collaborative research, and on the other, the commonality of the Relational across the two knowledge domains, led to the design of the *Artful Mob* program such that the last art activity would be a collaborative effort. This would be the creation of a joint artwork according to a group decision on its guiding theme. The unfolding of events meant that we were only able to reach this stage with the BADAC group on Wathaurong Country. Given their previous Art-yarnings, some of which I have shared here, it was not surprising that the group chose the theme of Country. We rolled out a 1.5 by 4-meter-long un-stretched canvas over several tables put together, and participants allocated personal space and engaged in individual expressions of Country.

The process unfolded in unexpected and interesting ways. Ash, the co-facilitator, and I suggested that each person begin work on a part of the canvas, and then change to continue work on an area started by another member. This idea originates from a mandala exercise in AT, where in small groups, participants begin by working on their section of a circle for a set time, and then systematically move in one direction to continue working on every other piece of the circle, completing the process by returning to create on their original piece for a second time. This art-process focuses on the experiences of giving and receiving, by working through reflections about the felt responses of creating on another’s space and managing the creations of others on one’s original space. The participants accepted this idea, yet none were able to action it. Ash and I shortly noticed negative non-verbal responses from the others when we attempted to work on their areas, so we decided to let the idea go and decide to work on our original areas. In addition, Paul, who missed a couple of sessions, asks to continue his work for additional two weeks past the completion of the program. He met me six weeks later at the State Library of Victoria and delivered the completed product.

The engagement with this art activity produced both similar and different insights among participants in relation to Country. I therefore use the Art-yarnings of Kym and Lisa below as examples for their expressions of hope and despair in relation to revival of Country; and examine these in relation to relevant literature. In addition, group conversations and my own critical reflections on the processes of creating Country, which I describe above, have produced several insights. Firstly, the participants confirmed that they did not like the idea of working on the areas of other participants. The reason for this relates to their need to respect the other. My initial expectation was that the notion of the Relational would necessarily make the idea of working on others’ areas natural and logical. Mirroring the colonialisations process, this Euro-centered position ignores their respect of territories and boundaries. For the participants, knowing one’s symbolic Country also means knowing not to cross its boundaries unless an invitation has been extended. This notion became further crystallised for me when Lisa spoke about making her home and friends where she currently resides, yet it is her to Adnyamathanha Country which provide her with healing.

Secondly, the above description of the process of doing the artwork on Country demonstrates the ongoing flexibility required for research in Indigenous contexts. There is a risk that any discussion about flexibility in Indigenous research contexts can become hollow rhetoric, standing more for the politically correct thing to say, rather than leading to recognition and then better management of issues of power and control. Here, I recognise an unintentional need to control how the process of creating the joint artwork took place. I put my desire for participants to experience the powerful Mandala AT process first, and when participants non-verbally declined to take it on board, I continued to push for it though co-acting the process with Ash. While at times I wonder if my Whiteness caused more harm than good, I also find some little comfort in the edible fruit of critical self-reflection. The relevant awareness here led me to let go of control in other research.
related processes. For example, I decided to release control, despite the potential ethical issues, by leaving the joint artwork in the hands of Paul for an extended period. In reflection, the image of Paul carrying with great pride this long piece of rolled canvas, walking up the steps of the Victorian State Library, where we set to meet for the exchange, was a potent moment of both the relinquishing and taking of control. I like to think Paul’s march was a declaration on behalf of the group about who had the control over Country from conception to process and through to delivery. Through the collaborative striving for a methodology which is shifting, uncertain, slow, modest, vulnerable, and diverse (Law, 2004) - and, I will also add here, at times ethically messy - Art-yarning had expanded to a desired way of knowing-being-doing because it mirrors the realities of life and of cross-cultural research.
I started back to front. I’m always back to front person. Did you know that?

That’s the land at first when everybody nice and talking, come and be friendly. This is before all the crap went on. Then down the track when it gets lighter and that. With the animals, you can see I don’t have much animals there. Then you come here where its disappearing more. Your food and the animals, tucker. Going all red from bad fire

And here it’s dark. Where you can see the fog. Were all unhappy you might say. Yeah sad because of white fellows destroying our country. Still going, look at all the animals pushed away, food, trees, goannas, koalas, kangaroos - all coming out from the bush into the city ’cause they got no food.

It’s done. You can’t fix it now. Its stuffed. Nobody can fix the country. Look at it. They still trying to take the land away from us. This is our stuffed country version.

They welcomed them into the land and stuff, into Country and they make things bigger than what they want it to be. Chaining them up, and were losing our culture, kids are going to school and they not allowed to speak their own lingo. I know some (culture) but I mean I know hardly nothing.
Kym utilises the creative process to create a timeline of Country depicting four stages: pre-colonisation; sometime after; later on; and today. She begins the actual process by drawing the Country today - black, destroyed, and with little life. She works her way up to the first phase.
of Country, before invasion. In her Art-yarnings she speaks twice about doing it ‘back to front’, saying she should have started painting the pre-invasion Country. I believe that her sharing about her pain over the destruction of land, and her concerns about her minimal cultural knowledge, explain her process of ‘back to front’. That is, she begins with what she knows - the changed Country with the disappearance of trees and forced migration of animals into the city, as well as the lack of traditional language among the young. The last phase - Country as it was - is the furthest knowing of Country, and it is beyond reach. For Kym, there is no hope for revival of Country. Kym’s Art-yarnings are similar to literature that discusses Elders’ portrayal of Country as ‘low down’, and ‘closed up’ (Rose, 1996; Bradley, 2006, 2008), due to long-standing colonial violence towards both Country and its people.

On the other hand, Lisa, who shares Kym’s feelings about the destruction of Country, also holds hope for its revival. This hope comes from connections to Country which emerge through her physical lived experiences and those of persons close to her. These include visits to Adnyamathanha Country, where she receives healing from Country through its physical touch and the eating of its food. Sally Morgan (2008) describes this, in part, when she explains that

when we experience that deep longing inside ourselves, then we know our country is calling us back. It is time to go home, even if only for a short while. This is because my country is far more than what can be seen with physical eyes. Our country is the home of our ancestral spirits, the place of our belonging. The core of our humanity (p.263).

The knowledge her son has of Gariwerd, a sacred site for Indigenous people, situated on Jardwadjalj and Djab Wurrung Countries (also known as the Grampians mountain range) is another significant source of Lisa’s hope for Country. It is a wonderful example of the Relational - feeling hope through someone else’s experiences, and the son’s knowledge about a sacred site far away from his Mother’s Adnyamathanha Country. Lisa also recognises the low-down of culture as a result of lack of interest by young people in receiving knowledge from Elders. She and other participants agree that a sense of loss and lack of cultural knowledge had emerged at later stages of life, often after having children of their own. This knowledge is similar to Kearney’s (2018) findings that middle-generation Yanyuwa experience an increased sense of responsibility in guiding younger generations in their becoming Yanyuwa as they care for their own children and grandchildren, as well becoming aware of the decline in living Elders.

At the same time, despite her removal from Country due to the colonial child removal policy, Lisa also shares her conscious decision in later life to live off Country because living too close to her family on Adnyamathanha Country can become overwhelming. Furthermore, Lisa also discusses the racism she had experienced from Indigenous people, particularly from Elders in Horsham, Victoria. This sharing is similar to some of the perceptions the participants on Gunditjmara Country share about some of their local Elders.

This complexity of feelings towards her Country is similar to Kearney’s (2018) findings of intimacy and distance towards Country amongst some displaced Yanyuwa people in Northern Australia. Although, for Lisa, the sense of distance from Country is not motivated by fear of unfamiliarity, as expressed by the Yanyuwa participants, the implication appears similar. It pertains to the need for recognition of the multiple and complex meanings of Country for Indigenous people. The co-existence of intimacy and distance in Lisa’s relationship to her Country appears, amid different representations, in Kym’s apparent expression of loss of faith in the revival of Country. That is, in her doomed description of the state of the Country, Kym expresses a close sense of intimacy - not just to Country but to ancestors, language and younger generations. These two complex representations are, as Kearney (2018) describes, “necessary moments in the making of cultural
and ethnic identities” (p. 187). Elements of intimacy and distance, continuity and discontinuity, and preservation and integration are evident in other aspects of representations of identities, including, for example: the co-existence of Indigenous spirituality and Christianity for Malachi; Lisa’s and Kristie’s experiences of racism and exclusion by other Indigenous Elders and individuals; and co-feelings of respect and mistrust in Elders as expressed by participants on Gunditjmara Country. While the recognition of these elements is helpful in improving expression and communication, it remains important not to turn them to categorising dimensions of contemporary representations of Indigenous peoples, and these did not take place evenly for all participants of the project. I will now turn to summarise these and other necessary messy spaces of knowing-being-doing for the participants of the Artful Mob projects.

Summary

Through these visual and verbal discussions, interweaving direct examples of Art-yarnings, my own interpretations and calls back to the relevant literature, the knowledge synthesis in this chapter reflects both the overall argument about the Relational as a common philosophy across the two knowledge domains, and the possible visual-verbal enactments of this notion and its subsequent insights for participants. Conceptual commonalities between art therapy and Indigenous knowledge systems and their enactments - specifically across the method assemblage of enactment, agency and dualism, and ontological disjunction - have been identified in both the content of Art-yarnings and in the related creative processes of participants. That is, the characteristics of the method have enabled participants to integrate multiple narratives influenced by both the cultural and personal dimensions of the self, and to enact those stories in visual and oral depictions. Similarly, the agency of the image, art material and space fitted well with the Indigenous belief in the presence of agency in everything - human and non-human - which have enabled participants to express and communicate to other non-human things around them, particularly Country. Lastly Ontological disjunction was evident throughout the workshops, with participants commenting on not being clear about specific meanings in their artworks, or on fewer occasions actively choosing to restrict access to knowledge to the group. The Art-yarning process involved the personal and social decoding of visual metaphors which, in turn, led participants to new understandings about their and others’ selves. Examples of expressions of the Relational have been abundant. A potent example is Paul’s art-yarn discussed above, where he captures visually, and verbally claims, “And there was always going to be connections between you know whatever is in between heaven and earth. We are all connected”.

In this chapter, I have identified shared spaces where participants expressed similar ideas and categorised those under the terms: Messy resistance; Elders & Community - tailored constructs; Country - a bond in present and absence; Dot painting - Messy stereotype; and Whiteness. I have identified the additional space of adaptation, which pertains to the experiences of the several non-Indigenous participants, including myself and the research itself. The governing space which encapsulates all these spaces is the Relational in integrational method. I have found the Messy Whole Self to inhibit these spaces. That is, the Art-yarnings reveal different, often apparently contradictory, terrains within each self, which take and reject, adapt, modify and manipulate various elements of Western ways of knowing-being-doing, whilst continuing to hold strong to Indigenous knowledge systems. Far from reflecting fragmentation or inferior identity formation, I associate the emergence of this messiness in part with the impact of colonialism, but more with an expression of the evolving nature of the Relational in Indigenous philosophies. The Messy Whole Self reflects a strong, resilient and whole Indigenous identity. The notion of wholeness-
through-mess in representations of Indigenous identities does not dismiss the urgent need for justice, nor does it undermine the challenges the Indigenous participants face in light of their continuing subjugation. It does, however, illuminate and celebrate the strengths, diversity and richness of their Indigenous identities - a portrayal of unequal representations across governmental, structural and street communications in Australia. The notion of the healthy messiness of Indigenous identity representations is evident in some of the shared spaces which I now briefly summarise here before discussion pertaining to research limitations and implications.

**Messy resistance**

Some of the Art-yarnings suggest the rejection of postcolonial conceptions about inferior identity formation (Fanon, 1967), and others do not fit so neatly with ideas about utilisation of the stereotype as a resistance tool (Bhabha, 2004). In turn, these Art-yarnings also expand on prevailing notions about the essentialisation and homogenisation of Indigenous people. On face-value some Art-yarnings can appear to depict the Indigenous participants as compliant in processes of essentialisation and homogenisation. The relevant areas here include the use of Western stereotypes pertaining to sexual identities, or the adaptation of visual symbols belonging to other Aboriginal groups as indicators of one’s Aboriginal identity. However, deeper reflections suggest positions where rejection and acceptance of homogenisation and essentialisation co-exist, creating messy spaces. These positions echo the broader politics of difference and inclusion within the histories of Indigenous people since colonisation.

The survival of Indigenous peoples is an overall form of resistance to colonialism, and participants have visually enacted other forms of resistance to colonial structures such as policies around land management and child care. Yet, often, both overall resistance through existence, and its practical manifestations across various domains, sits alongside the conscious practices of homogenisation and essentialisation. For example, as the Art-yarning shows through these messy spaces, Candy is at once a Gunditjmara, a Koori, and an Aboriginal gay woman who consciously uses stereotypes of race and sexuality to represent her Aboriginality as constitutive of resistance and integration. The impact of 230 years of colonisation influences representations of the Messy Whole Self, but I propose its consideration as a contemporary expansion of the Relational to include the non-Indigenous with its multiple possibilities of meanings across human and non-human. The participants were born into the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007), making the nature of enacting the Relational both similar and different to their pre-invasion ancestors - thus, the Messy resistance represents a form of construction based on continuity and change. To understand resistance amongst Indigenous peoples in a total form, which then demands from them certain behaviors, reflects again oppressive colonial ways of knowing which fail to grasp the foundational essence of Indigenous knowledge systems - that is, the reciprocal relationships of one with all that is around. The contemporary view that the Relational as inclusive of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations can explain the presence of the Messy Whole Self, enriches our understanding of contemporary Indigenous identities formation.

**Country - a bond in presence and absence**

The art-yearnings also reveal multiple and complex meanings of Country, with a governing commonality of a bond between Country and identity, which exists in both presence and absence. That is, the Art-yarning method enabled: the mirroring of the physical reality of this bond; its enactment in absence due to colonial displacement; and illumination of the bond with the Country
in which participants reside. This notion of multiple enactments of the bond between identity and Country is similar to Kearney’s (2018) findings of intimacy and distance, which she describes as “necessary moments in the making of cultural and ethnic identities” (p. 187), and Brady’s (2007) discussion about a state of sovereignty pertaining to a “functioning sovereign Indigenous being” (p.140). Overall, the creative process as an act of visual reflection of the bond in its presence and absence, produced powerful experiences which some have identified as a source of healing.

**Dot painting - Messy Stereotype**

Although dots are visual symbols associated with specific Indigenous groups, Dot painting has become a signifying feature of Desert art as an inter-cultural product, which in turn had expanded the status of dots to represent challenged but lingering notions of ‘authentic Aboriginality’. The commonality of its use in artworks of participants across both Countries led to reflection on dots and their usage in relation to the concept of Orientalism. As the manufacturing of the Other can be for the purpose of domination and as a political act for capitalist gain through the use of stereotypes (Said, 1978), a unique form of Orientalism is evident in the enterprise of Desert art where the use of dots has been set as cultural mechanism through which the coloniser constructs specific Aboriginality. The complex impact of this process sees some Indigenous groups reclaiming their own cultural designs for identity and financial ends.

Bhabha’s (1994) notion of the stereotype manifests somewhat differently here, which I believe is partly due to the complexity imbedded in the use of dots pre-contact, rather than dots being a complete invention of the coloniser about the colonised. Bhabha’s (1994) conception of the stereotype as a tool to prevent resistance from the colonised turns here to its use as a resistance tool for some participants. That is, some Indigenous participants took the dot as an imposed stereotype of Aboriginality, and used it in meaningful innovative ways to enhance and express both the individual and the racial self. Some masks use the stereotype of dot painting in a manipulative, rather than Bhabha’s (1994) fixed, form of representation in order to depict pan-Aboriginality as resistance to the imposed White self. He links the stereotype as a tool for the operation of other concepts of ambivalence, anxious repetitions and mimicry; we cannot argue for any evidence of ambivalence, or anxious repetitions in the ways the Indigenous participants use dots as a stereotype. Relevant here is his view of mimicking as a source of power and resistance. As seen in Art-yarning examples, two masks use stereotypes about gay sexual identity and the third depicts a mixture of Christian and Indigenous religious beliefs as the religious make-up of one’s identity. These are not seen as mimicking for the purpose of resistance. Rather, they are simply identified as true indicators of one’s identity.

I have found a complex array for the use of dots, including as a resistance tool to depict pan-Aboriginality, but also as indicator of physical appearance of Aboriginality in a messy space which includes a sense of pride as well as experiences of pre-judgments by non-Indigenous people. Dots are also used as indicators of an Aboriginal artist identity, and as a healing tool within creative experiences. These examples depict the messiness of the space where dots are used, which includes: clear resistance to the colonising project; healing; creativity; pride; sadness; frustration and anger. Yet regardless of the functions the dot painting fulfills for the different participants who use it, the use of the form creates one aspect of a uniformed pan-Aboriginality. Equal in importance to how each participant uses dots, is the recognition of a certain collective status the dots have across the broad space of defining Aboriginality. To clarify, I do not suggest that dots are a collective mark of Aboriginality for all participants, but this is certainly the case for some.
Whiteness

The presence of Whiteness or White possessive logic was evident in relation to broader governmental structures, research design structures and my own behaviors. For some participants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removal policy and its application by DHS reflects the exercises of White possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, 2004) through dictation of dominant ways of knowing pertaining to child care, and thus the maintenance of a superior white sovereignty. Similar to Maddison’s (2013) argument that the contest over Indigenous identity drives a form of political violence against Indigenous people, weak links between legislation, policy and practice in child protection systems undermine self-determination, and thus constitute a form of colonial violence towards Indigenous communities (Arney et al. 2015; Murphy, Graham & Brigg, 2017). For some participants, it is stealing rather than stolen generations.

Whiteness also appeared in my various reactions to different aspects and processes across the program including: avoiding photography of the Winda Mara group during art-making processes; offering ‘white-looking’ masks in order to avoid essentialisation; and my insistence on having the BADAC group experience a particular process in AT. These and other examples reflect alternative reasoning and discomfort as mechanisms through which I was exercising Whiteness - taking control over decisions that were not, at least not entirely, mine to make, and being led by Western norms pertaining to visual methods and ethics. Unlearning Whiteness is a lengthy process that can never be completely attained. It is therefore critical to relentlessly employ the decisive question: whose ethics? For the choices we avoid making are as important as those we make with regard to our capacity to behave in ways our Indigenous participants and collaborators deem ethical. My various reactions to different aspects and processes across the programs support the literature’s discussion about illogical claims of unbroken connections to timeless Indigenous ways of life (Cowlishaw, 2009; Niezen, 2009). The length and breadth of White possessive logic (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, 2007) cannot be overstated, and it is not operationalised by the structures and policies of the state alone. As an immigrant from a minority group, I can identify structural Whiteness more easily. Yet, as a non-Indigenous person, I can as easily miss my own deeply imbedded personal Whiteness. Being a non-Indigenous person makes recognition of Whiteness a process rather than an achievable end-goal.

Adaptation

The research found two forms of non-Indigenous adaptation of aspects of Indigenous knowledge systems. The first concerns the adaptation of ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological aspects. These are reflected across ethical considerations, the integrated method of the Art-yarning, the active and ongoing collaborative nature of the program, and the recognition and empowerment of the non-human - Country and art as active agents in research. The second demonstrates adaptation through marriage, life in Indigenous communities, experiences of cultural knowledge through art, or adaptations to ways of being-in-the-world which view everything as an entity with which one shares a reciprocal relationship of care. The overall guiding principle of integration between Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems has enabled ongoing critical reflections which, in turn, helped identify the various spaces for adaptation to Indigenous knowledge. The outcome was similar to Birch’s (2007) argument that adaptation does not suggest an abrogation of responsibility to one’s ‘intellectual and cultural knowledge base’, but rather immersion in ‘intellectual exchange’ (p.115). The second form of adaptation suggests that adaptation to Indigenous ways does and can occur through individual interactions. Thus, our
adaptations go beyond the symbolic and onto the practical. These adaptations respond to Muecke (2004), who challenges the non-Indigenous to adapt Indigenous Knowledge systems through the development of connections with the land and its first people.

The Art-yarings of non-Indigenous participants who express adaptation in the practices of their daily lives, offer a reflection of Bhabha’s (1994) opposition to the duality between oppressors and oppressed. Non-Indigenous people who marry and live with Indigenous persons and community are not excluded from experiencing this particular impact of colonial oppression. Forms of adaptation are never total like the word might suggest. These non-Indigenous participants, including myself, have not crossed a clearly defined boundary between the white and black camps. Rather, the fabric of our daily lives is interwoven with both colours. Whilst these examples of adaptation do not deny the deeply imbedded racism prevalent in our society, further exploration of their occurrence can expand on our existing understanding of decolonised research.

Lastly, a related implication is that the visual method provides safety from which non-Indigenous persons can engage with various experiences geared toward the acknowledgment of Indigenous people and their knowledge systems. The starting point of a non-Indigenous individual who engages with creative process in order to depict a Gunditjmara creation story is in itself valuable for our learning about the use of art as a method through which adaptation to Indigenous knowledge systems can take place. Rather than mere tokenistic engagement with Indigenous cultures, there are opportunities here to unsettle the settler, to experience uncomfortable spaces from which to transcend our acknowledgment of Indigenous people, cultures and histories, from the conceptual to the embodied. In turn, opportunities are also present for Indigenous people to feel empowered through the dominance of their ontologies in such space.

The Relational in an integrational method

The Art-yarings demonstrate an explicit capacity for the visual enactment of the foundational theoretical conception of the Relational in Indigenous paradigms (Tuihiwai Smith, 1999; Nakata, 2007; Martin, 2003; Wilson, 2008; Christie, 2006; Martin, 2010; Laycock et al., 2011). For example, the art activity Draw Your Family enabled Paul to represent his family, both the living and the deceased, through the non-human environment, and to directly express an inseparable connectedness to all that is non-human. The children and he became animals, not just through a symbolic representation, but through deeply embodied connections he feels to all that is earth and beyond.

The process My Island is an all-encompassing example of the strong parallels between Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy in relation to the philosophy of the Relational, precisely because it merges, at least visually and physically, the individual, sacred and lived worlds. It takes the individual and metaphorically places him or her outside the self - ready for exploration. Most of the participants were physically on the ground with their visual self which heightened the embodied experiences. What is then drawn or painted onto the body are elements from both the sacred and lived human and non-human worlds, making the enactment of the Relational as a dialogue concerning “knowledge creation both in the sacred and lived world as is ‘growing’ or mentoring of an individual and one’s own responsibility in “(Arbon, 2008, p.53) all the more powerful in its presence.

These shared spaces join together to support the thesis’ overall arguments about the presence of common philosophical reference points across Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge
domains, and the subsequent benefits of knowledge integration through visual methodologies, as well as the suitability of the method devised to research this argument in practice. However, to avoid re-practicing oppressive research methods under the guise of creative methodologies, these spaces need to be viewed as fluid, flexible and ever-changing, where no one Indigenous person’s experiences within these spaces are identical to another’s. Such a view is expressed in the methodology chapter as slow, modest, shifting and uncertain – points to which I now return for the following, final chapter of the thesis. That is, all the new knowledge synthesised here is treated as fluid with ongoing engagements and insights occurring past the conclusion of the project. Therefore, the concluding chapter continues to reflect this approach by treating such summaries as a space-in-between rather than the arrival at any final destination of conclusive and set knowledge.
Chapter 6: Parenthesis

This chapter is not a summary of the thesis, but rather a temporary gathering of the experiences and knowledge gained so far from engagement with an art-based integrated method with Indigenous persons on Gunditjmara and Wathaurong Countries in Southwestern Victoria in Australia. Emphasising the temporality of this chapter reinforces the shared epistemology of the methodology and of Indigenous knowledge systems involved - that is: partial, multilayered and ongoing knowledge. Process is at once the engine of both the method and the project, and a continuing force on its own. By this I refer to participants who took up the creative process past the project, as well insights that continue to emerge since its completion. Here, I reflect on the ethical dimensions following the four questions Foucault (in Rabinow, 1984) devised to guide his own study of ethics across time and culture. Further, I provide a synopsis of the new knowledge generated from this research through a focus on its substantive and methodological dimensions. I also reflect on the limitations of the research and use the four questions Flyvbjerg (2001) proposes as a guide for Phronetic social science researchers, taking a retroactive approach in order to identify implications for future social science research when applied to questions concerning Indigenous communities, and beyond.

Ethics

Foucault defines his first question as pertaining to ‘ethical substance’, and asks Which is the aspect or part of myself or my behavior that is concerned with moral conduct? (In Rabinow, 1984, p.352). I read this question as a call for a deconstruction of the immediate and obvious answer – the whole self – into dimensions relevant for the activity with which one engages. Therefore, the researcher self and the creative self are the most relevant parts of me which are concerned with moral conduct. This narrow identification can promote two processes - the first illuminates the interests of these ethical aspects of the self, and subsequently highlights which ethical actions need to form, and according to which world view. Reflections on my researcher and creative selves led me to see that, for the research to reflect ethical conduct, it had to include an ongoing, Relational ethics approach. This approach requires daily responsiveness to the worldviews of others, particularly when these are not being commonly promoted by those in power (Kendall et al., 2016), as well as to the non-human with which one engages, including Country.

Secondly, Foucault asks about the ‘mode of subjection’ or what is the way in which people are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations? The ethics chapter engages with a reproblematisation of the Guidelines (NHMRC, 2003) as a predominant way in which researchers are incited, indeed made, to act on their moral obligations in Indigenous research contexts. Despite good intentions, the Guidelines (NHMRC, 2003) as a dominant form of institutionalised ethics does not provide a neat fit with Relational ethics. That is, they do not promote the development of an ethics that recognises and emphasises the diverse worldviews of Indigenous participants and communities, or an ethics concerned with interactions between the human and non-human. In other words, while there is some emphasis on the advisory role of the Guidelines, its dominance – especially through ties to government funding of ethics committees in research institutions - induces researchers to engage with ethics within a dominant Western worldview.

Creative operationalisations of, and new conceptual propositions for, viewing the Guidelines across the existing literature, create new and arguably more ethically appropriate pathways
through which researchers in the field can recognise and enact their ethical responsibilities. These partially constitute the response to the third question Foucault raises, which I discuss below. However, I have learned that the first ethical step requires the researcher to critically engage in identifying the grounds from which their sense of moral obligation emerges, and regularly scrutinise the terrain of such grounds. The more formal, standardised view to which research institutions adhere, provides one ethical landscape, while notions of ethics situated within the researcher’s cultural identity, Indigenous or otherwise, are also always present and influential. Learning about where one’s ethics is situated by seeking knowledge pertaining to ethics of other worldviews, influences the ethical pathway Foucault asks about next.

Thirdly, Foucault asks about ‘Self-forming activities’ or, what are the means by which we can change ourselves to become ethical subjects? As I indicate above, one of the means through which the field strives to change itself to become more ethical is through the various creative operationalisations of the Guidelines. Beyond working ethically through the acknowledgment and prioritisation of the ethics of the community within which research takes place, the operationalisation process itself communicates resistance to the dominant forms of the institutional ethics process (a resistance which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers enact). Some scholars propose a full immersion in an Indigenous knowledge system as the ethical way to recognise and fulfil ethical obligations (Bishop, 1998), while others believe that becoming ethical subjects requires a balancing act between ethical codes understood as mechanisms of regulation and compliance, and enactment of practical ethics - a balance that must consider the complexities involved in the meeting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices (Davis & Holcombe, 2010).

In reflection, the most significant means by which I have changed myself to become an ethical subject relates to changing my mindset. The understanding that ethics is culture-, time- and context-dependent, is the mindset that has enabled me to view ethics as an ongoing, self-regulating process which asks and re-asks whose ethics is being reflected in each research-related practice. This is not about eradicating one’s ethics and elevating a romantic notion of a pre-contact traditional Indigenous ethics. Whilst, with some cultural groups, ethics will differ significantly to Western morals, I have found that communities, participants, and myself were sharing identical ethical notions. The critical means through which to change into an ethical subject, was to view, much like the method of this research, ethics as a shifting concept that takes its most honest form through open and respectful interactions between parties. Understanding and enacting this transformative and fluid quality is the means through which I have changed (and am still changing) myself to become an ethically shifting subject.

Lastly, Foucault asks about ‘Telos’, or which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way? Through all the research-related experiences, particularly the conversations with Elders, the workshops, and becoming familiar with Country, the kind of ethical being I aspire to be in my ethical conduct, is one informed by what I refer to as open-ended or nameless ethics. By this I mean an approach to ethics that aims to arrive at every research project after conscious effort to bracket existing notions of ethics, whether they reflect Western ethics or ethics specific to a cultural group one might have researched with in the past. When I minimise the names or labels of ethics, I free up a greater space for the emergence of ethical conduct based in the real world, through social interactions with those involved in the research with me.
New knowledge: Substantive and Methodological Dimensions

The Art-yarning method has proven an effective and powerful mode of inter- and intra-communications. The uniqueness of this method is twofold. Firstly, it includes the non-human in its interaction process, which expands possibilities for new knowledge. Secondly, these non-human entities - Country and art-making process related - hold importance within both Indigenous knowledge systems and art therapy, making the integrative decolonised method honest and fitting.

Winnicott (1965) describes turn-taking as the most basic interaction process, because the capacity to make someone respond confers upon them significance, creating signifier and signified. Objects fall into this identification process, and their materiality and uses offer unique possibilities. The art-yarning method has created multiple platforms for communication. Firstly, all elements of the creative process have played an active part in the process of the art makers engaging with, re-learning about, and re-representing various dimensions of their identities. The creating process itself enabled turn-taking between the art makers and their emerging images. In this process, a reciprocal bestowing of significance took place - the art makers made the artwork significant by the act of creation and projection of the inner-self, and the artworks mirrored to the art makers the significance of specific things, whatever these may be, about the self and about the self in relation to others. The art materials were active agents whose inherent characteristics set the tone of these interactive processes to a point where even so-called ‘aesthetic mistakes’ were often turned into meaningful insights.

Country and the Art-yarning method were found to communicate well. The creative process became a powerful vehicle through which many participants had embodied experiences of Country. Further, the creative process acted as a visual reflection of the bond between identity and Country, in its presence and absence, and thus produced powerful experiences, which participants have identified as healing. The artworks, as products and processes, acted as a ritual for the purpose of communication “between the world of the profane and the sacred, between the surrounding realities and the unknown”, and for reasons which include a “request for wisdom, power healing” (Wasilewska, 1992, p.198). As their Art-yarnings show, the creative process had allowed participants to float between known and unknown selves, known and unknown culture, and, through the yarning, arrive at moments of clarity and self-containment.

Through the art making process, apparently separate entities - including: the individual (happy, grieving, proud, hurt, confused, clear minded, angry, contained and so on) self; other significant Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; specific Country or Countries; individual and collective challenges and successes; personal and cultural knowledge - have stepped forward, in turn, to become visible, to communicate their presence to the art makers. In doing so, and through the shared yarning, they have led to enhanced understanding and awareness of self and others. At the same time, the doing of the art also made these apparently separate entities shed self-definations and become one healing body for the art makers to get lost in, become mindless and flow.

The research question seeks insights into the lived experiences of participation in an integrated visual method. The knowledge synthesis shows representations of Indigenous identities as the overall focus of these experiences. More importantly, it suggests the conceptualisation of Indigenous identities as constellations - while bound together, the appearance of each star to itself and to others constantly shifts according to the angle of view. In addition to Country, other substantive dimensions that emerge as a result of engagement with the Art Yarning method include: Messy resistance; Elders & Community - tailored constructs; and Dot painting - messy
stereotype. It is more useful to think of those commonalities as imagined soft-edged spaces among which the participants have travelled, taking different pathways to represent their sense of identity. I have identified the additional spaces of Whiteness and adaptation, which pertain to the experiences of the several non-Indigenous participants, including myself and the research itself. The governing space which encapsulates all these spaces is the Relational in the integrational method. I have found the messy-whole-self to inhabit these spaces. That is, the Art-yarnings reveal different, often apparently contradictory, terrains within each self, which take and reject, adapt, modify and manipulate various elements of Western ways of knowing-being-doing, whilst continuing to hold to Indigenous knowledge systems.

Far from reflecting fragmentation or inferior identity formation, I associate the emergence of this messiness in part with the impact of colonialism, but more so with an expression of the evolving nature of the Relational in Indigenous philosophies. The messy-whole-self reflects a strong, resilient and whole Indigenous identity. The notion of wholeness-through-mess in representations of Indigenous identities does not dismiss the urgent need for social and political justice, or the challenges the Indigenous participants face in light of continuing subjugation. It does however, illuminate and celebrate the strengths, diversity and richness of their Indigenous identities - a portrayal of unequal representations across governmental, structural and street communications in Australia.

A significant and unexpected finding relates to adaptation of aspects of Indigenous knowledge systems. The first form of adaptation relates to ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological aspects. These are reflected across ethical considerations, the integrated method of the Art-yarning, the active and ongoing collaborative nature of the program, and the recognition and empowerment of the non-human - Country and art - as active agents in research. The overall guiding principle of integration between Indigenous and art therapy knowledge systems has enabled ongoing critical reflections which, in turn, have helped identify the various spaces for adaptation to Indigenous knowledge. This outcome was similar to Birch’s (2007) argument that adaptation does not suggest abrogation of responsibility to one’s ‘intellectual and cultural knowledge base’, but rather immersion in ‘intellectual exchange’ (p.115).

Second, the Art-yarnings of non-Indigenous participants, including myself, reflect various degrees of adaptation to Indigenous ways of knowing-doing-being. Adaptations have occurred through marriage, life in Indigenous communities, experiences of cultural knowledge through art, or adaptations to ways of being-in-the-world which view everything as an entity with which one shares a reciprocal relationship of care. These examples suggest that adaptation to Indigenous ways does and can occur through individual interactions. Thus, our adaptations go beyond the symbolic and onto the practical. These adaptations respond to Muecke’s challenge (2004) for the non-Indigenous to adapt Indigenous Knowledge systems through development of connections with the land and its first peoples.

The Art-yarnings suggest that the call for inclusion of art in a polyphonic process of harmonisation in Indigenous scholarship, extends successfully to Indigenous individuals and communities as a healing tool, a form of expression and communication, as well as a means through which to enact the Relational. The creative process is one possible space to arrive at the infra-critique, where worlds emerge collectively, distinctions such as human non-human, living and non-living disappear, and positions of knowers-observers dissolve. The non-Indigenous can share this space which, in turn, improves cross-cultural communication.
Research Limitations

The *Artful Mob* research carries several limitations. First, some people can find it challenging or simply have no desire to engage in the creative process. We had one participant in BADAC who stood up and left within the first few minutes of engagement with the scribble drawing of the first workshop. There are many reasons why people might not be willing to engage with the art-making process, and these include: a prolonged period of non-engagement with any creative process, coupled with the belief that only artists engage in art-making; inability to sit with the potential intensity and speed in which their artwork communicates to the art maker about specific aspects of the self; and outside factors which bear on the capacity to engage with art-making which utilises art therapy tools and processes because of the clear purpose these carry for self-exploration. This means that the Art-yarning method is not suitable for everyone, which limits its accessibility as a research method.

The second limitation pertains to the length of the *Artful Mob* workshops. As I state in the Knowledge Synthesis chapter, we completed only 13 out of the 20 sessions of the original program at Winda Mara. On the one hand, the method is approached as uncertain, slow and shifting, so the shorter duration is not necessarily viewed as a limitation in itself. On the other hand, effective engagement with art therapy tools and processes requires a lengthy engagement time, because art-making in this way is a language that needs to be learned or re-learned in order to develop the fluency which leads to self-enhancements. Conversations with Aunty Maude and Kelly, the Family Program Manager at Winda Mara, revealed that they and the organisation saw the program as successful regardless of its actual duration, because women were able to gather and self-express while connecting with cultural knowledge. We also learned that some women ceased attendance because they found new employment or chose to engage in further study, which had a small ripple effect. These unfoldings demonstrate that some women traded their participation for other positive forms of engagements, while the ripple effect can be seen to reflect on the connectedness of the group as a whole. On the other hand, the *Artful Mob* ran at BADAC for the full 20 weeks and could potentially have run for longer given available resources, yet often time and money are things that Aboriginal communities have in short supply. These experiences with the duration of the programs suggest that flexibility should depend on locality, but also that the Art-yarning method is less suitable as a short-term method.

Because the Art-yarning method is not therapeutic, it can be facilitated by any researcher. However, the therapeutic dimensions associated with using specific tools and processes from art therapy require that the researcher immerse themself in preparational conceptual and experiential learning. This can be seen as a limitation of the method; yet all research methods require the development of relevant skills, and the use of visual methodologies should be no different. The use of art therapy tools and processes in research must also be carefully differentiated from using free art-making. I have compiled a guideline for the use of Art-yarning as research method (see appendix 9) as a complement to this theoretical and experiential learning. The required learning, and the popular association of art-making with the artist identity, might deter researchers from engagement with this specific visual method or other visual methodologies.

Other research limitations are more general and refer to the inability to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the Art-yarning for other Indigenous populations. The approach of the Art-yarning method as slow, uncertain, modest, and shifting, means that generalisation was never a goal applicable to this research. The perspective which sees knowledge and knowledge production as universal, contradicts the epistemology of the Art-yarning method. Furthermore, the new knowledge to which we had access through the implementation of the method is itself
viewed as partial and shifting. This perspective will not suit all types of social science researchers and institutions, particularly those who believe method should provide access to universally-applicable generalisations.

Research Implications

As I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, I would like to use the four questions Flyvbjerg (2001, p.60) suggests as a framework for Phronetic social science researchers to discuss the research implications of the Artful Mob project. These questions are: Where are we going? Is this desirable? What should be done? Who gains and who loses; by which mechanism of power? I ask these questions of social science research in Indigenous contexts, rather than of participants and collaborators on the Artful Mob research project.

Visual methodologies have an appeal as one possible direction for social science research in Indigenous contexts. When Indigenous participants and communities come as partners into such research, visual methodologies can not only benefit participants and communities, but shift the power relation which is still present in research simply because it derives from Western institutions in a society where colonisation persists. The difference that visual methodologies bring to this potential shift in power relation, lies in the creative process and its near neutral characteristic. When participants express through art, they, at least for the duration of the creative process, express through a non-verbal communication, which means that the influence or dominance of one world view on the other is minimised and the limits set by words are lifted. When the researcher is also a participant, everybody speaks the same language and this language is not derived from one world view or one culture.

A related implication is that the visual method provides a space of safety from which non-Indigenous people can engage with various experiences geared toward acknowledgment of Indigenous people and their knowledge systems. For example, the starting point of a non-Indigenous individual who engages with the creative process in order to depict a Gunditjmara creation story, is in itself valuable for our learning about the use of art as a method through which adaptation to Indigenous knowledge systems can take place. Rather than mere tokenistic engagement with Indigenous cultures, there are opportunities here to unsettle the settler, to experience uncomfortable spaces from which to transcend our acknowledgment of Indigenous people, cultures and histories, and to move from the conceptual to the embodied. In turn, opportunities are also present for Indigenous people to feel empowered through the dominance of their ontologies in such a space.

The use of art therapy tools and processes equip visual methods with an added directed focus, which can be useful for exploration of specific community-related questions or the testing of the potential of the art-yarning method to benefit sub-populations such as out-of-home-care children and their parents, incarcerated people, the elderly, or students at university. Because the method is at once safe, flexible, and generates multiple levels of knowledge, it can be used in a range of creative ways which exceed the general benefits of self-enhancement or self-expression. For example, Art-yarning could be modified to explore the development of new and empowered representations of identities among Indigenous peoples in a wide variety of contexts.

The creative process weaves together the individual with collective faces in a distinctive fashion that is at once permanent and negotiable. Art-making enables us to safely see and explore alignments and disfigurations within and across the personal self, the ethical self, and the self in relation to others. The creative process also enables us to ‘flow’ or to temporarily lose our sense...
of being-in-the-world, only to come back to it calmer and wiser. Creating ourselves into being alone, while with others, is both transcendent and grounding - it is a language worth speaking, and in deploying art-making in research which seeks to benefit Indigenous people and cross-cultural relations, it offers both a means and end for decolonised research.
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ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics). Quick Stats Heywood

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics). Quick Stats Ballarat


Fredericks, B. (2013). 'We don't leave our identities at the city limits': Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in urban localities. Australian Aboriginal Studies, (1), 4-16.


Gibson, L. (2008b). 'We don't do dots - ours is lines' - Asserting a Barkindji Style. Oceania, 78(3), 280-298.


Gibson, L. (2013). We don't do dots : Aboriginal art and culture in Wilcannia, New South Wales. Herefordshire, United King.dom]: Sean Kingston Publishing


## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Winda Mara Skeleton program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Art-making</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intro - What is Art Therapy?</td>
<td>• Group cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scribble drawing - Checking in.</td>
<td>• Setting up group contract: confidentiality/respect/safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing - me in the group fear and strength</td>
<td>• Learning spontaneous art-making skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>WU - What water will you be today?</td>
<td>• Group cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in.</td>
<td>• Learning of traditional names for waterways and building on sense of individual and indigenous aspects of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional names for waterways - choose one that resonates with you and use any materials to create it and you in it</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>WU - What cake will you be today?</td>
<td>• Group cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in.</td>
<td>• Knowing Country/knowing self</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lava blister creation story - create a response drawing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>WU - What lines will you be today?</td>
<td>• Group cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in.</td>
<td>• Learning of resilience - ancestors and individual today</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The warrior: Scars on landscape/scars on me</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choose one massacre site, tell story of related Eumerella war. Each woman to create a visual response depicting one of her scars.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>WU - What plant will you be today?</td>
<td>• Developing a sense of belonging to land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in.</td>
<td>• Creating container for precious self</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Shared Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 6    | WU - Scribble drawing  
Checking in  
Continue/finish working on weaving basket and create a visual image of something precious about you that you would like to keep protected.  
Sharing | • Group work  
• Communication  
• Perception of self  
• Personal processes |
| 7    | WU - Ink blot  
Checking in.  
Family group/clan/Totem  
Find what totem you are and use any materials to create it.  
Sharing | • Group work  
• Communication  
• Perception of self  
• Personal processes  
• Identity via totem |
| 8    | WU - what shape will you be today?  
Checking in.  
Lore and the role of women  
Women in groups of 3 create a child from clay and found objects together  
Sharing | • Group work  
• Communication  
• Communal child raising |
| 9    | WU - What water will you be today?  
Checking in  
In different groups of 3 create a safe place for each child from last week  
Sharing  
Work together to connect all the safe places together  
Sharing | Family safety  
Expectations from community  
Expectations from self to community |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WU - What season will you be today?</th>
<th>Aboriginal seasons and inner seasons-parallels and reflections on individual identity through season.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning of the 6 seasons of the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal calendar. Choosing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>one you identify with and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>creating a visual response to it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>WU - Scribble drawing</td>
<td>Self and the environment- relationship-strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project 2: My Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>WU - What line will you be today?</td>
<td>Self and the environment- relationship-strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue Project 2: My Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hang all islands next to each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other along the wall</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>WU - What water will you be?</td>
<td>Compromise /give and take/recognising existing strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Magical Gift Shop</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>WU - What landscapes will you be?</td>
<td>Outer perceptions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project 3: mask</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>WU - What landscapes will you be?</td>
<td>Inner perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project 3 continue: mask</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>WU - What line will you be?</td>
<td>Raised personal issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td>Independent decision making</td>
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</table>
|   | Free art-making            | Sharing                                                                 | 17  | WU - What food will you be today?                                                                                   | • Perceptions of self  
• Inner/outer |
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Rose Bush’ AT Exercise using any native plant/tree instead of Rose bush</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>WU - What line will you be?</td>
<td>Checking in</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create a bridge using any materials you like</td>
<td>• Coping with change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>WU - What water will you be?</td>
<td>Checking In</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paint/draw/Sculpture ending the group</td>
<td>• Ending group- reflections/insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>WU- Free</td>
<td>Checking In</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paint/draw/Sculpture Me in the future</td>
<td>• Ending group- reflections/insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ending the group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix 2: BADAC Skeleton program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Art making</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Intro - What is Art Therapy?  
Scribble drawing - Checking in  
Drawing - me in the group fear and strength | - Group cohesion  
- Setting up group contract: confidentiality/ respect/safety  
- Learning spontaneous art-making skill |
| 2    | WU - What water will you be today?  
Checking in | - Group cohesion  
- One’s perceptions of Family and self |
| 3    | WU - What cake will you be  
Checking in  
Wadawurrung story-create any response drawing (personal or global) | - Group cohesion  
- Knowing Country/ knowing self |
| 4    | WU - What line will you be today?  
Checking in  
The warrior: Scars on landscape/scars on me  
Discussion on Stolen generation-intergenerational scars  
Massacre site - Convincing ground. Tell story of related Eumerella war. Each women to create a visual response depicting one of her scars. | - Group cohesion  
- Learning of resilience - ancestors and individual today |
| 5    | WU - What plant will you be today?  
Checking in  
The Island | - Self and the environment - relationship-strengths and weaknesses |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6 | WU - Scribble drawing | Checking in  
Continue My Island  
Sharing  
• Self and the environment – relationship - strengths and weaknesses |
| 7 | WU - Scribble drawing | Checking in  
Connect your Island with your partner’s  
Sharing  
• Us in partnership |
| 8 | WU - Ink blot | Checking in  
Family group/clan/Totem  
Find what totem you are and use clay to create it.  
Sharing  
• Group work  
• Communication  
• Perception of self  
• Personal processes  
• Identity via totem |
| 9 | WU - what shape will you be today? | Checking in.  
Masks  
Sharing  
• Group work  
• Inner and outer representations |
| 10 | WU - What water will you be today? | Mask continue  
Checking in  
Sharing  
Inner and outer representations |
| 11 | WU - What food will you be today? | Checking in  
Learning of the 6 seasons of the Aboriginal calendar. Choosing one you identify with and creating a visual response to it.  
Sharing  
Aboriginal seasons and inner seasons-parallels and reflections on individual identity through season. |
| 12 | WU - Scribble drawing | Checking in  
Create your safe place  
Sharing  
Self-care |
| 13 | WU - What lines will you be today? | Checking in  
Self care |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>WU - What water will you be?</td>
<td>Checking in Magical Gift Shop Sharing</td>
<td>Compromise /give and take/recogising existing strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>WU - What landscapes will you be?</td>
<td>Checking in Men business/women business In groups of men and women make a joint artwork using any materials you’d like</td>
<td>Experiencing, acknowledging and accepting social relationships outside the couples’ relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>WU - What landscapes will you be?</td>
<td>Checking in Expressing appreciation - create artwork to show your partner what you appreciate about them</td>
<td>Expressing appreciation for partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>WU - What line will you be?</td>
<td>Checking in Expressing needs- create artwork to show your partner one area of support you need</td>
<td>Expressing need for support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>WU - What foods will you be today?</td>
<td>Checking in ‘Rose Bush’ AT Exercise using any native plant/tree instead of Rose bush</td>
<td>• Perceptions of self • Inner/outer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>WU - What lines will you be?</td>
<td>Checking in Create a bridge using any materials you like</td>
<td>• Coping with change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>WU - What water will you be?</td>
<td>Checking In Paint/draw/Sculpture ending the group</td>
<td>• Ending group-reflections/insights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sharing                  | WU- Free Checking In  
|                         | Paint/draw/Sculpture Me in the future  
|                         | Ending the group  
|                         | Sharing  
| 20                      | Ending group - reflections/insights |
Appendix 3: Recruitment Posters

Winda Mara

Women and young mothers are sought to take part in a research project

Artful Mob: Making art together and alone
An art based research project that asks: Can we talk through art? How does it feel to make art along and together with other women?

*NO ARTISTIC SKILLS NEEDED*

DATE: FIRST SESSION ON MARCH....2016
TIME: 10-2 WITH BREAK FOR LUNCH
VENUE: THE ART ROOM AT WINDA MARA

ALL ART MATERIALS PROVIDED
RESEARCH PROJECT
BY ELINOR ASSOULIN
ATHR/ RMIT UNIVERSITY
Appendix 4: Consent Forms

Consent Form - Winda Mara Copy
Written & Verbal Consent Forms Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation

Principal Researcher-
Elinor Assoulin
PhD Student
RMIT
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

Chief Investigator-
Dr. Nicole Pepperell
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

Associate Supervisors-
Prof. Barry Judd
Professor, Indigenous Studies
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

1. I have had the project explained to me in an interview, and I have read the information sheet or it had been read to me.

2. I agree to participate in the research project.

3. I agree:

That my voice will be audio recorded
That what I say is going to be part of the data for the research
That my artworks are going to be part of the data for the research
That what I will write about my artworks is going to be part of the data for the research
That photographs of my artworks will be taken and be part of the data for the research
That if I choose to put an artwork in the exhibition, and it sales, I will get the money minus the cost to frame it.

4. When writing about me in your research, you are allowed to:

1. ☐ Only talk about the content of my visual, narrative and verbal data
2. ☐ Also include the name of my Country
3. ☐ Also include my full name

4. I understand that:

(a) I can stop coming to the art-making program at any time and to stop anything I said from being used as data (unless follow-up is needed for safety).

(b) The art-making program is for research to see if it is helpful for participants, but it may not bring specific benefit to me.

(c) The privacy of the personal information I give will be kept safe and only be shared as I said it could.

(d) Everything my peers or me have said will be kept safe during and after the program. The data collected may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to my peers and me, the Aboriginal Reference Group, and the management at Hopkins Correctional Centre.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: Date:

(Signature)

Verbal Consent

The content above will be explained to participants. Participants will then choose to read out the written consent, have it read to them, or give their consent in their own words using a recorder.

All participants should be given a hard copy of this document.
Appendix 5: Information to Participants Form

Information to Participants Form - BADAC Copy

ART MAKING PROGRAM RESEARCH PROJECT

*I will also read this out with you and explain anything you might not be sure about.

Project Title: Artful Mob: An inquiry into the lived experiences of engagement with a bi-cultural art-making program utilizing Art Therapy techniques for and with Indigenous couples at BADAC.

PhD Student
RMIT
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

Chief Investigator-
Dr. Nicole Pepperell
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

Prof. Barry Judd
Professor, Indigenous Studies
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

Dear .............,

Thank you for showing interest in my research project through conversations with the Family Service Team at BADAC. As explained by the team, I am running the program as part of my PhD research at RMIT University. I have been working with the team and with an Aboriginal Reference Group to ensure the art-making program respects your cultures and uses Indigenous knowledge and ways of doing things.

As I have explained to you, during our meeting at BADAC, art therapy is about making art to express and learn more about ourselves, as well as be creative and have fun. When we do it in groups, we also give and receive support, often realising that other people might have similar issues or challenges to our own. Because art is very important in Indigenous cultures in Australia, I want to see if putting the two together can do good things for people participating in the art group. I believe it could show people who make important decisions that programs like this one
can be good for Indigenous people because it fits with your cultures and ways of doing things. We hope to have 4 to 6 Indigenous couples in the group, and this can include Indigenous persons with non-Indigenous partners.

The program will happen once a week for 3 hours with breaks, and we will run it for 20 weeks. You will have art materials and space to make art together with others and on your own. We will talk about what we are doing and try to understand the meanings that we each make from the art works we create. There will be no pressure to talk and we will respect each person, making everybody feel safe in the group. Sometimes we might write a few words about our work. I will record these sessions and try to find out how it all went and if it brought good experiences and benefits. You can choose to not come to some sessions or drop out altogether at any time. You can then decide whether I can use your art works and verbal/written sharing as part of my study.

After I finish listening to the recordings, I will write about what was it like, without sharing private information unless you want me to do so (for example, I will use made-up names). I will show it to the management and family services at BADAC, as well as the Aboriginal Reference Group to make sure I got it right. The thesis will be published electronically and therefore be available to the public on the Internet. I will also present the findings to the management at BADAC and provide them a written report. I also hope to write about the program in articles for academic journals and speak about it in conferences. When the study finishes, I will give copies of the recordings and other data to BADAC, but will also keep copies for possible future use. This means I might listen to the recordings and look over the data again in order to write a book or a chapter in a book or journal that talks about the use of art for self-expression. I might use data from the recordings to justify applications to do similar projects with other people. In any case of future use, your privacy will be kept at all times. The written data and photographs of the artworks created will be stored electronically on a secure RMIT server system.

Because making art is a way of saying how you feel, some hard feelings might come up. This can be a good experience, but it can sometimes also be difficult to handle. As an art therapist I have many ways to help you feel safe and respected at all times. If you do find some things a bit too much, you can choose to speak about it with Ash or me in private, with an Elder, or with a counsellor that will be available at the centre. I don’t expect this to happen, but it’s important you know extra support will be available.

I also hope to have an art therapy exhibition that will show some of the art works made in the program and in a similar program at another Indigenous community. You can include one of your artworks in it. You can also say if you want to sell your artwork or just show it. If you do sell it, you will get the money for it. I will explain to you how you can show your artwork without saying who you are.

You can:
• Get out of the program at any time.
• Ask me to destroy and never use anything you have said.
• Have any questions answered at any time.
If you have any questions, you can contact my supervisor,
Dr. Nicole Pepperell
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT

Yours sincerely
Elinor Assoulin AThR
RMIT PhD Candidate

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University.

• The above ‘complaints box’ is a compulsory component of the PICF.
Appendix 6: Letters of Approval - BADAC & Winda Mara

Letter of Approval - BADAC Copy

18/11/2016
To RMIT Ethics Committee

Letter of Approval - Art Making Program

I, Karen Heap- CEO at Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), am writing to provide this letter of approval for a proposed art therapy program to be planned and delivered by Miss Elinor Assoulin from RMIT. Miss Assoulin is an RMIT PhD candidate, looking to explore the benefits of art making for and with Indigenous populations in two different settings across South Western Victoria. Ms. Assoulin is supported at RMIT University by a team of academic supervisors.

Ms. Assoulin and the Family team at BADAC have developed an art-making program based on tools and processes of Art therapy and perspectives of Indigenous knowledge systems. The program has been reviewed and approved by me, the CEO, Karen Heap at BADAC. The program will be delivered to a group of 6-8 Indigenous and Indigenous-non Indigenous couples, for a period of 20 weeks, starting in October 2016 at BADAC in Ballarat. It is our belief that such program can be potentially beneficial to the wellbeing of the Indigenous couples who engage with our services.

I am aware that Miss Assoulin has been working closely with Ash Egan, our Therapeutic Care Clinician, and. Leah Keegan, our Manager at the Koorie Family Services Team. The joint effort involves regular visits to the Centre and regular email and phone communication regarding the proposed project. We have met with Miss Assoulin on several occasions to discuss and develop the proposed project, and will continue to do so throughout the proposed duration and beyond.

Ms. Assoulin has also been in regular contact with Ted Lovett, a respected key Elder in our community, in regards to this project. I am currently putting together an Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) for this project. The ARG will review the art making program before providing their approval.

We are aware of the funding required for the provision of art materials and BADAC has agreed to carry this cost. The cost will include $2000 for art materials.
We therefore, approve the facilitation of the program in 2016 on the provision that it receives ethics approval from the RMIT Ethics Committee.

Yours truly,
Karen Heap
CEO, Ballarat & district Aboriginal Co-Operative
Letter of Approval- Winda Mara Copy

Re: Letter of Approval- Art Making Program.

To RMIT Ethics Committee

ICN: 1239

We, Vin Gannon- General Manager of Operations at Winda Mara Corporation, and Eileen Alberts, Elder and Director of Winda-Mara at Heywood writing to provide this letter of approval for a proposed art therapy program to be planned and delivered by Miss Elinor Assoulin from RMIT. Miss Assoulin is an RMIT PhD candidate, looking to explore the benefits of art making for and with Indigenous populations in three different settings across South Western Victoria. Ms Assoulin is supported at RMIT University by a team of academic supervisors.

Ms. Assoulin has prepared an art-making program based on tools and processes of Art therapy, with the aim of running it with Indigenous children or young adults who utilise the centre Family Support & Wellbeing Program, for a period of three months in 2016 at the Winda Mara Corporation in Heywood. We are currently in the process of reviewing and further developing the art-making program skeleton together with the allocated Aboriginal Reference Group, and it is our belief that such program can be potentially beneficial to the wellbeing of the young Indigenous people who engage with our services.

We are aware that Miss Assoulin has been working closely with Kelly Gannon, our Family Support & Wellbeing at Winda Mara. The joint effort involves regular visits to the centre and regular email and phone communication regarding the proposed project. We have met with Miss Assoulin on several occasions to discuss and develop the proposed project, and will continue to do so throughout the proposed duration and beyond.

We are aware of the funding required for the provision of art materials and the Winda Mara Corporation has agreed to carry this cost.

We therefore, approve the facilitation of the program in 2016 on the provision that it receives ethics approval from the RMIT Ethics Committee.

Yours truly

Vin Gannon  
General Manager of Operations Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation
Eileen Alberts Elder Winda Mara Corporation Aboriginal Corporation
Appendix 7: Memorandum of Understanding - BADAC & Winda Mara

Memorandum of Understanding - BADAC copy (identical to the copy for Winda Mara)

9th September 2016

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
Elinor (Elle) Assoulin, RMIT PhD Candidate, The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC),
and the Ballarat Indigenous Communities as represented by the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG)

Purpose
Agreement between the parties named above in relation to ownership, communication and dissemination of research results.

Date of signing:

Names and contact details of parties

1. Elinor (Elle) Assoulin
RMIT University
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies

2. The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative
CEO Karen Heap

3. Aboriginal Reference Group
Authorized person: Ted Lovett

Duties and responsibilities of each party

Under the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding the parties named above seek to clarify the content of agreement in relation to ownership, communication and dissemination of research results.

All parties understand that each party has differing knowledge systems which require some actions and responses which may be different to each other, and that each party will share and contribute information from its knowledge system whenever this is required to assist in communicating and
disseminating research results.

The areas of ownership, communication and dissemination of research results require agreement to work in respectful way with each other. This would be manifested in shared communication, in joint decision-making around the work covered in this agreement, in jointly promoting the work of each party, and in public recognition and respect for the work of each party.

Ownership of results

The ownership of results of the research project Artful Mob will be shared between The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) and the researcher, Elinor Assoulin. To ensure shared ownership, Elinor Assoulin will deliver to The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC):

- An electronic copy of the completed thesis, including electronic photographs of all artworks produced during the duration of the program, to The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC).
- A written summary of the research findings.
- A statement within the completed thesis acknowledging The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) as co-owners of the research results.

Communication and dissemination of research results

Elinor Assoulin is responsible for communicating the results of the research via:

- Oral presentation to the Aboriginal Reference Group, BADAC Family Service Team, the participants, and other key persons as identified by The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) and the Aboriginal Reference Group. The presentation will take place at The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) at the completion of the results chapter of the thesis.
- Written summary of the results and its distribution to the Aboriginal Reference Group, The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), and the participants.

The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) is responsible for communicating the results of the research in relevant reports, and to make these available on the organisation website.

All Parties understand that Elinor Assoulin is likely to produce works from this research project, which might include academic conference presentations, journal articles, monographs, or other appropriate publication outlets, without the express permission of the other parties. However, Elinor Assoulin will explicitly acknowledge the other parties in any related future publications.

Visual Communication of results

The artworks created by participants during the research project are recognised by all parties as visual data for this research project. All parties agree for art exhibitions showing some of these artworks along with core messages pertaining to its meanings for participants to take place.

It is the responsibility of Elinor Assoulin to organise an exhibition at an RMIT Art Gallery on the
provision that the RMIT Art Gallery consents to host such an exhibition.

It is the shared responsibility of Elinor Assoulin and the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) to organise an exhibition of the artworks at The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) in Ballarat. More specifically, it is the responsibility of The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) to organise the space, and for Elinor Assoulin to install the exhibition.

The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) will cover the costs associated with framing and installation of the artworks. Elinor Assoulin is responsible of sourcing a framing gallery at low cost, and delivering the framed artworks to The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC).

Signed for Aboriginal Reference Group  
Signed for the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-Operative

Signed
Elinor Assoulin
Appendix 8: Guidelines for the use of Art-yarning as research method

The following are guidelines only rather than prescribed code for implementation. Any use of these guidelines should be part of a larger conceptual and experiential learning about Art therapy and the Indigenous Knowledge Systems of the groups with whom a research takes place.

1. Acknowledgment of Country
   Participants might like to take turns or nominate an appropriate person to carry this important process.

2. Group Contract
   Invite group members to co-devise a group contract. The basic elements I like to include:
   - Respect - to group members and to the art materials and space.
   - Take time to see rather than look at the artwork being shared.
   - We do not tell someone what we think his or her artwork says or mean. We can only talk about what looking at the artwork does for us.
   - It’s always best to ask questions in a gentle way even if you know the person from outside the group.
   - We don’t make art during yarning or sharing time.
   - It’s ok to sit in silence - we don’t suggest to people they should share.
   - We help to set up and clean up.

3. Facilitators
   - It’s always better to co-facilitate with someone from the community or organisation with whom the research takes place.
   - Debriefing after each session is very helpful for mental wellbeing and for talking through practices to improve or dispose.
   - You are not a therapist, but a facilitating participant. Open-up, discuss uncertainties, ask questions, make more space to listen than to talk, and ask for regular feedback.