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Assessing the impact of social procurement policies for Indigenous people

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ABSTRACT

Governments of highly developed western nations with colonised Indigenous populations such as Australia, Canada and South Africa are increasingly turning to social procurement policies in an attempt to solve social inequities between Indigenous people and other citizens. They seek to use policies and funds attached to infrastructure development and construction to encourage private sector companies to provide training, employment and business opportunities for Indigenous people in the communities in which construction occurs. This paper outlines the rise of these policies and their origins, and critiques their connection to Indigenous people's human rights, impact measurement, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. In doing so this paper also explores benefits and potential of social procurement policies, as well as risks. Drawing on insights from an Aboriginal-developed evaluation framework, *Ngaa-bi-nya*, and Indigenous Standpoint Theory, this paper highlights Indigenous peoples' definitions of value and outlines their relevance to social procurement. Introducing the notion of cultural counterfactuals into social impact measurement research, it also offers a new conceptual framework to enable policymakers and practitioners to more accurately account for social procurement value and impact, including Indigenous people's notions of social value.

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Introduction

Indigenous Australians are the world's oldest continuous culture. They are a collectivist society, and have responsibilities clearly identified simultaneously across older and younger generations as well as for the physical environment – intergenerational caring for "Country" being the primary responsibility (Bawaka Country *et al.* 2013). They have a holistic understanding of health being beyond the physical state of an individual to include mental, emotional, spiritual and social wellbeing of the community as a whole, and Country (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation 2011). Indigenous Australians are a young population, with approximately 50 percent being under the age of 21 (ABS 2018) and are diverse with over 300 nations each with their own languages, community-level governance, Elders and visions for the future (Perkins and Langton 2010).

Since colonisation by British forces in 1788, the lives of Indigenous Australians have been the subject of often conflicting, rapidly changing and poorly evaluated policies and programmes. Specific policies have most often targeted Indigenous Australians separately to mainstream Australians. These have ranged from protectionism policies of the 1800s to "smooth the dying pillow" of Indigenous Australian cultures and the expectations of extinction (Wolfe 2006), to assimilationist policies of the mid-1900s and seeking to subsume Indigenous Australians into a monoculture and Anglo identity (Arbon 2008). Shifts to support for self-determination were short-lived in the 1970s (Sullivan 2011) although that period saw the development of the first Aboriginal-community-controlled health, legal and childcare services which continue to operate today (Foley 1991, Grant *et al.* 2008). Today, these Aboriginal community-controlled services are organised into peak national bodies, with state bodies and networks across urban, regional and remote Australia. They are funded separately to mainstream services by the federal government, unlike other services generally which are state funded. The policy and funding arrangements that separate Aboriginal community-controlled services from mainstream also have a role in suppressing their growth, removing them

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from public policy development, and maintaining them as "other" in Australian consciousness (Sullivan 2011).

Government departments responsible for policy making and evaluation have rarely met Aboriginal staff targets. Government policies have rarely been developed through the national network of Aboriginal services or involvement of Aboriginal leaders (Shokman and Russell 2017). The federal government's "Closing the Gap" framework to achieve health equity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians, for example, has existed for ten years but only in the last year engaged Aboriginal leaders, after its 10th annual report to Parliament again identified its targets had been unable to be met and some inequities are widening (Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee 2018).

Government frameworks such as Closing the Gap focus on the deficits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rather than strengths (Fogarty *et al.* 2018) – on "overcoming Indigenous disadvantage" (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2016) and to align Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mainstream Australian standards rather than achieve human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, build on cultural strengths or address local needs. This overlooks the inequity as an outcome of colonisation and oppression (Arbon 2008) and locates disadvantage in the failure of Aboriginal people. In excluding Aboriginal people, it also legitimises "authoritarian action upon Indigenous subjects" (Strakosch 2015, p. 78).

During the period of Closing the Gap's implementation and failure, the Australian Government also designed and introduced social procurement policies in their attempt to address growing inequity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. It introduced the *Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy* (CIPP) in 2015 in accordance with the then-current national Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (IEDS) that set as a "priority for the Australian Government that Indigenous Australians have the opportunity to contribute to a stronger economy and achieve greater economic independence and security for themselves, their families and their communities" (Australian Government 2011, p. 6). The Closing the Gap framework has influenced subsequent policy and annual reporting against identified statistical "performance targets" is used to modify, introduce or remove policy initiatives (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2018).

The CIPP focusses on governments' spending and infrastructure development, and the allocation of targets in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and businesses. In the context of the construction industry, Indigenous procurement policies require companies tendering for government construction contracts to create "social value" for Indigenous people living in the communities in which they build (see Raiden *et al.* 2019). Social value refers to the economic, social, cultural, cognitive and health impacts of a construction organisation, project or programme on the lives of the people in the community and on site (Raiden *et al.* 2019). But as this paper shows, this definition is problematic if it is removed from Indigenous Australian ontologies, epistemologies and lived experiences.

The social value focus of the CIPP is the economic development and financial independence of Aboriginal people through the creation of training, employment and business opportunities in construction projects (Australian Government 2015).

The CIPP has the aim of intentionally creating social value outcomes for Indigenous people and businesses by requiring government departments and their supply chains to procure from Indigenous businesses. Social procurement has been able to generate social value through purchasing processes among populations affected by poverty, inequality, migration and social isolation (Barraket *et al.* 2016). Hence the Commonwealth have promoted it as a useful tool to stimulate economic development and therefore create social value among Australia's Indigenous peoples (NIAA 2020).

Australia's construction industry is a focus of Indigenous procurement policies because of its potential multiplier effect on other parts of the economy (Loosemore 2016), which would increase the impact of more employment and business opportunities for Indigenous peoples. The construction sector is also the largest growing employer of Indigenous people with a 38 percent increase in Indigenous people working in the industry directly and indirectly from 2011 to 2016 (ABS 2017). There is also a higher proportion of Indigenous business owners operating in the construction industry compared to non-Indigenous business owners. 27.5 percent of Indigenous business owners operate in the construction industry, compared to 20.1 percent of non-Indigenous business owners (Shirodkar *et al.* 2018, p. 12).

While this may provide some logic to the Commonwealth, there remain many questions about the claimed value of social procurement to create

social value for Indigenous Australians, particularly in the construction industry. No work has yet occurred to define social value through social procurement from Indigenous Australians' perspectives, particularly in any meaningful way that takes into account the great diversity in experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities across Australia.

This paper questions these unexplored assumptions that underpin the CIPP and several other issues related to the introduction and support of the Australian government's social procurement policy in the context of Indigenous Australians. It does so using Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Foley 2003) and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* Aboriginal evaluation framework (pronounced "naa binya" in Wiradjuri; Williams 2018). This promotes Indigenous Australians' ways of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and doing (axiology) (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003), and informs the new conceptual framework for social value measurement proposed in this paper. This work is critically important to overcome the misunderstanding, misinterpreting and misrepresenting that often occurs of Indigenous Australians' cultures (Foley 2000) as well as needs, and therefore solutions to address those needs (Jackson Pulver *et al.* 2019).

This paper argues that Indigenous procurement policies may inadvertently create unintended negative impacts if Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing are not accounted for in policy implementation and evaluation. For Indigenous procurement policies we have termed these unintended negative impacts cultural counterfactuals. Drawing on accepted terminology of social impact assessment (Raiden *et al.* 2019), cultural counterfactuals refer to the unintended negative impacts Indigenous procurement policies may have for Indigenous peoples where local needs, culture and decision-making are overlooked. A new conceptual framework is presented to stimulate consideration of possible risks of applying general, mainstream definitions of social value to Indigenous, colonised peoples compared to benefits, as well as opportunities for the future.

Theoretical position and critical literature review

This section draws on a critical literature review of social procurement in relation to Indigenous peoples and the notion of social value to present a new conceptual framework to stimulate discussion of cultural counterfactuals. Published literature sourced from Indigenous scholarship and the growing fields of social procurement and social value are used to show that Indigenous ontology, epistemology and axiology and western theoretical social value work can benefit each other to use the best of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges.

This type of policy analysis is important to highlight the potential pitfalls of Indigenous procurement policies and to ensure the opportunities they create can create real change for Indigenous people. It is also important for "creating the space that allows relationships with Aboriginal people to be developed in meaningful and deep ways," so people can share their stories and experiences of the world around them (Wright and Kickett-Tucker 2017, p. 153). This will help inform a planning and measurement framework that will be a useful tool for government departments, procurement managers in the construction industry and, importantly, Indigenous communities who can use it in their regional decision-making practices.

One author of this article is Wiradjuri and two authors are non-Indigenous. Wiradjuri country is in the central west region of New South Wales. The two non-Indigenous authors are of European heritage. One author is Welsh and immigrated to Australia 25 years ago. The other has mixed French, English, Dutch and Scottish heritage and their ancestors immigrated to Australia gradually since the mid-nineteenth century. We are conscious that their background could risk them imposing their "whiteness" onto Indigenous procurement policy research (Moreton-Robinson 2005). Acknowledging this positionality, we are aware that we bring our own "cultural assumptions, standpoints and biases" to our research (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003, p. 212). This critical literature review was therefore informed by Indigenous Standpoint Theory and an Aboriginal evaluation framework to minimise these biases. Indigenous Standpoint Theory addresses historical attempts to oppress knowledge, which has been viewed as inferior by western non-Indigenous researchers (Foley 2003). Indigenous Standpoint Theory therefore promotes Indigenous epistemological approaches to conceptualising cultural counterfactuals.

This critical review is also informed by the *Ngaa-bi-nya* evaluation framework developed by Williams (2018). The value of *Ngaa-bi-nya* is that it prompts evaluators to consider the historical, policy and social landscape of Indigenous peoples' lives and allows for evaluations of Indigenous procurement policies that are culturally relevant, effective and translatable. This builds on the work of Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017), who first highlighted the potential value of

Strain Theory as a conceptualisation of how social value is created in an Indigenous procurement policy context by showing that social value is created by the relationship people have with construction employment opportunities and Indigenous cultural values. Because they explain the relationship between social procurement, construction employment opportunities and Indigenous cultural values, Value Theory and Strain Theory support Indigenist research and Indigenous epistemologies, which "focuses on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians" (Rigney 1997, p. 118).

Taken together, Indigenous Standpoint Theory, *Ngaa-bi-nya*, Value Theory and Strain Theory are valuable tools in prioritising the traditions and aspirations of Indigenous workers in conceptualising cultural counterfactuals. These theories therefore support Indigenous epistemologies, which are relational in that "Knowledge is something that is socially constructed by people who have relationships and connections with each other, the living and the non-living, and the environment" (Chilisa 2012, p. 116). This means knowledge is developed as people gain experiences with the world around them, including Indigenous procurement policies and therefore social value. Indigenous Standpoint Theory, *Ngaa-bi-nya*, Value Theory and Strain Theory support the relational nature of Indigenous epistemologies in the context of Indigenous procurement policies because they focus on the relationship between workers, culture and the jobs that Indigenous procurement policies create.

Social procurement in relation to Indigenous people

While not new, there are five critical drivers to the use of social procurement globally: the historical use of public procurement to achieve social outcomes (McCrudden 2007); a receding welfare state in the context of New Public Governance (Barraket *et al.* 2016); increased focus on evaluation and measurement of social performance in order to command legitimacy with government funders (Barraket *et al.* 2016); recognition that government purchasing from industries like construction has significant potential to address complex problems and create social value for disadvantaged groups excluded from the labour market (Fewings and Henjewele 2019); and growing corporate social responsibility practices in the private business sector (Raiden *et al.* 2019).

Fundamentally the aim of all social procurement policies is to deliberately create social value through purchasing (Barraket *et al.* 2016), although it acknowledged that assessing and measuring social value is difficult and there is currently a lack of empirical evidence about the benefits of social procurement compared to traditional government interventions (Barraket *et al.* 2016). Nevertheless, advocates in a range of countries propose that social procurement benefits include: poverty reduction; community economic development; social inclusion and employment; and training opportunities for marginalised groups (LePage 2014), or: increased employment of racial/ethnic minorities; financial support for small business development; and increased demand for minority-produced goods and services through market-based interventions (Moon 2017).

There is also broad consensus among governments in countries like Australia that they are an effective policy lever and have thus been implemented by Local (City of Sydney 2017), State (Queensland Government 2016) and Federal (Australian Government 2015) governments. But despite claims around the benefits of social procurement for disadvantaged communities such as Indigenous people, some authors warn of potential negative consequences. For example, at an individual level Rogers *et al.* (2008) argue that social procurement can negatively affect intended beneficiaries, requiring them to move away from their social networks and communities to take up employment opportunities. There may also be financial costs associated with transport and accommodation. For Indigenous people, these potential negative impacts can be especially significant. For example, someone who relocates to take up a job may have to pay for rent, living expenses, and transport to and from work, while finding new social networks, may find that these costs are counter the intended benefits of a job (Dockery and Hampton 2015).

Barraket and Weissman (2009) also argue that social procurement can reduce competitive neutrality and introduce market distortions by: advantaging certain subcontractors and suppliers (such as Indigenous businesses); favouring and subsidising certain supplier groups; limiting the number and range of suppliers; limiting the ability of suppliers to compete in an open market; reducing the incentives of suppliers to compete; and limiting the choices and information available to consumers (Burkett 2014, Abbott 2016). Indigenous procurement policies may also generate a "central tension" as more Indigenous businesses are

created to take advantage of the opportunities these policies present (Evans and Williamson 2017a). The central tension is "the pursuit of profit for individuals versus the pursuit of independent Indigenous economic development for collective purposes" (Evans and Williamson 2017a, p. 6).

While social benefit organisations like Indigenous businesses are one way to deliver social and economic benefits to communities through social procurement, it can also lead to adverse social impacts, such as the establishment of "fronting" companies where decision-making power and benefits are held by privileged individuals who are not targeted beneficiaries (Esteves and Barclay 2011). For example, in Australia an Indigenous business can be registered with Supply Nation (Australia's national Indigenous supplier diversity network) by a non-Indigenous person (providing that at least 50% of the business is owned by an Indigenous person) and control the flow of profits away from Indigenous stakeholders. Thus, any financial benefits flowing from social procurement can be diverted to unscrupulous entrepreneurs away from those people that the policies are intended to benefit. Indigenous communities may also become dissatisfied if they only receive tokenistic work opportunities as companies seek to simply comply with their contractual obligations to meet social procurement targets (Esteves and Barclay 2011).

Indigenous businesses that rely on social procurement policies may also become too dependent on them, limiting their resilience and ability to provide sustainable benefits to the community outside of these policy frameworks (Esteves and Barclay 2011). Cutcher *et al.* (2019, p. 18) critique Indigenous procurement policies from a political perspective, arguing that their intent has changed over time to reflect dominant neo-liberal "self-help" discourses and that they simply shift responsibility for Indigenous employment to Indigenous businesses away from government in a form of double taxation. Indigenous cultural businesses (Indigenous businesses that trade cultural services and products directly to customers) may also not be suited to government procurement opportunities that suit traditional business models (Evans and Williamson 2017b). There is some concern that Indigenous cultural businesses, and therefore Indigenous workers and communities, may miss out on the opportunities that Indigenous procurement policies present (Evans 2019). And, although policy-makers claim that Indigenous businesses are significantly more likely to employ Indigenous workers as justification for Indigenous social procurement policies (Hunter 2014), there is little empirical evidence to support this (Cutcher *et al.* 2019). So the benefits of social procurement over traditional social policy interventions remains contested and it is difficult to find empirical evidence of the tangible social impacts created by social benefit suppliers, such as Indigenous businesses, beyond the benefits created by normal businesses (Barraket *et al.* 2016).

As well as issues about definitions and meanings of social procurement, there are also practicalities that are concerning, including potential for misleading practices. For example, contractors may "game" the system and provide tokenistic or temporary jobs to meet their mandatory minimum requirements but offload Indigenous staff once a project is finished, thus creating a false sense of achievement. This is particularly likely when the supply of Indigenous candidates and businesses falls short of ambitious government mandatory targets, as is the case in the Australian construction industry, where many CIPP contracts are awarded to already established businesses because newer Indigenous businesses are restricted by the "large amounts of capital and rigorous certification" required to compete in the industry (Jacobs 2017, p. 16).

Given all of the above limitations and qualifications to the impact of Indigenous procurement policies on Indigenous people, it is critical that valid and accountable processes for measurement and reporting of social value are developed to avoid unsubstantiated claims of success by policy-makers and to ensure that the policies have the impact they are designed to create.

Social procurement policy evaluations

Claims about the benefits of social procurement policies are often undermined by a lack of agreed measurement frameworks and clear definitions of social value (Raiden *et al.* 2019). The majority of current approaches to impact measurement focus on the reporting of easily measurable "outputs" such as training places and jobs provided rather than more difficult to measure social "outcomes" such as improvements in mental and physical health, community cohesion and resilience, crime and family violence, etc. (Burkett and McNeil 2017, Hebb and Hechigian 2017). It is also commonly people in a position of power who undertake this measurement and determine what social value is or is not and how it should be measured, and this can omit things that the beneficiaries of social procurement see as being valuable (Hebb and

Hechigian 2017). This further disempowers and marginalises groups targeted by social procurement such as Indigenous Australians and can result in Indigenous voices and priorities being side-lined or co-opted into government rhetoric around the claimed success of Indigenous procurement policies (Cutcher *et al.* 2019).

In Australia, for example, the success of the CIPP is assessed on two key performance indicators (Australian Government 2015, p. 8):

- An increase in the number of Indigenous enterprises contracted to the Commonwealth Government; and
- An increase in the number and value of contracts awarded to Indigenous enterprises.

These indicators essentially measure policy performance, rather than impact of social procurement or evaluation of social value for Indigenous Australians. They overlook what value means to Indigenous people and they ignore key practices to assess the impact of social procurement: involving stakeholders and including counterfactuals (unintended negative consequences) into the assessment (Vanclay 2002), and deadweight (what would have happened anyway) to ensure that social impacts being claimed are attributable to an intervention (Nicholls *et al.* 2012).

If the Australian Government's two key performance indicators measure policy outcomes rather than outcomes for Indigenous people, they also ignore the impact that Indigenous procurement policies have on the lives of people meant to benefit from them. The concept of Indigenous economic development as an aim of Indigenous procurement policies is also problematic. Since colonisation "colonisers decided that not only was it necessary for Aboriginal people to develop but also how to develop, essentially moving them forward into Western civilisation and markedly different ways of being and doing in the world" (Bessarab and Forrest 2017, p. 2). This has meant that "To be Indigenous is generally to be in receipt of other peoples' regional development ideas, programmes and histories" (Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019, p. 1509), showing the history of government policies deciding how Indigenous peoples should "develop."

As Troje (2018) and Troje and Kadefors (2018) note, social procurement outcomes are often intangible, which presents difficulties for governments seeking to evaluate how these policies have impacted the lives of people they affect. There are also challenges in deciding what social value is in the context of a construction project and how it should be measured, including different notions of social value between construction stakeholders (Watts *et al.* 2019) and the changing priorities to create social value during the construction lifecycle (Mulholland *et al.* 2020). Troje and Gluch (2020) argue that this means there is often little to no follow-up on the outcomes of their social procurement policies. Financial indicators, such as those used in the CIPP, have also been criticised for their narrow focus on financial inputs and outputs that ignore the holistic nature of Indigenous economic development (Orr 2013). In Australia, the holistic nature of Aboriginal community development includes the "cultural, social, environmental (country), economic and spiritual dimensions of Aboriginal community" (Mooney *et al.* 2017, p. 54).

Wagland and Taylor (2015) and Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017) have questioned the use of these financial proxies, arguing that they do not align with notions of social value held by Indigenous communities that Indigenous procurement policies are designed for. The financial targets used by Indigenous procurement policies may also create a false perception of creating a wider impact, where many low-value contracts are awarded without encouraging positive behaviour in the wider market (Jacobs 2017). Financial key performance indicators on economic development also remove a "cultural context" from progress towards it (O'Sullivan 2017), and O'Sullivan (2017, p. 130) argues that economic development serves a diminished purpose when it is removed from the cultural context it occurs in.

Evaluations that consider Indigenous notions of social value must account for diversity of Indigenous peoples (Taylor 2003), who are made up of many different communities have diverse histories, traditions and practices (Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019), which could affect how social value is experienced. As the following section indicates, incorporating culture into social procurement assessments is important for meaningful and deep conversations about the social value they create. This will help avoid standardised project management metrics which can present a deceiving and biased view of the impact that Indigenous social procurement policies really have (Murphy and Eadie 2019), which are heavily monetised and culturally sterile.

Incorporating cultural counterfactuals into social procurement policy assessment

Many of the above challenges in measuring the social impact of social procurement policies like Indigenous

procurement policies have their roots in the "subjective, malleable and variable" nature of social value (Mulgan 2010, p. 38). Social value has many dimensions which cannot easily be measured; it means different things to different people and has cultural connotations which have not yet been fully explored in the social procurement debate. Research also shows that Indigenous cultures perceive social value in a very different way to non-Indigenous groups (Byrnes 2000, Smith 2012). This is even more complex in the context of the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Australia and internationally (Foley 2000, Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019).

Culture refers to "the ways of knowing, thinking, and acting that are broadly shared by members of a social group" (Eversole 2018, p. 40). Culture therefore refers to socially situated beliefs and practices (Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019). In the context of Indigenous procurement policies in Australia, "cultural counterfactuals" refers to the unintended negative consequences of Indigenous procurement policies on the ways of knowing, being and doing (see Martin and Mirraboopa 2003) of Indigenous Australians. In defining cultural counterfactuals, we acknowledge that we cannot speak to the cultures of all Indigenous Australians and the term may overlook the nuanced aspects of different Indigenous cultures.

Excluding these previously unaccounted for cultural counterfactuals means formal findings and recommendations of social procurement policy evaluation reports can frequently have material variances between evaluator and Indigenous understandings and perceptions of social value (Taylor 2003). This is highly likely in the current Indigenous policy environment because scant attention has been given to Indigenous evaluation methodologies, with evaluations often generalising their findings across varied and different communities and contexts (Price *et al.* 2012). There has also been "limited engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on evaluation selection, planning, conduct and reporting" (Productivity Commission 2020, p. 5). Price *et al.* (2012) thus criticise existing frameworks used to evaluate various Indigenous programmes for: being too generalised across various and different communities and contexts; being conducted by outsiders who attempt to engage with communities on a short, one-off basis and arrive with a pre-determined agenda to extract specific data without prior consultation; and occurring without seeing any change or improvement, causing evaluations to be perceived as coming from outside the community's interest and control and based instead on an external agenda, such as seeking to know that project funds have been well spent.

The above point is challenging, because evaluations are rarely, if ever, built into the design of Indigenous policies or programmes, and they are too often undertaken as an afterthought, with insufficient time or resources set aside for quality evaluations (Muir and Dean 2017). Western approaches to evaluating Indigenous policies and programmes can therefore lead to distorted perceptions of success of these policies through oversimplifications of Indigenous processes and experiences, which do not address Indigenous values, aspirations and needs (Orr 2013). To address this problem, an Indigenous evaluation framework is needed, to provide a more transparent monitoring and reporting structure on Indigenous outcomes that capture the social, cultural and economic influences on Indigenous programmes (Williams 2016, Seivwright *et al.* 2017).

Conceptualising social procurement policy evaluation for Indigenous people

To answer the call for an Indigenous evaluation framework this section conceptualises the notion of cultural counterfactuals. Bringing conceptual clarity to the debate about social value in an Indigenous procurement policy context, the following sections explain how Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* evaluation framework are useful to conceptualise cultural counterfactuals in an Indigenous context. Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Foley 2003) promotes Indigenous epistemological approaches to conceptualising cultural counterfactuals. The *Ngaa-bi-nya* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programme evaluation framework (Williams 2018) is used because it prompts evaluators to consider the historical, policy and social landscape of Indigenous peoples' lives and allows for evaluations of Indigenous procurement policies that are culturally relevant, effective and translatable. This has reciprocal benefits for Indigenous and western theory. We show below that Indigenous Standpoint Theory and *Ngaa-bi-nya* benefit Value Theory and Strain Theory by overcoming the limitations of western theory to explain social value. Value Theory and Strain Theory show how western theory can be used for the benefit of Indigenous peoples.

These ontological and epistemological perspectives challenge the historical marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge (Foley 2003) and the use of non-Indigenous value frameworks used in Indigenous procurement policy evaluations. We argue that social

value in an Indigenous context means more than creating jobs or providing work. This framework is critically important to enable accurate reporting of the impact and effectiveness of new Indigenous procurement policies and avoid further loss of voice and marginalisation of the people they are meant to benefit. It is also a strategy for resetting the relationship of Indigenous procurement policy evaluations that could be improved and extended by Indigenous researchers interested in this field.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory

Indigenous Standpoint Theory addresses historical attempts to oppress and exterminate Indigenous knowledge and epistemology, which has been viewed as inferior by western non-Indigenous researchers (Foley 2003). Indigenous Standpoint Theory was articulated by Gai-mariagal and Wiradjuri Aboriginal scholar of Indigenous entrepreneurship Foley (2003) in response to criticisms of post-structuralism and post-modernism for being dominated by Anglo Euro-centric and middle-class authors. Indigenous Standpoint Theory has its origins in:

- Critical Theory that challenges the restrictions and repressions of the established social order;
- Feminist Standpoint Theory that challenges neo-colonial approaches of the researcher dominating their "subjects";
- Insider-Outsider Theory that argues "non-Indigenous Australia cannot … understand the complexities of Indigenous Australia at the same level of empathy as an Indigenous Australian researcher" (Foley 2003, p. 46); and
- Indigenous philosophy that has three interacting worlds of the human, physical and sacred.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory gives primacy to Indigenous epistemologies and therefore promotes Indigenist research. Indigenist research is "research which focuses on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians" (Rigney 1997, p. 118). Indigenous Standpoint Theory ensures that theoretical constructs that emerge in research are consistent with Indigenous cultural perspectives (Jarrett 2019). Grounding cultural counterfactuals in Indigenous scholarship potentially increases the validity of this work and draws on relevant theoretical and practical constructs to conceptualise cultural counterfactuals in an Indigenous procurement policy context.

Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework

Ngaa-bi-nya, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programme evaluation framework (Williams 2018), identifies four domains where social value may be created by procurement policies: in the broad social landscape a policy is implemented in, in the resources used and generated, in the ways of social procurement in operation and in reflecting on learnings from the process and outcomes. *Ngaa-bi-nya* encourages Aboriginal programmes to be evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively from Indigenous peoples' perspectives and captures the social, cultural and economic influences of programmes like Indigenous procurement policies. The value of *Ngaa-bi-nya* for conceptualising cultural counterfactuals in an Indigenous procurement policy context is its resonance with the arguments above about the economic, social and cultural influences on social value for Indigenous people. Table 1 below explains the four *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains in relation to Indigenous procurement policies.

The *Ngaa-bi-nya* framework promotes Indigenous epistemologies that help to understand social value. For example, *Ngaa-bi-nya* prioritises Indigenous perspectives in social value research by sharing knowledge about the four domains as an example of working at the cultural interface of Indigenous and scientific knowledge systems (see Nakata 2007). The four domains of *Ngaa-bi-nya* recognise that local areas have their own histories, resources, and ways of working and relating, for example, that requires attention to the roles of communities, country and culture as a conceptual lens (see Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019) to conceptualise social value and therefore cultural counterfactuals. *Ngaa-bi-nya* therefore is useful to conceptualise that cultural counterfactuals may be created by Indigenous procurement policies when the policies negatively affect the domains Landscape, Resources, Ways of working and Learnings.

We explain below how Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* framework conceptualise how cultural counterfactuals can be understood in the context of Indigenous procurement policies in Australia and how these perspectives extend western theory. This new conceptual framework is an example of the "cultural interface" of Indigenous social value and western social value, which can be mediated to promote Indigenous standpoints in policy design and evaluation. The cultural interface is the contested knowledge space that includes the "histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses,

Table 1. Ngaa bi-nya evaluation framework domains in relation to assessing the impact of Indigenous procurement policies.

Ngaa-bi-nya domain	Considerations
Landscape	• The broadest context Indigenous procurement policies and construction employment opportunities are located in and influenced by • History of colonisation • Other programmes that have generated employment generally and in construction • Local socioeconomic factors like housing affordability, education and employment rates • The extent to which local Indigenous peoples have been engaged in identifying needs and setting priorities • Alignment between legislation and policies relating to the outcomes targeted by Indigenous procurement policies.
Resources	• Human, material, non-material and in-kind resources and informal economies and relationships that often support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programmes • Employment, Indigenous workforce development and transfer of knowledge • Human resources draw on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge and resources and volunteer community participation • Networks that support construction employment opportunities created by Indigenous procurement policies.
Ways of working	• Delivery of Indigenous procurement policies • Extent to which Indigenous procurement policies promote self-determination for communities • Level of local engagement to plan for social procurement interventions • Activities, relationships, frameworks, principles and accountability mechanisms that support Indigenous procurement policy implementation.
Learnings	• Reflects on the insights gained and what has been learned by the people who have gained construction employment though Indigenous procurement policies • Assesses whether policy objectives have been met • Relates to the movement of ideas, actions, purpose, ways of being, and ways of relating.

Adapted from Williams (2018).

social practices and knowledge technologies" of Indigenous and western science (Nakata 2007, p. 9).

Reciprocal benefits of Indigenous and Western theories of social value

The value of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the *Ngaa-bi-nya* framework is that they talk across boundaries between Indigenous and western scholarship and help recover Indigenous epistemological foundations (Smith 2012). This includes accepting that Indigenous culture and community are key platforms to understand regional development (Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019), where "regional economic success (a key target of Indigenous procurement policies) comes down to people and communities being able to work effectively and cleverly across organizational and cultural boundaries" (Tebrakunna Country *et al.* 2019, p. 1510). Indigenous theory should be engaged to override the erasing effects of Western epistemological standpoints and to recognise the importance of cultural identity as a positive driver for Aboriginal peoples (Bodkin-Andrews *et al.* 2017a). In other words, Indigenous and western theory should be used together to give reciprocal benefits to the other. This section explains how *Ngaa-bi-nya* interacts with Value Theory and Strain Theory to highlight how the value of social procurement to Indigenous people might be conceptualised and measured.

Value theory

Defining the concept of "value" has been a long-standing point of contention between philosophers and social scientists going back to the philosophical foundations of Aristotle and Plato which first articulated the concept of value in terms of experiences and objects that provide pleasure and satisfy desires (Frondizi 1971). Subsequent work positions notions of value as arising from "evaluative experiences" which elicit a positive or negative emotional response. For example, Hirose and Olson (2015, p. 1) argue that value "concerns which things are good or bad, how good or bad they are, and … what it is for a thing to be good or bad". This highlights that different types of value are perceived by people or communities depending on how they perceive good and bad.

While initially useful for defining social value as a positive or negative result of Indigenous procurement policies, an explanation of how social value is created or perceived by the people who are meant to benefit from Indigenous procurement policies is still needed. The process of how social value is created is best captured through the four components of Value Theory. Despite its age, Meinong's (1894) Value Theory can be useful in understanding social value creation in social procurement policy targeting Indigenous people, because it proposes that there are four components acting together in a process of determining value. Table 2 explains these four components in relation to

Table 2. Components of value theory relating to social value and Indigenous procurement policies.

Value component	Description
Value subject	• An Indigenous person perceiving the social value created by Indigenous procurement policies and participating in construction employment opportunities the policies provide.
Value object	• Construction employment opportunities provided by Indigenous procurement policies to which value will be ascribed.
Existence judgement	• Evaluation of the relationship between the value object (jobs) and Indigenous cultural values, that determines the social value created by social procurement policies.
Value feeling	• An Indigenous person determining social value based on the relationship between a value object (a job) and the existence judgement • A positive relationship, where construction employment responds to local contexts (Landscape), provides employment with good training and pay (Resources), addresses local needs through meaningful community engagement (Ways of working) and has established processes for assessing objectives (Learnings) will create positive social value • Negative relationships promote negative social value – one or more of the domains is neglected or harmed.

Adapted from Meinong (1894).

Table 3. Ngaa-bi-nya benefiting the conceptualisation of social value in the context of Indigenous procurement policies.

Ngaa-bi-nya factors	Effect of construction employment on social value
Landscape	• Local employment rates, socioeconomic position, collaboration between builders and local communities and self-determining practices • Integrated into project procurement plans and supply chains so project teams are clear about procurement actions.
Resources	• Indigenous businesses who can subcontract different work packages on a project • Project-specific employment and training opportunities • Financial outcomes, skill and experience development of local Indigenous workers and community contributions that promote the sustainability of collective involvement in construction planning and operation.
Ways of working	• Holistic and addressing the social determinants of health and wellbeing • Facilitating connection to culture and identity • Project managers collaborating and engaging with community members to reach shared agreement on procurement matters.
Learnings	• Commitment to make progress despite challenges and set-backs • Strength of relationships through improved trust, reciprocity and sharing with local communities.

the social value created by Indigenous procurement policies.

This conceptualisation of social value is useful because it aligns with Indigenous epistemologies, which Chilisa (2012, p. 117) argues are based on "knowledge [that] arises out of the people's relationship and interaction with their particular environment" and this has significant implications for perceiving social value. While useful, Value Theory is limited by its absence of Indigenous epistemologies (Foley 2003) and would benefit from being extended by Indigenous scholarship.

Through *Ngaa-bi-nya* for example, social value comes from someone's interaction with construction employment in relation to the *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains. Where construction employment aligns with or supports those domains it will produce a positive value feeling and hence positive social value. In an Indigenous procurement policy context this means that communities and construction procurement managers can plan for and assess social value when construction jobs provided by Indigenous procurement policies support *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains as explained in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that if elements of *Ngaa-bi-nya* are neglected by contractors, Indigenous workers may perceive those companies as creating negative social value because they do not support Indigenous epistemologies or self-determining practices. However, while Value Theory is conceptually useful for identifying criteria, such as how social procurement in a construction context can create social value for Indigenous people it does not explain the counterfactuals important to good practice social value assessment. For example, it does little to explain how the relationship between a value object and the value subject's personal values has a causal effect on perceptions of social value. To address this theoretical gap, we explore below how construction jobs my create strain for Indigenous construction workers, and therefore negative social value, when they do not support the *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains.

Table 4. Behavioural responses to Indigenous procurement policies influencing social value (Merton 1938).

Behavioural response	Description
Conformance	• Acceptance of cultural goals and institutional opportunities.
Ritualism	• Rejection of cultural goals and acceptance of institutional opportunities • Performs ritual of forced and disingenuous conformance.
Innovation	• Acceptance of cultural goals and rejection of available opportunities • Creates new ways of achieving institutional opportunities while maintaining cultural values.
Retreatism	• Rejection of both factors • Person retreats from their society • The egalitarian nature of Indigenous Australian culture means it is unlikely someone would completely retreat from their society. Retreatism is included here because of its use in the original development of strain theory.

Strain theory

Strain Theory is based in the work of Merton (1938) and argues that societies and cultures have culturally acceptable goals (such as employment) which are achieved through approved institutionalised means (such as going to university or working in legitimate Indigenous organisations). Institutions are the rules, norms and procedures which govern social behaviour – they can be formal and informal (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). "Formal institutions" are disseminated and enforced through official channels like regulations and laws, while "informal institutions" are communicated and enforced through unofficial channels which are subtler and typically not visible to the casual observer. For example, in Australia informal institutions include calls from business leaders for Indigenous people to take up employment as a way of lifting themselves out of passive welfare (Forrest 2014), while formal institutions like Elders (Pearson 2003) and Indigenous procurement policies provide a regulatory framework for this to happen.

Individuals may accept or reject either or their culturally ascribed goals or the available institutional means to achieve them. In the case of Indigenous procurement policies, this means people may show a range of behavioural responses which influence the social value the policies create. Behavioural responses are shown in Table 4.

Theoretically, Strain Theory posits that positive social value results when individuals have high acceptance of both cultural goals and available institutional opportunities. In other words, employment and training opportunities offered by social procurement policies will be created when they do not clash with cultural values, such as traditional social obligations that oblige Indigenous people to share with and look after their kinship network (Byrnes 2000) or any of the *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains. This would happen when construction employment supports the *Ngaa-bi-nya* domain Ways of working, such as supporting staff to discuss challenges they are having and make improvements. In contrast, a psychological strain is created when social procurement policies conflict with these values and *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains which will create negative social value. This could occur if a job opportunity takes an Indigenous person away from their land or community or requires them to act in ways that are detrimental to the community, something unlikely to be considered by social procurement policymakers who are typically non-Indigenous people.

To understand in more depth, how these social value tensions may arise, the following sections examine key differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous notions of value.

Indigenous social value extending cultural goals and values

Indigenous reality, and therefore values that influence social value, is shaped by the connections people have with themselves, others and the world around them (Wilson 2008). Indigenous social reality is best "understood in relation to the connections that human beings have with the living and the non-living" and how people construct reality based on these relationships (Chilisa 2012, p. 20). This highlights that Indigenous values prioritise the environment and strong connections between people and others. In contrast, non-Indigenous society is more individualistic (Byrnes 2000) and values the exploitation of the environment for economic profit (Groenfeldt 2006).

Table 5 illustrates this by presenting a comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of thinking in Australia in Australia (Bessarab and Forrest 2017). It shows that Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies differ significantly to non-Indigenous ways of thinking, and we discuss the implications of this for social value below.

Given that Indigenous people continue to be excluded by non-Indigenous governments from policymaking (Westbury and Dillon 2019), and that social procurement policies are therefore likely to reflect

Table 5. Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of thinking in Australia (Bessarab and Forrest 2017, p. 11).

Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Based on a non-lineal understanding of the cosmos and life – circular and continual	Based on a lineal understanding of the universe and life – a beginning and end
Environment (nature) as capital	Money (particularly accumulation of wealth) as capital
Living with nature	Dominance of environment
Time and the measurement of time is less of an important element of society	Time and the measurement of time is a prevailing ridged element of society
Indigenous peoples are custodians of the land	Land is owned by entities
Land (environment and nature) is viewed as peoples' mother, the giver of life, and is protected to support life	Land is an economic resource to be used to benefit society
Kin-ism (kinship) and reciprocity are keystones	Individualism is a keystone
Oral societies	Literate societies

non-Indigenous values, Table 5 illustrates that Indigenous procurement policies could create negative social value for Indigenous communities, based on the different values held by the two groups. For Indigenous Australians community development, and therefore economic development and social value, relies on the Aboriginal values of relationships, responsibility, respect, reciprocity and accountability (Mooney *et al.* 2017). For example, given the important connections to family, society and land that distinguish Indigenous cultures, the social value created by construction employment or training opportunities could be negative for an Indigenous person, compared to a non-Indigenous person, if it required them to move away from their community or they do not have access to education, training and skills development to further their careers. Similarly, a job which involves working alone and in a hierarchical organisational structure may hold less value for an Indigenous person than a non-Indigenous person, as might the income generated from employment since these would contradict Indigenous values of collectivism and egalitarianism. These potential sources of strain and negative social value can be further magnified by construction industry institutions – both formal and informal, as discussed in more detail below.

Social value implications of construction industry institutions

The construction industry has its own unique industry-specific institutions which may be counterproductive to Indigenous social value creation. Significant levels of marginalisation, racism and discrimination have been reported on construction projects towards minority groups (Wong and Lin 2014), which may create negative value for Indigenous people employed in the sector. Furthermore, although the construction industry operates in remote communities, construction is an inherently site-specific, project-based activity (Dubois and Gadde 2002), which creates a nomadic lifestyle likely to cause strain for Indigenous people, by conflicting with Indigenous notions of kinship and connection to country. In a social value context, construction project characteristics may therefore adversely affect the relationship between the value object (work opportunity) and existence judgement (Indigenous cultural values), where a job comes at the expense of cultural values, leading to negative social value.

Other aspects of the construction industry that may create strain, for Indigenous people include the highly commercial imperatives that drive the industry. These too often subjugate people to be just another expendable resource to be managed to maximum efficiency (Dainty and Loosemore 2013), preventing Indigenous people from maintaining cultural values of staying connected to country and community.

Construction is also a highly "measured" process where people operate under extreme time and cost pressures. As Bassioni *et al.*'s (2004) review of performance measurement frameworks in construction found, performance measurement frameworks used in construction rely heavily on financial measurements with little attention given to how a company is meeting the needs of its employees. This suggests that cultural values such as those which are important to Indigenous people are likely to be neglected in pursuit of performance goals. Finally, a culture of presentism and long work hours on construction projects (Galea *et al.* 2018) is also likely to prevent Indigenous people from attending important community or family events, leading to a sense of disconnect from community.

Conceptual framework: cultural counterfactuals to assess the social value of Indigenous procurement policies

Synthesising the above critical review, Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework of cultural counterfactuals which can be used by policymakers to better measure social value creation in the context of Indigenous procurement policies. The framework uses

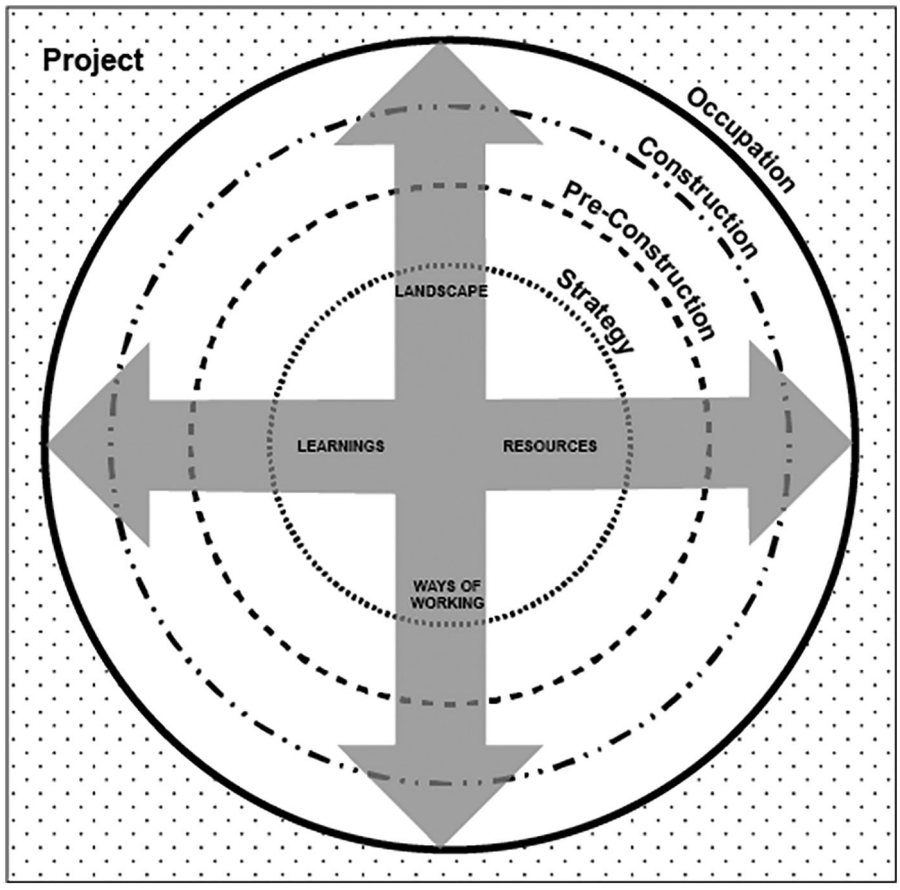

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of cultural counterfactuals to plan for and assess the social value created by Indigenous procurement policies.

the four *Ngaa-bi-nya* domains to highlight the areas to be promoted through procurement: Landscape contextual factors like employment rates and community socioeconomic position; Resources like existing Indigenous suppliers in a project's area and work packages that can be completed by Indigenous businesses; Ways of working that reflect Indigenous values, and; Learnings and evaluation opportunities and processes that inform ongoing work. The framework is bounded by a construction project which recognises that Indigenous procurement policies are implemented in the context of separate construction projects and that each project represents a unique context the policies are implemented in.

Four layers to the framework show planning for and evaluating social value can and should occur during stages of the construction project lifecycle. Arrows extending from the centre of the framework show that stakeholders and their needs to create social value will change as the project moves through the lifecycle (Mulholland *et al.* 2020). Following Fewings and Henjewele (2019), Table 6 explains the stages of the construction project lifecycle used in this framework and the consideration that procurement managers and contractors should make, to do social procurement and create social value.

The framework in Figure 1 should be used when a project is in its planning stage to identify community stakeholders who should be engaged by a contractor to understand the specific needs of local Indigenous communities they build in. This can be used to develop a plan for the construction and occupation stages of the lifecycle which might show opportunities for local Indigenous businesses to be involved in work or maintenance packages. Procurement managers can use this information to plan how and where they can provide business and employment opportunities for local people. This will ensure that community issues are addressed, and communities meaningfully engaged in the construction process. The occupation phase can be used to identify businesses that can be contracted on an ongoing basis to operate and

Table 6. Application of construction lifecycle phases to this conceptual framework.

Project lifecycle phase	Consideration
Strategy	• Planning for the construction and management of a project (Landscape) • Researching and deciding procurement options to purchase from Indigenous suppliers or employ Indigenous workers (Resources) • Engaging Indigenous stakeholders to plan for social procurement (Ways of working) • Collaborating on how the Landscape, Resources, Ways of working and Learnings domains can be supported on the project (Learnings).
Pre-construction	• Pre-construction activities like design and tendering (Landscape) • Engaging Indigenous businesses to put the strategy developed previously into practices (Resources) • Determining capability of local Indigenous businesses and identifying work packages or experience and development opportunities (Ways of working) • Developing processes to identify, communicate and resolve challenges that arise during construction (Learnings).
Construction	• Construction of the project according to approved plans and specifications (Landscape) • Opportunities for skills and experience development undertaken on site (Resources) • Indigenous procurement strategies implemented and monitored by contractors and procurement managers (Ways of working) • Contractors continue collaborate with communities and businesses to get initial feedback (Learnings).
Occupation	• Commissioning and operation of the finished project by the client (Landscape) • Identify opportunities and engage Indigenous businesses and workers to operate and maintain the finished project (Resources) • Implement further opportunities for social procurement in the operation and maintenance of the building or facility (Ways of working) • Finished project is evaluated, lessons learned and practices adjusted if necessary (Learnings).

Table 7. Ngaa-bi-nya questions to plan for and evaluate social value from Indigenous procurement policies.

Ngaa-bi-nya domain	Questions to evaluate social value and Indigenous procurement policies
Landscape	• Has the project promoted self-determining practices of local Indigenous people? • Has the project and supply chain improved the socioeconomic position of local Indigenous people?
Resources	• What Indigenous businesses have been subcontracted to different work packages on the project? • What employment and training opportunities has the project provided? • What financial outcomes did local Indigenous businesses and workers get from the project? • How were the skills and experience of local Indigenous workers developed on the project?
Ways of working	• How did the project address the social determinants of health and wellbeing? • How did the project promote cultural identity for workers? • How engaged were the local community during the project and were their concerns addressed?
Learnings	• What challenges and set-back were experienced on the project? • How were they overcome and did this contribute to positive relationships between the contractor and other businesses or the community? • What were the levels of trust, reciprocity and sharing between the contractor and local communities and businesses?

maintain a facility. Ongoing packages that could be contracted to Indigenous businesses or employees to create social value could be maintenance (cleaning, landscaping, etc.), operations (operating systems and machinery or face-to-face roles) and management services.

Figure 1 prompts people who use it to plan or evaluate their social procurement, to consider Landscape, Resources, Ways of working and Learnings that the framework is being used in. For example, construction clients (public or private) can assess the Landscape to identify social requirements to insert into construction contracts. Contractors can use the Landscape domain to collaborate with communities to help them meet project-specific requirements. Communities can also use the framework in discussions with project teams during the planning, construction and operation stages of the project lifecycle to communicate their concerns and needs. This will promote the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making matters that affect them and improve their economic and social conditions through employment and vocational training (United Nations 2007).

The framework can benefit diverse stakeholders who implement, and are affected by, Indigenous procurement policies. For example, government departments can refer to the framework to inform policy development and evaluation. Communities can use the framework to assert their concerns with governments and contractors. This should leave communities in a better position to use the current infrastructure boom in Australia to ensure better training and employment opportunities for local people. Contractors can also use the framework to develop social procurement practices or evaluate what they

are currently doing. For example, contractors can review the material and non-material resources their Indigenous procurement uses. This includes the training and employment opportunities they have provided and the new networks and suppliers established in their supply chain. Table 7 gives examples of key questions which stakeholders in each stage of the building procurement life cycle should ask to evaluate Indigenous procurement policies. The questions asked in Table 7 are past tense to locate them in an evaluation context. The wording could be altered to change the questions to future tense to stimulate thinking about local contexts for contractors developing their Indigenous procurement strategy.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper addressed calls for more culturally informed evaluation frameworks to assess the impact of Indigenous social procurement policies from the perspectives of those who they are meant to benefit. It critically examined the use of Indigenous Standpoint Theory, *Ngaa-bi-nya*, Value Theory and Strain Theory in providing a more nuanced understanding of how social impact researchers and assessors can integrate Indigenous and Western Theories in a beneficial way to, allow for cultural differences when assessing the impact of social procurement policies that affect Indigenous peoples.

We have shown how without consideration of the different ways that Indigenous cultures perceive value, initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for these people may create unintended strain in those communities they are meant to benefit. Introducing the concept of cultural counterfactuals and a conceptual framework to assess it into the social impact and social procurement policy debate, this paper addresses an important gap in both research and practice, where scant attention has been paid to allow for culturally specific perceptions of social value.

The theoretical and practical contribution of this model to the emerging social value debate is in illustrating how institutional opportunities created by industries like construction, formulated in response to Indigenous procurement policies, can have an unintended negative social impact – especially when they are developed by non-Indigenous people who do not deeply understand Indigenous culture and/or when Indigenous people have been excluded from their development and implementation. Using this model, policies could be reviewed by determining if they support *Ngaa-bi-nya* or create strain by requiring people to surrender important cultural values in taking the institutional opportunities they offer. Our paper adds to this debate in the context of Indigenous procurement policies by showing that if cultural counterfactuals are not considered, then the success of these policies will never be fully understood which could mean that scarce resources could be invested in ways which are counterproductive to the very communities they are meant to benefit.

In addition to being of value to social procurement policymakers, the framework developed above can also be useful to construction procurement managers when implementing social procurement practices in two main ways. First, to shape their organisation's employment practices so they create social value for employees by developing people's acceptance of the work and culture benefits they provide; and second to select subcontractors based on their understanding of and allowance for Indigenous values.

This framework can also be used by researchers to understand the social value created by Indigenous procurement policies. It is "critical that all people seeking to understand 'Indigenous Australia' recognise, respect and incorporate perspectives emerging from Indigenous scholars … [and] communities" (Bodkin-Andrews *et al.* 2017b, p. 21) and this applies to research on Indigenous procurement policies. We are constantly learning from our research journey and are reminded of the importance of Indigenous-led solutions to topics that impact them. Operationalising the framework this way will ensure that future research in this area is grounded in community values and priorities, that it recognises Indigenous epistemologies around the relational nature of knowledge creation, and that it ultimately provides an accurate explanation of the social value Indigenous procurement policies create.

Potential barriers to using this framework

Raising awareness of this framework in the construction industry so it benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples could be challenging. Many construction contractors who have to meet the requirements imposed on them by social procurement policies see Indigenous businesses as a significant cost, time and safety risk to their project deliverables (Loosemore *et al.* 2020). Recent data also shows that up to three quarters of Australians hold an implicit bias against Indigenous Australians (Shirodkar 2020).

So how likely is the construction industry to use an Aboriginal-influenced framework? The take up of this

framework may be resisted in some parts of the construction industry but could be welcomed in others. Builders are gaining interest in evaluating their Indigenous participation (yourtown 2018). This framework is a simple tool they can use in those evaluations to assess the social value they create. The framework will also educate builders how they are promoting self-determining practices in their supply chains.

Another strategy to "reset the relationship" and decolonise the Tasmanian Government by Aboriginal Tasmanians has been "love-bombing" that changed the relationship with government for good governance (Tebrakunna Country and Lee 2019). Resetting the relationship involves decolonising relationships and injecting Indigenous-led strategies that reflect, for example, cultural processes of kinship and reciprocity. Resetting the relationship could be used in the context of Indigenous procurement policies to strengthen the domains of our conceptual framework through the processes described above. This means that operationalising our conceptual framework must be done by prioritising the lived experiences of Indigenous workers who have been employed on projects covered by Indigenous procurement policies.

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