Historical Trauma and Resilience: Stories with Aboriginal young people in Australia

By

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

2024

University of Technology Sydney

Dedication

Tyiesha Anne

8 November 2006 – 27 July 2021

Forever our girl... our balabala, dancing in the dreaming.

Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Reakeeta Smallwood declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This thesis includes Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) belonging to the Gamilaroi Nation custodians or Traditional Owners. Where I have used ICIP, I have followed the relevant protocols and consulted with my community about the inclusion of our knowledge in our thesis. ICIP rights are Indigenous heritage and will always remain with Gamilaroi and other Indigenous peoples who have informed my positioning on Country. To use, adapt or reference the ICIP contained in this work, you will need to consult with the relevant Indigenous groups and follow cultural protocols.

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Signature:

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Yaama, yaamanday

Ngaya girr naangu dhurrin gnay

Gamilaraay

Nhama yalagirrmawu ngargay yalgiyu nhama

Wurruga nhalay dhawun garaga yilaadhu

Gaagi gadhabal yaraadha

I want to take this time to acknowledge Country and all that it encompasses. This includes the living and non-living Entities who have informed me on the grounds of guni ma.

Acknowledging that Aboriginal sovereignty has never been ceded.

Grounded with a deep respect to the relationships that inform my positioning I first want to acknowledge Elders past, present and future. I pay attention further to our future Elders who are our young people - may we as their old people pass down to them generational strength, love, and hope, always.

maarubaa nginda

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maarubaa nginda

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maarubaa nginda

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I hope the stories I share strengthens and shows love to every one of you. Always was, Always will be.

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Statement of contributions to jointly authored worked contained in the thesis.

This thesis contains three published works, two of which are jointly authored with my supervision team (chapter 2 and chapter 7). My responsibility as first author of these articles included ensuring each author contributed to the work as per COPE guidelines to be a named author (Authorship | COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics). Please see the statements of 'author contributions' and 'acknowledgements' within the publications to acknowledge both supervisory team and community authorship, mainly Uncle Nev Sampson. Additionally, I take full responsibility for the accuracy of the findings presented in these publications and this thesis.

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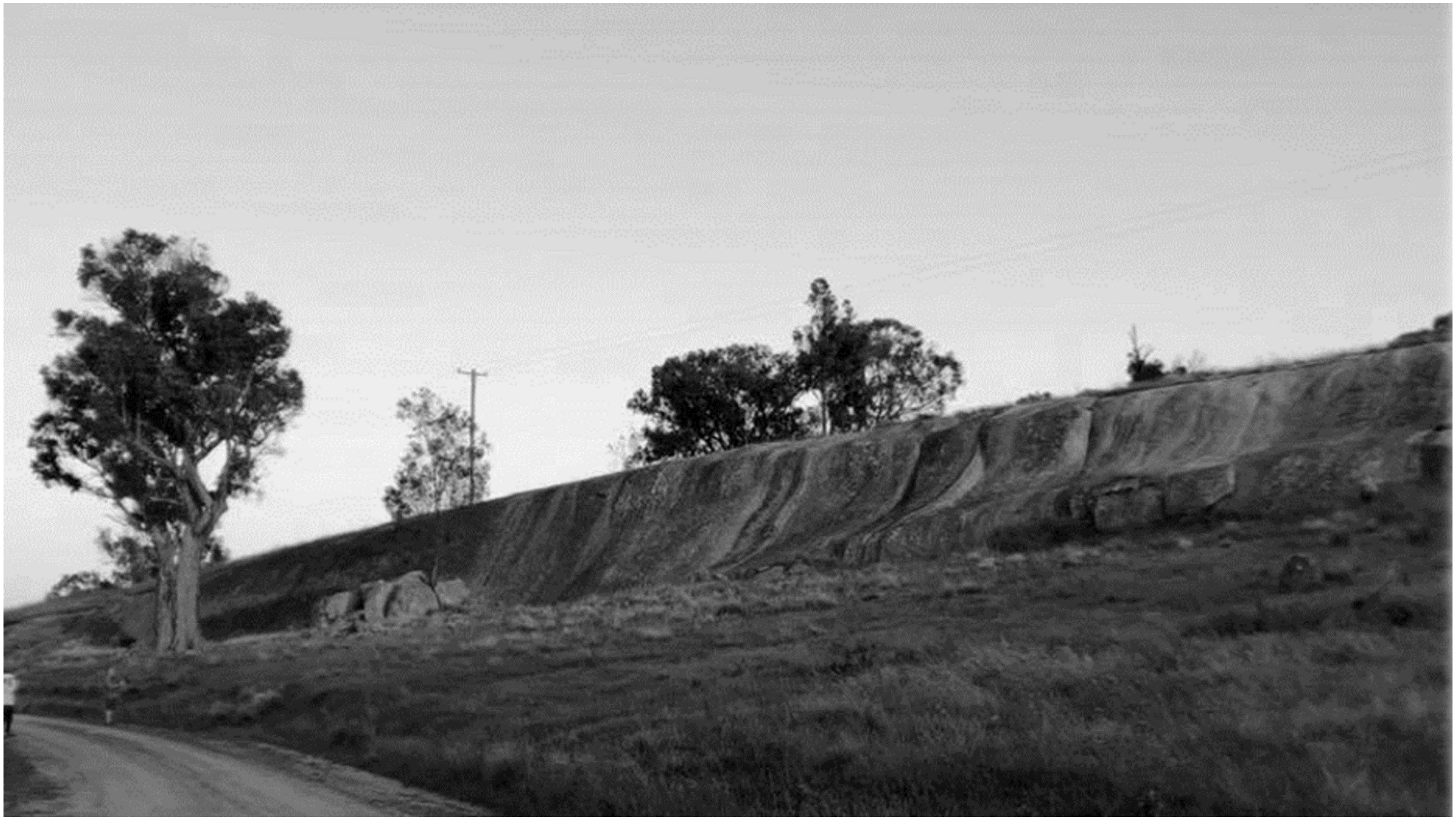

Figure 1 Little Wave Rock, photo.

PROLOGUE

Opening the Ceremony

I begin this thesis, imagining you coming to sit to have a yarn with me in circle, at a place where it all began for me; a place called Little Wave Rock (see Figure 1). In this circle are the people who have walked this journey with me, including, my Ancestors, my Elders, my sisters, my brothers, my family, my community and, importantly, the young people who have shared their stories with me as I journeyed across the Country of the Gamilaroi.

All on equal footing, we talk with each other, finding out where we're from and why we're here; who's our mob, where and how we connect, while sharing stories of our families and Country. We may not acknowledge that certain histories come with us, for we know there are traumas we carry within our bodies, but sitting down together, we choose to place those stories in the background and foreground the ones that brought us here today. Here, we know we've come together for a common purpose – to listen to the voices of Aboriginal young people and to learn from their experiences. I began this thesis with the aim of learning how to tell stories that celebrate their resilience, strength, and connection of our young people as our future ancestors.

Placing our feet on equal footing, on Country, is tricky business since there are protocols for opening a storytelling space on Country. Acknowledging the multiple spoken/unspoken protocols that ensure our safety, and for the ceremony to be a strong one (Martin, 2008), we must be accountable and responsible to these protocols and obligations as we journey through each stage of this ceremony with intent and purpose. Within this intent and purpose, we hold Country in a sacred relationship, as a guide to how we engage with Country, with others and with all living things. Acknowledging our continued relationship with our mother of all beings, our guni ma, our Country. Thus our relationship with Country and place is not based on ownership or claim, but in the way we are relationally accountable to all; where Country, people and all livings things (trees, spirits, animals etc.) are contingent on each other within this ceremony (Graham, 1999). To purposefully open this space, I use a poetic provocation to call on this continued connection to our mother, ensuring that as we enter, we are ready to hear, listen, know, and remember (see Poetic transcription 1).

Guni ma calls,

Guni ma calls,

Can you hear?

Can you listen?

Guni ma calls,

Can you hear?

Can you listen?

Guni ma calls, it’s time.

Time to return to her sacred place, dance upon the sacred ground.

Guni ma calls,

Can you hear?

Can you listen?

Her drum echoes through spaces in time,

In spaces they cannot listen,

Guni ma calls,

Can you hear?

Can you listen?

Poetic transcription 1, ‘Guni ma calls’ (R. Smallwood, 2021)

To begin

The imagining of you and me in this place of significance, not only tethers us to Country, but further is a purposeful way to hold my relational accountability to this story. This tethering has been informed by the work of Wilson (2008), who posited that Indigenous research is ceremony. Thus, I acknowledge this thesis and story as ceremony. Tethering our relational roles and accountabilities to the sharing of voice, using multiple voices as it is written, to where the telling of story is crucial to ensure we are not only heard, but also to how you and I connect in this space. Your role as the reader, in the wise words of Kakadu man Bill Neidjie (1989), emphasises the value of reading and the act of connecting through reading; it is comparable to the act of listening carefully, as if we were together and as if we and the young people who participate within this research circle were together: ‘When you read … Exactly right and you can feel yourself, anyone. The way I feel myself putting me in this story, I ask you to feel’. (121)

So read now with feeling as we journey through this ceremony. I acknowledge that I am accountable for the telling of these stories on behalf of our young people, who answered my questions and gave me their knowledge to use within this space, yet also recognising that this story is not really mine to tell … But here I am, holding not only my accountability to this way of telling in traditional academic formats, but also using different voices and methods of telling (through the use or art and poetics) not only to address the requirements, obligations, and accountabilities I hold as a student of a doctoral program, but also as a Gamilaroi woman connected to the community of the young people who took part in this ceremony. Hence, I am attempting to cross the bridge between two worlds.

I will leave you now in a moment of reflection, to read and connect to Neidje’s work from a ‘Story About Feeling’ (Neidjie, 1989, pp. 2–3) that reminds us of our continued connection and belonging:

> Well I’ll tell you about this story,
> About story where you feel…laying down
> Tree, grass, star…
> because star and tree working with you.
> We got blood pressure
> but same thing…spirit on your body,
> but e working with you.
> Even nice wind e blow…having a sleep…
> because that spirit e with you
>
> Listen carefully this, you can hear me.
> I’m telling you because earth just like mother
> and father or brother of you.
> That tree same thing.
> Your body, my body I suppose,
> I’m same as you…anyone.
> Tree working when you sleeping and dream.

My story

My name is Reakeeta, the name bestowed on me by my parents; a unique name, that dad swears is spelt differently to the name he originally imagined. Changed on purpose I reckon; mum had funny ways of always making things just right. I feel my name is just right. Dad tells a story of where he says he named me after the swinging bridge at Quirindi, spelling out my name as if it was a rickety bridge: **Rik-kit-ta**. Literally he would sound out each syllable as it is spelt here. Hence, my name spelling debate emerged. Now, whenever I meet someone new, or they want to know about my name, I have my story to tell about the origins of my name.

I am a proud Gamilaroi yinarr (woman) from Tamworth New South Wales, a place once called Calala. It is from my father's side that my Aboriginal heritage emanates. We are recognised and accepted as Aboriginal in a small town only 50 km from Tamworth, known as Quirindi. My father's parents were both Aboriginal; I only ever knew Pop to be Aboriginal. My nan's heritage comes from her mother, whose family were from the Wiradjuri Country. Pop's great-great-grandfather was Phillip Williams from Sackville Reach Mission, near the Hawkesbury River, the traditional land of the Dharug/Darug peoples. He married a non-Aboriginal lady, took on her name and went on to have five children with her, one of whom was my great-grandmother, Christina May Smallwood. Christina was born in Quirindi, or near there. I am uncertain of how they came to Quirindi originally, but Christina's father died young in Quirindi.

I was one of four daughters to my parents Kerrie and Phillip Smallwood. It goes, Reashanna, Kasey, me, and Chloe. I was smack-bang in the middle; well almost. We lived in a small house that grew, and grew, and grew over the years with dad's handy-man skills. I am not exaggerating: this house started as a small three-bedroom house, and when I left there, just over one year ago, it had four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a massive dining/games/lounge room with a hand-carved bar that I believe is tied to the structure of new additions in the house.

We had wild adventures living on the 'bad side of town', in a place known as Coledale. We didn't mind, nor did we think it was bad; it was normal for us. We terrorised the neighborhood, created forts, tree houses, or played hide and seek games in the local high school (before the days of fences), rode our bikes everywhere, hung out at parks, set off sparkler bombs, played knock n' run and stayed out until all hours.

Throughout my life, my parents were my anchors; my mum constantly worked multiple jobs and worked her way through a corporation to become a laboratory technician at a local meat works. She made many friends and organised social and charity events in her spare time, and not one thing she did was ever half-hearted.

Everything my parents had was well earned through labor and love. We were responsible from a young age, and once my sisters were old enough, and I was beyond Year 3 in primary school, Mum and Dad would be at work from sun-up to sundown showing us a strong work ethic and tireless sacrifice for us kids. We respected what this showed us.

When I was finishing high school, I couldn't decide if I wanted to join the Army or be a teacher, nurse, or artist. I was pretty convinced I would end up in one of those careers and made the decision to pursue nursing. Mum, who always found the time and energy to support all my great adventures, drove me to Newcastle and I sat the entry exams and tested for the Army to be a registered nurse. I did what I could in the testing but afterwards the careers officer took me into the room and announced that if I wanted to join tomorrow I would at best be a clerk, as nursing required officer-level results. I returned home with the paper in hand and thought 'Well, great what's next'. By this point I knew nursing was something I wanted to do; thoughts of art school lingered, but I was a pragmatic person. In true fashion Mum figured out how she could get me to university, finding a share house, helping me to apply for a cadetship, driving me to Armidale for a tour and paying a hefty deposit for the house I never used.

During this period of my life, I fell in love with my soulmate, Timothy. I still often reflect on the first time I saw him and, no lie, I relive that memory with a warm glow, as if a heavenly rom-com light points towards him and he walks in slow motion. Tim, from the get-go, has been my greatest supporter and number one fan. He shows me daily what love is and makes me a stronger, better human. With Tim came one of the best humans alive, his daughter Amber. Amber was only two years old at the time, and for many years I have watched her blossom into a young woman, with an amazing soul, who is caring, loving and hilarious. She gives me hope, hope for our young people. She is my daughter, and I will forever hold a special-shaped place for her in my heart.

With this newfound love and passion, and to avoid the impending moment my mum would make me move to Armidale (due to not yet having my licence and other things), the stars aligned and my very new friend Mary, who just completed her aged care certificate at TAFE, mentioned casually she wanted to do nursing. After some strategic persuasion by her husband, Mary and I took a leap of faith and off we went to Armidale, driving up and down the road for university. Mary and I did nursing together, studied together, and went on all our placements together. We even worked together, as the first graduates at the Base hospital to complete the NSW Aboriginal Cadetship program. My destiny was set. I finished university, ready to start my graduate year, but then decided to have my first child, Anders.

Our family had grown. Amber was now a big sister, and Tim and I were doting parents of a new spirit finding his way through the world for the very first time. When he chose me to be his mother, my world shifted, and I was absolutely smitten with this beautiful, gentle, soft boy. He chose me to be his mother and from the first time I met him I can still remember the feeling of pure joy.

Not long after returning to work after four months at home with Anders, my mum, after previously going into remission after a radical surgery and chemo/radiation therapy for Stage 3 oesophageal cancer, was diagnosed a second time with cancer – but this time it was a metastatic mass, deemed inoperable. Mum was the heart and soul of our family. The news of palliative care was a tough concept to grasp. We all wanted her to fight through this; there was not one person in my family who did not rely on Mum. Travelling to and from Tamworth to Sydney, mostly by herself previously, this time it was not the case; when she went to Prince of Wales in Sydney, intensive treatments or radical surgery was not an option. In one last effort, she tried her best with chemotherapy and radiation. However, the illness and sickness associated with the chemotherapy was too much and, in the end, we stayed for radiation only. A few weeks on, we brought her home. Things were different; Mum was still Mum, but she was tired and absent, fighting the pain and fatigue. Mum's symptoms became worse, and due to unbearable pain and difficulty walking, she was admitted into palliative care; coming home was no longer an option. She couldn't bear being a burden on anyone, nor did we want to push the point. Every moment I could spare, lunch breaks and whenever, were spent with mum. We had family pizza night watching the NFL footy, where she and Dad would be cuddling up on the hospital bed, yelling and cheering for their team, the West Tigers. This would all occur while Anders created havoc in the previously quiet environment of the palliative care ward.

Mum had good days and bad days, but in the end fatigue and pain came knocking quicker than we imagined. Tim and I decided we wanted to get married before losing mum, and we planned our wedding to every moment to ensure she could be there. Originally planning for early 2016, Mum and the nurses, mostly Mary, pushed for an earlier date. With just six weeks to plan, it was a mammoth task, but luckily many family members and friends rallied to the cause. On the day, the 31st of October 2015, Mum almost couldn't come. Struggling and crying, she fought to get up out of her bed to the water chair (a fancy hospital recliner). But she did; she pushed through, as I helped her get ready, donning my wedding dress; we got her ready, and we got to the wedding, bed-bound but nonetheless beautiful (see Figure 2). She enjoyed every minute, catching up with family and friends, taking selfies, living her best life and giving every ounce of energy she had left to be with everyone. I reflect on that night now, as one last party for Mum. She gave it all and just 18 days later, she went to sleep forever.

Figure 2: 'Bed-Bound and Beautiful', photo of Mum and Dad at my wedding

After what seemed a very short time, along came Eddie, our second son. Eddie the terror, or as most know him, Eddie Teddy. He came out unsettled, grumpy and, as I would say, chalk to his brother's cheese in personality and temperament, then age and to this day. I sometimes wonder if he too felt my grief, as if it passed through the womb. Who is to know? When he got a little older and became more settled, his personality developed, and the stories I share with others about him affirms we have an old soul on our hands; one who is a constant ball of energy, creativity, stubbornness, and imagination. There is not a day where Eddy has not been at least one of my highlights of the day's activities. In fact, all my kids, each, and everyday surprise me with their creativity, wit, exploration, and love.

Six months later, with two growing boys and one blooming young lady, I returned to work in theatre for almost 10 months. Shortly after I went to cardiac cath lab and cardiac rehab I was made aware of a project position at the hospital, called the Lighthouse Project. This project was aimed at addressing Aboriginal patients' experiences with acute coronary syndrome focusing on four areas: governance, cultural competence, workforce, and care pathways. It was a quality improvement (QI) project, where my boss mentored and taught me many things about the health system, including how to write and plan strategies with fancy Gantt charts and QI systems. I was out of my comfort zone for the first time.

During this time, I had the opportunity to reconnect with Uncle Nev Sampson, who knew my grandfather and my dad growing up. After trips away and ongoing community work, over time he took me under his wing. He is not only a respected senior Elder who I love and respect dearly, but someone I consider to be one of my closest friends. Not many days pass without a phone call or a scheduled plan to catch up with Uncle Nev. Often our phone calls are words of encouragement, checking in on my writing progress and continued updates on his latest adventures in community or plans for Friday night, including what band is playing where and when over the weekend, and if I can manage to meet him out, so he can keep refining my dance moves. I should note here, I am a terrible dancer…

Figure 3: 'Dancing the night away': photo of Uncle Nev and me, ripping up the dance floor.

Working alongside him sparked something inside me. He embraced my eagerness to learn and nurtured my passion for Aboriginal health and culture. Nearing the end of the project, I needed a challenge. Thinking I could not just return to clinical nursing, with what I had done in the project, I knew I needed to do more; I wanted to be part of change and I became passionate about helping my people and my community. At first, I was not sure what I needed to do or how I could continue specifically working in this space. I had previously met Professor Kim Usher, who had started an Aboriginal Research Advisory Committee in Coledale, which I attended in my project role. At one of these meetings the Master of Philosophy program was mentioned and my curiosity was sparked. One afternoon, I eagerly met with Kim in her office at Armidale, and later that week completed an application to enrol in a Master of Philosophy course.

Initially, while completing course work, I played around with a few ideas, primarily looking at workforce and cultural safety for Aboriginal nurses, something that I felt I could lead on from the Lighthouse Project, particularly because I developed an ongoing passion for supporting Aboriginal nurses in the health system. After submitting a few assignments and making some progress, Kim, Uncle Nev and another member of the committee convinced me to apply for a PhD position and scholarship under Australian Research Council Grant, focusing on young peoples' wellbeing and resilience.

One of the conditions of the project was that my sub-project would need to look at Historical Trauma and how it is understood from the perspective of Aboriginal young people. Initially, this topic rattled me. I wasn't sure I could focus on such an area; I felt my positioning as an Aboriginal nurse was my strength in this new world of academia, and that in time I wanted to produce research that aligned with my career goals. How was I to begin even thinking about such a topic, let alone research it? How could I do it right? It had me stumped. This leads to a reflective piece I wrote in March 2020 (Text box 1, below).

I'm uncomfortable as it's a pursuit for understanding the colonial impact, past, present, and continuing. That is undeniably out of my zone.

How do I begin to investigate colonisation and its effects when it is all I know?

I know the trauma. I know the loss of culture and I know my identity has been impacted by this very thing.

Where being strong in your identity is paramount, to ensure you can comprehensively and holistically understand the ongoing colonial oppression occurring; the colonisation of Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

Being certain in your identity, so you are not to drift off, continue the pursuit for truth.

Otherwise, you risk putting yourself in a very vulnerable position. From both a methodological stance and your position in community. Remember, research is a dirty word to our communities.

Text Box 1. Reflection in Diary, March 2020

From what I learnt in the course work, I knew I needed to understand the topic from the literature's perspective, what this looked like from a methodology and methods point of view, and how I could design something that would be achievable. A systematic scoping review was conducted during my cross-over and focused on young people within the nations that share similar colonial histories, referred to as the CANZUS Nations – Canada, Australia, New Zealand and United States of America (Smallwood et al., 2021b). This literature identified that young people experienced an impact of historical trauma at multiple levels, from an individual, family, and community perspective. With these layers, protective factors were identified, emphasising intergenerational strength and resilience. Further studies that use quantitative methods, only one considered the multiple impact this understanding had on young people. Further, strength, resilience and protective factors were reported in only one quantitative method, where the qualitative studies identified several layers of protective factors, with most being reported in a study that utilised an Indigenous methodology combined with participatory action research (Smallwood et al., 2021b). Identifying early on in my study that I needed to grasp how I could do this in a respectful way, I acknowledged that I would constantly be accountable to myself, to Country, to the people in my community, and to my ancestors.

Making sense of how I could even begin, I was yarning with my supervisors about how I could overcome my internal struggles with this topic. The best way I could suggest was to understand the topic from the point of view of my kids. At that point, Kim mentioned that perhaps – like Wilson (2008) – I could write my understandings as a letter to my sons in a paper. A perfectly timed idea.

With this aim in mind, I began as if they could hear this story from a view that the teaching of this story, as if it had always been there. As if my dad had the very same discussion with me, and his father the same. This metaphor of intergenerational stories, told to our young people, teaching them valuable lessons that make them aware, respectful, and accountable to our histories as people in a place we now call Australia (Smallwood, 2020). Overcoming this hurdle, my writing and my understanding transformed; I went deeper and deeper, developing, and solidifying principles, concepts and insights that have grounded and anchored this ceremony throughout.

Closing the beginning

As we now have opened this ceremony, calling on our connections and belonging, we are tethered not only to place, but to the continued accountability held in relational ways of knowing, being and doing within the relationships we hold to Country, people, and all living things. Reading this thesis, you may notice different forms of storytelling throughout; art works, stories, and poetry, all echoing the different stages of the journey I have taken through this research ceremony. The story and storytelling formats within this Indigenous research space rely on multiple formats (Benham, 2007) to build the way that sense-making has been achieved, and how I have captured knowledge gained at the crucial moments of this ceremony; you will notice I use differing techniques to guide you between the differing voices.

Throughout the thesis, artworks and poetic expressions have been used; you will be able to listen to the poems using the QR code placed with the transcriptions.

Using poetics and art has been a method of sense-making outside of the normative traditions of research writing and academic structures.

Like all stories, there are many told and left untold.

Artworks and poetics have held these stories. Held these voices.

You'll notice, too, two distinct 'voices' **– one written in the academic ways of writing**, the second, my words, my thinking, my beginnings.

Now, we begin.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter overview

This introductory chapter provides the reader an overview of this thesis, including the study's:

- significance,
- rationale,
- justification,
- context,
- dissemination strategies and outcomes, and
- structure of the thesis.

Highlighted in the prologue, this doctoral work is a sub-outcome from an Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant titled *Indigenous young people resilience and wellbeing* (# IN170100008). The larger project was led by Professor Rhonda Marriott (CIA) and Professor Kim Usher (CIB). The study was a mixed methods study at an urban and rural site. Using a longitudinal method to identify factors of resilience and wellbeing with Aboriginal young people, the study also included qualitative analysis of yarns with Aboriginal young people, service providers and community members. Being a sub-project, this doctoral work was grounded in the rural setting and in addition to the yarns for the ARC, Aboriginal young people were asked questions about historical trauma, their understandings of this concept and their collective experiences of trauma and resilience (see Appendix 4). Contributions to the ARC's body of work are highlighted later in this chapter and methods used, as part of the ARC, are discussed in Chapter 4.

Significance and rationale

The significance and rationale of this study are closely tied to much of what already is known about Aboriginal people globally. These stories often begin with alarming statistics, life expectancy comparisons and so on. Thus, the significance of this study could start here; it could start with what we have been socialised into thinking about Aboriginality as a 'problem to solve' (Dodson, 1994), ontologically, challenging the deficit-based discourse is crucial for hope to be fostered and transformation to occur. So, we do not begin there, in a problem story; we tell a different story...

Famously, Michael Dodson in 1994 challenged the notion of Aboriginality being a problem by re-pointing the gaze back to colonisation and the continuing oppression, marginalisation, and racism that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia (hereafter called Aboriginal people) have endured. Since then, well-researched evidence confirms that colonisation is a determinant of health; as Sherwood (2010) notes, ‘Today the burden of disease, poor socio-economic status and severe disadvantage of the Indigenous Australians is a testament to a history of colonisation and its continuation’ (p.30).

So, this is where we will begin.

> ‘Unpacking’ colonisation has been an interesting journey. I remember sitting on the computer one morning, well before I had started my doctoral program. I was researching Australia Day, now commonly referred to by Mob as Invasion Day. A date that rolls around every year on 26 January. This day for me had always been held a special place, a day where we were with our friends/kin, a significant date in their family that comes with being a best friend and sister. So, for me, celebrating the ‘founding of Australia’ was never really in my mind; the day was about being with my family and supporting them through each milestone, their loved ones never completed.
>
> Although I remember previous history lessons were whitewashed by the schooling system, with the arrival or invasion sold as a peaceful settlement, as an adolescent, the trauma I had experienced in my early life would not have an impact until later in life. I had not awoken to knowing about colonisation and how it still impacts us today. I remember that day, focusing so acutely on what I read about the Mob’s battle for date to be changed and calling for the transformation Australia needs.
>
> I felt the pain, the sadness, and the longing.
>
> The longing of Stolen Children, who were disconnected and had felt they would never return to Country.
>
> For Country is us and she is our kin.
>
> Reading these words not through my eyes but my heart,
>
> I was… penetrated by the loss, the trauma, and the fight…
>
> I became hyper-focused, reading over and over the stories of Stolen Generations activists, and warrior men and women who kept up resistance and fought for change. Months later, after going through the health system, intrigued about my own positioning in the colonial systems, I wanted to do life differently, I wanted to enhance my own understanding of Cultural Safety and the experiences that we as Aboriginal nurses were facing in the system.
>
> I became the warrior woman I had always felt I had needed to be. Finally having a purpose beyond my

own way of ever knowing myself.

I was birthed.

I was a warrior woman of fight. Of anger. Of trauma. Of guilt.

Of… many things.

But in true reflection, anger and the raging bull that steamed within, stemmed from the understanding of the pain of many things. It was hurt, it was loss, it was the gut feeling like the waves in the ocean were pulling you back from inside yourself, taking it to the pits of your stomach, up through your heart.

It is physical and emotional.

Wise words from many who guide, the motion of emotion (Personal communication, Saunders, 2023), like words flowing across our fingers through our pens, and the knowing and uncertainty of all that must be said.

I called my sister, explaining to her about all my learnings and opinions. My breath was shaking, struck by the statistics and stories, with a humility of acceptance and intrigue. She acknowledged my pain and understood what this moment felt like for me, with an empathy that has only grown stronger through our sisterly bond that is not defined by blood or kin.

Colonisation, defined through her words, was not a matter of loss in that moment, but of acceptance.

In that moment, her own loss and sense of identity moved beyond the tethering of trauma towards the tethering of love. Her story was shaped in ways beyond my knowing and in that moment our identity was shared collectively, through our trauma.

Coupled with reassurance, she taught me that no matter what, no matter our histories and our experiences, we are what we are, and we each have our purposes to fill in what it means to exist in a world we have always known. For me, that meant that colonisation was a concept that would be held in a place where I was feeling for my people and our country.

But love shines in those moments of vulnerabilities and disbelief. It shines through and penetrates us beyond belief, through ways in which we can write our own stories that are a part of us, and that are with us and belong to all of us.

Ontologically tying myself to this love, then, acknowledges my connection to all my ancestors who have

> given connection and belonging to me. For it is they who have defined us.
>
> My mother and my father, the generations before and our grandchildren hereafter.
>
> For we are all part of this past of finding 'Australia' that it defines us all.
>
> This milestone in my story acts as a tethering point of how far the journey has taken me towards decolonisation; towards understanding, accepting, and knowing my identity as an Gamilaroi woman within and outside of colonial thinking.
>
> Moving towards this understanding also involves coming to terms with what it means to be a parent of Gamilaroi children, who will also discover things of our past, that hold us in places of uncertainty.
>
> And thoughts of an Aunty who is there for them; one and not, who holds forever hope, love and longing beyond the reach of death.

Colonisation began just under 250 years ago in Australia; prior to that, over 500 distinct Aboriginal Nations were scattered widely across the diverse spaces and places of this continent (Koch & Nordlinger, 2014). As a result of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia have experienced a series of traumatic assaults that have had enduring consequences for families and communities (Evans-Campbell, 2008). These assaults are well documented in Australia (Paradies, 2016) and are like the experiences of other Indigenous populations globally. The story includes the introduction of disease, massacres, killings, forced relocation from traditional lands, removal of children for assimilative reasons, and removal of cultural practices such as language, dance, and ceremony (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Smallwood et al., 2021a). Evans-Campbell (2008) explains how Indigenous populations continue to experience the highest rates of lifetime traumatic events, including violence, abuse, neglect and ongoing racial microaggressions and negative stereotypes, that disparage and undermine Indigenous peoples' position and identity in society.

Historical trauma inquiry

Importantly, for communities to heal and break the cycles of trauma, historical trauma inquiry offers valuable insights in the field of health research by taking into consideration contemporary and historical collective traumas experienced by Aboriginal people due to colonisation (Mohatt et al., 2014). Historical trauma is an emerging field defined as a collective experience of depredation from historical interventions that have led to present day intergenerational transmissions (Joo-Castro & Emerson, 2021). It is important to note here that historical trauma inquiry began in the mid-1990s as a construct to contextualise, describe and explain the disproportionately high rates of mental health issues and health disparities among Aboriginal people globally (Gone et al., 2019).

First studied in survivors of the Holocaust after the Second World War, the purpose of the Indigenous inquiry was to understand the effects of collective trauma on health and wellbeing as result of Indigenous peoples due to colonial assaults, such as the generational impacts of massacres and forced removal from land (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Through this work, concepts such as intergenerational trauma and historical trauma were developed. Fast and Collin-Vézina (2019) state that many studies have tried to empirically link intergenerational trauma transmission, parenting deficits and other difficulties experienced by Indigenous people and communities today. Joo-Castro and Emerson (2021) recent review identified that most authors in the included studies focused on defining historical trauma or ways to address the trauma highlighting several challenges around this field of inquiry:

1. definition and measurement of intergenerational trauma transmission, such as social pathways identified as parental neglect or trauma;
2. differentiating between historical trauma and contemporary trauma;
3. The role of racism, discrimination and microaggressions;
4. The quest for resilience through enculturation, acculturation, and assimilation;
5. Addressing historical trauma through intervention and programs (Joo-Castro & Emerson, 2021, p.292).

This ambiguity at the conceptual level around what constitutes historical trauma dominates the field of inquiry and the idea is best appreciated for its metaphorical or literal functions in the field (Gone et al., 2019). Metaphorically, it is recognised as a figurative stand-in for colonisation, and literally as a scientific construct that can be measured and equated to the experiences and expressions of trauma, such as historical loss and consciousness with associated symptoms (Gone et al., 2019; Paradies, 2016).

Fernandez et al. (2021), after synthesising experiences associated with historical trauma and historical traumatic events, conducted a secondary qualitative analysis of the experiences of historical trauma in relation to specific locations of significant historical events. Fernandez et al. (2021) state: ‘Historical trauma events are systematic attempts to destroy spiritual, cultural, and subsistence practices often based on relationships with land’ (p.123). They add that the links between these historical trauma events are links to the root of settler-colonial disruptions for Indigenous peoples’ social, cultural, corporeal, and terrestrial relationships with Country. Foundational to Aboriginal peoples’ health and wellbeing is understanding how these events have caused increased vulnerability to stress and illness, both historically and in the present (Fernandez et al., 2021).

Kirmayer et al. (2014, p. 301) characterise historical trauma under the ‘Four Cs’:

- Colonial inquiry – to Indigenous peoples by settlers who perpetrated conquest, subjugation, and dispossession.
- Collective experience – of injuries by entire Indigenous communities whose identities, ideals and interactions were radically altered in consequence.
- Cumulative effects – from these injuries as consequence of subjugation, oppression, and marginalisation have created a constant force throughout ever-shifting historical sequences of adverse policies and practices by dominant society.
- Cross-generational impacts – of these injuries leaving a legacy of risk and vulnerability passed from ancestors to descendants in unrelenting fashion until ‘healing’ interferes with this process.

With this refined form in mind, Kirmayer et al. (2014) highlight that the concept of trauma, and the assumed identification of trauma through the psychological understanding of trauma, is impossible to capture. Consequently, previous identifications of historical trauma, from the individuals’ experiences and expressions of associated traumas such as causal pathways from past and present contexts, cause confusion in the field of inquiry.

Recognising associated adversity faced between generations and by individuals is varied, and without taking a wider view it does not capture the important elements that are rooted in structural issues, such as sociopolitical issues such as poverty and racism. Evans-Campbell (2008) further highlights that understanding historical trauma should not be based purely on a single-level diagnosis such as post-traumatic stress disorder but, rather, should be addressed using a multi-level and a multi-generational focus.

Aboriginal resilience and historical trauma inquiry

Importantly, historical trauma contextualises this disconnection, and the experience of colonisation, generationally (Smallwood et al., 2021). Brokenleg (2012) tells how, prior to colonisation, our young men and women were taken through traditional ceremonies into adulthood. They were given names, totems (meat and skin) and were deeply connected to Country and given roles and responsibilities within the kinship system. The understanding of culture in this regard is not just about past traditions and present norms but is about fostering a future-orientated capacity to aspire (Kirmayer et al., 2014) – an aspiration that builds collective agency and voice towards the healing of past traumas, towards future growth, resistance of oppression, and the redressing of inequalities experienced collectively (Kirmayer et al., 2014; Smallwood et al., 2021).

With this aspiration in mind, Kirmayer et al. (2014) highlight the need for historical trauma inquiry to focus on ways that Indigenous resilience is fostered and promoted throughout communities. Indigenous resilience focuses on a broader view of the individual and how they are positioned in their communities, and within their social, cultural, political, environmental, and historical contexts (Thomas et al., 2016). Indigenous resilience considers the individual as part of a collective, while not laying blame on their individual deficits or vulnerabilities to risk (Thomas et al., 2016). Kirmayer et al. (2011) define Indigenous resilience in context of historical trauma as multiple shared commonalities that include:

- regulating of emotion,
- supporting adaption through relational, ecocentric and cosmocentric concepts of self and personhood,
- revisioning of collective history in ways that valorise collective identity,
- revitalising language and cultural resources for social standing, healing, and narrative self-fashioning and,
- renewing of individual and collective agency (political, empowerment and

reconciliation).

Understanding historical inquiry through a lens of resilience is crucial. Aboriginal peoples' health and wellbeing issues have been in the research, policy, and interventions space for what seems like a millennium. Only in the last 20 years has this space considered the role and need for meaningful approaches to be led by Aboriginal peoples and their communities (Gee et al., 2014). Gee et al. (2014) highlight the importance of this shift as part of the development of the national framework contextualising social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) with and by Aboriginal peoples. Integral to this work is the recognition and importance of culture and history when understanding health and wellbeing issues. The nine guiding principles that underpin the SEWB framework are:

1. Health as holistic
2. The right to self-determination
3. The need for cultural understanding
4. The impact of history in trauma and loss
5. Recognition of human rights
6. The impact of racism and stigma
7. Recognition of centrality of kinship
8. Recognition of cultural diversity
9. Recognition of Aboriginal strengths (Gee et al., 2014, p.54).

This framework highlights the importance of historical trauma and loss, how it is understood as an impact on the lives of Aboriginal people, past, present, and future. Further, the SEWB framework acknowledges the continuing diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the strengths that our communities continue to foster.

Colonisation and historical trauma inquiry in Australia

Most notably, colonisation enabled the removal of children from families and communities through paternalistic policies enforced across the colony of Australia. The first policies started in 1910, with the last policy being removed in 1972 (Peeters et al., 2014). Placing stolen children in camps, schools, and domestic servitude, where many were traumatised, abused, neglected, and experienced lifetime oppression and assimilation, has had long term impacts on our people (Peeters et al., 2014). Ensuring they did not return home when they were adults, they were told lies – that the colonisers had 'saved' them, or that their traditional families had deserted them or died (Peeters et al., 2014). Some of the children were taught to be ashamed of their traditional identities and were moved away from Country and families; internalising the hate and racism forced on them from the dominant society, they found themselves assimilated and oppressed within.

Peeters et al. (2014) highlight that healing from these practices has been thwarted by a significant gap in funding, research, policy, and service. Furthermore, few programs focus on the redress of this collective, complex trauma. Although the focus of Peeters et al.'s (2014) work is on the impact of the Stolen Generations, the practice of removing children was just one of many used to control and remove Aboriginal people.

The colony of Australia and Aboriginal people have lived in a relationship of tension since colonisation began just over 250 years ago; some argue the colonies that exist today in the colonised world were founded on genocide (Docker, 2015, citing Barta, 1987). And, like many other Indigenous peoples globally, Aboriginal people in Australia hold this trauma, and the manifestation of trauma the permeates generationally, acknowledging that colonisation has uprooted entire systems of people, Country, and connection. Thomas et al (2016) explains:

> These colonising policies and practices resulted in the near destruction of all Indigenous knowledge systems that guided Indigenous civilizations and systems of education, healthcare, child and social welfare, and any sense of self-determination. The loss of this Indigenous knowledge was devastating because, as the settler society dismissed Indigenous ways of knowing, they denied Indigenous philosophies and perspectives of knowledge and reality, and supplanted them with foreign concepts of individuality, patriarchy, and ownership. (Thomas et al., 2016, p.6).

Shared collective trauma has been well researched in many fields within Australia, particularly those of intergeneration trauma and trauma-informed research, policy and practice. O'Neill et al. (2018) cite the work of Atkinson (2002) and Ratnavale (2007) in examining collective and intergenerational trauma with Aboriginal people in Australia. These authors proposed that trauma within Aboriginal families began with the colonising practices of social marginalisation, racism in all its forms, and incarceration. Additionally, continuing colonisation contributes to the re-traumatisation of Aboriginal people in forms of family violence, abuse, self-harm, and substance abuse (O'Neill et al., 2018). In 2010, two years after the National Apology to Aboriginal peoples, and in particular to those who were part of the Stolen Generations, the Healing Foundation was established on the basis that if trauma is left untreated it is transmittable across generations, and that trauma inquiry requires a lens that acknowledges historical and continuing colonisation (Dudgeon, 2021).

The emphasis moving forward is on the focus of Aboriginal people on enacting self-determination and leading generations of families to healing. Healing is multilayered and diverse for each family and community group across Australia. Healing should be focused on re-connecting to culture and ceremony, creating safe places for people to share their story of hope, trauma, and connection through the empowerment of individuals to develop a sense of identity, belonging and purpose (Calma et al., 2017). With a focus on healing our ways, healing must occur across generations, acknowledging that for all who have suffered and continue to suffer, we have a right to heal and build our futures towards the restoration of physical, social, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing (Calma et al., 2017).

Context of inquiry

The context of this inquiry requires a story...

When I first started this doctoral study, my project was a sub-project of a larger inquiry into the health, wellbeing, and resilience of Aboriginal young people. The context for my project being focused on young people was clear. I only had to Google to realise the torment of our traumas, laid bare for all to see:

Our children are hurting.

Researchers, policy makers and clinicians are all part of this narrative, in which our failures are positioned in the first sentences of their policy or research documents, highlighting the same script of 'an urgent need to change and intervene', often followed by the overwhelming statistics that not only map our continuing traumas, ill health, and risky behaviours, but are also used as weapons for politically led agendas.

It seemed like for me...

A rolling news feed of demise.

A Twitter swarm of experts and those who know best.

A government that denies our history, self-determination, and sovereignty.

> *A story of continued powerlessness.*
>
> Challenged by the repetitious problematisation of Aboriginal young people and children, a shift occurred; I became conscious of the stories I, too, would share about our young people and how I was sure I was listening to the young people who had share their stories of trauma and resilience.
>
> I did not want to tell a story of demise, of failure, of vulnerability, of risk and of aged-based transitions. I do not want to add to the feeding of the fire in which our traumas are used for the purpose of chaos and silence.
>
> I couldn't, ontologically... couldn't.
>
> *I am a mother.*
>
> *I am an aunty.*
>
> *Our children are and always have been our hope.*

Stealing and removing of children was undertaken with purpose and intent, and the brutality of such interventions was aimed at the eventual extinction of our race through elimination or assimilation – for the building of 'White Australia' (Nakata, 2017a). Not by luck but through their continued resilience, Aboriginal people continue to be the one of the oldest living cultures today; yet our children are still being removed from their families at unprecedented rates, and our young people are over-flowing at detention centres nation-wide (Nakata, 2017a). Despite these alarming concerns, which are overwhelmingly reported in the literature and media, the narratives of our children being removed and our young people being locked away is not the reflection of love that we have for our children (Nakata, 2017, citing Referendum Council, 2017). Since the beginning of time, children have always been the focus of our change for a better future. As Nakata highlights:

> The wellbeing of all Aboriginal and Islander children weighs on the minds of us all; it is the specific focus of four of six Closing the Gap targets. Their wellbeing also troubles the nation, not just as a set of complex policy problems but because their lives remind us of this nation's grief-stricken past and compels us forward into an uncertain, unknowable future. Across these temporal dimensions of past, present and future, we are confronted by incomprehensible failure. This is what Australian policymakers grapple with every day: the grief of our history, the demography of our present, and the uncertainty of our future. By recognising that Aboriginal and Islander children are, and always have been, central figures in our nation's history, demography, and politics, we can grasp new empirical terrain upon which to understand our nation (Nakata, 2017b, p. 398).

Nakata (2019) further explores the concept of ethical loneliness and how this can be critically examined in the abandonment of Aboriginal children by the colony of Australia. Nakata examines this concept in the broader context of thinking politically about childhood, particularly Aboriginal peoples' childhoods as result of colonisation. Within the colony there is an array of well-documented oral histories and stories of the atrocities inflicted by colonial governments on Aboriginal children, with the most notable being the Stolen Generations. Nakata (2019) explores how the management of Aboriginal people, in the eyes of the colony, was a matter of control, governing and intervention, with the focus on children considered the *best* way to control and assimilate a race, at the most intimate level of connection. This resulted in the stealing and removing of children from Country, kin, and culture.

The unfolding impact of such interventions has contributed to the multifaceted traumas Aboriginal people experience today (Menzies, 2019). Yet despite these traumas also being well documented – for example, in coronial inquests and royal commissions – our voices still fall on the deaf ears of governments. And today, we are still positioned in society as a problem to be solved. Perpetual accompanying our silence and powerlessness is the continued management of our communities, through deficit-based legislation, *well-intended* policy and racist practice and implementation of such policy (Nakata, 2019).

Nakata (2019), through her theorisation, engages critically with the notion that as result of colonisation our children have been silenced in many ways, perpetuated by the context of colonial/settler relations. Silencing their voices often leads into a cycle of despair and powerlessness that, for some young people, results in dramatic life-ending choices, that ultimately permanently silences their voices. Westerman (2019) highlights the extremity of such outcomes, emphasising that trauma is political, and the silence used by our political figures in times of crisis contributes to the abandonment of our children in the colony. Importantly, Nakata's (2019) work draws attention to the need for research to not focus on the objectification of Aboriginal young people and children, and to the ontological need for research to listen and hear our children's voices as integral to reconciliation and healing moving forward. Thus, pertinent questions are raised in this inquiry to examine the complexity of listening and hearing to our young people and ensure we are not just listening, without hearing (Shay et al., 2019).

I sit here on the grounds of Country, seeking meaning to the question: how one comes to a decision that taking their own life is their only solution.

I sit here, in the place where the trees whisper, only heard if we listen, drawing us close to the spirits of The Dreaming.

Through this deep listening, brought through us by winanga-li, we remove ourselves from the passive, to the active; we stand up from our ground of wept tears and mud to a place where we can stand strong again. For I know we are strong.

My initial thought is to consider the concept through the eyes of a mother of three, including one young lady and the aunty of a beautiful soul taken way too soon by her own hand.

Yet meaning does not come from attempts at sense making through the lens of the so called great western philosophers or rummaging through thoughts of reasoning. Rather, as an Aboriginal woman, a Calala Murri yinarr, I see meaning coming through Country, where she whispers, *'Guni ma' 'Guni ma is here for you', 'I am here'.*

When looking for hope, I am surrounded by hopelessness; I see pain, anguish, and troubled souls around me. When looking for courage, I am overwhelmed with feelings of powerlessness and moments that sink deeply in my soul arising through the doubts and internalised feelings of not being enough; I laugh and feel at times they have won.

Colonisation has defeated us. Disjointed and removed, we are disconnected through colonisation, the removal of children, the implementation of systems of control and spiraling mental health issues.

Yet, she whispers *'I am here'.*

The spirit against these negative emotions overwhelms me, holds me to account, for I am strong enough; it washes away the anger and kindly reminds me of the carved tree metres from my house. Scarred where a coolamon had been being cut out years before, it is physically before my eyes when I step out the door of my house. It had been almost destroyed, chopped in half, but now has new stems of life reaching for The Dreaming. Saved years past. The strong yellow box, blurring out the systems school laid behind it, a strong reminder to listen for and hear Guni ma as she whispers, *'For I am here'.*

The same artefact, tool and vessel that was carved out on this tree carries our young, our food and our tools: coolamon. It is used for the carrying of herbs and plants and provides a space to light fires to smoke and be within the aromas of the smells and smoke prepared by our ancestors. This vessel holds and acts as a place to prepare and serve teas and elixirs to carry us through our ailments of both internal and external concerns. Provided to us by Guni ma, as a gift. Again, she whispers, *'Guni ma is here for you'*.

Her whispers, carried through time and space, a time before my own. The coolamon carried by the aunties through the process of assisting the young mother through her journey towards birthing her first girl on Earth-side. To help through the childbirth process, the young one within the mother travels through a tunnel to become our beautiful gaayinggal; from within her, to outside her, her mother stills carries her. Still carries her now. *'I am here, I am with you'*.

The babe is placed upon mum's chest, receives her first energy; taken through the fine and rich colostrum as her soft suckling stops when her tummy is full and then she is laid into the coolamon, surrounded by her aunties; resting easy, while the grand-mother, mothers and aunties care for her mother, ensuring the placenta like the gaayinggal is birthed earth-side. *'Guni ma is here for you'*.

The placement of her placenta at the birthing site, buried deep underground, grounds the child to this place, a place where she can return and feel home again, surrounded by tea-tree and the plants provided by Guni ma as a healing space. A space where time sits still. *'I am here'*.

Her journey encompasses the passing of her mothers' knowledge to her; she is placed within the family and community, carefully nurtured, and guided by her mothers. At the time, when she is ready and strong, she is taken to place for a special ceremony. Guni ma invites her to this place. Brought forward by her mothers, to start her journey through life; giving her kinship, her identity and her own totemic responsibilities and accountabilities as she moves through her Songlines. Towards her future, she is the first woman of her future kin, she is the future mother, grandmother, aunty and baawaa. She is their hope.

'*As she was ours'*.

Justification

Young people represent the largest population cohort among the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. Since colonisation began 250 years ago, Aboriginal children have been controlled and governed by the colony, from harsh historical practices to present day oppressions and microaggressions. Subsequently, Aboriginal people continue to experience negative determinants of health and wellbeing because of colonisation and its continuum.

Experiences of trauma are cumulative, and if one generation does not heal, problems are transmittable to subsequent generations (Brokenleg, 2012). Historical trauma, although situated in a contested field of inquiry (Gone et al., 2019; Kirmayer et al., 2014; Paradies, 2016), explores the traumas related to colonisation and how these have impacted Aboriginal people broadly, including how we think, respond emotionally, interact socially, and connect spirituality to Country and Dreaming (Brokenleg, 2012; Kirmayer et al., 2014).

Within Australia, relatively few studies have been conducted with and by Aboriginal people in the context of historical trauma inquiry. Yet this inquiry space offers potential pathways to reexamine trauma and offer collective ways to transform, heal and transmit new ways of resolving trauma, including the generation of collective narratives that position Aboriginality in the context of strength, self-determination, and resilience; these are importance for diverging ways oppression and powerlessness (Mohatt et al., 2014).

Integral to this study as an ontological need is the promotion of healing, strength, and resilience and the purposeful avoidance of objectifying and problematising Aboriginal young people (Nakata, 2019). The attention on the problematisation of Aboriginal young people in media, research and policy is a harmful practice that should be re-examined and re-focused on the problematisation of colonisation (Nakata, 2019; Shay et al., 2019). Importantly, historical trauma inquiry offers the capacity to do this, particularly if it is understood in the broader context of social and emotional wellbeing, and resilience, while amplifying young peoples' voices (Shay & Sarra, 2021). This research aims to achieve that goal.

Aim and research objectives.

The aim of this research was to amplify the perspectives of Aboriginal young peoples' understanding of historical trauma due to colonisation, and the impact it has had on their lives and the lives of their families and communities. Further the study sought to understand perspectives of resilience and how, from this strength-based approach, Aboriginal young people can overcome the impact of colonisation and subsequent historical trauma.

Research design

Positioned in the Indigenous research paradigm, this research study has been informed through Gamilaroi ways of knowing, being and doing; a process of ongoing critical reflection of my positioning within the community of focus, and the cultural and ethical responsibilities held as part of relational approaches to research (Kovach, 2021; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Wilson, 2008). The methodology used in this study has been informed by the principles of Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008), aligning with the context of sense-making that heals and transforms communities (Kovach, 2021). The Storywork methodology was further informed by using placed-based meaning (Benham 2007), where story is reliant on relatedness and time, place, and space in the methodology. This project was gifted the use of a Gamilaroi word, winanga-li, by Elder Uncle Neville Sampson (Munro, Brown et al. 2019). Winanga-li means to listen, to hear, to know and to remember. Winanga-li, through interpretation of stories, has been both a practice of deep listening and reflexivity to ensure sense-making was reflective and accountable to the amplification of the young peoples' stories, their contexts, and the lived experiences of the researcher and the young people (Nicholls 2009; West, Stewart et al. 2012). Additionally, throughout this thesis I have used poetic and art-based methods to aid in the sense-making process of doing research that is ethically and culturally informed. The poetic transcriptions in this thesis are commonly referred to as *poetic occasions* and, as highlighted by Sullivan (2009), these occasions for poetry leave room for the nexus of tensions that I have navigated as part of knowing and unknowing in this ceremony of research, leaving the door open to the possibilities and complexities within the space of doing research with those who inform my positioning (Smallwood, 2023; see Appendix 1).

Ethics

Human research ethics approval for this project was provided by the University of Technology Sydney and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) NSW branch. Detailed information regarding the process of ethical and cultural considerations is presented in Chapter 4. Proof of approval from UTS and AH&MRC is included in the Appendices.

How does this study make an original contribution to the literature?

Grounded in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, this study is one of the first in Australia to focus on historical trauma inquiry and the subsequent impacts of continuing colonisation on Aboriginal young people. This study positions the voices of Aboriginal young people at the centre of inquiry, bringing forth perspectives that are grounded in the time, place, and space of telling our story in ways that make us stronger. Further, this study draws attention to the need for research to deproblematise the experiences of Aboriginal young people and how, when focusing on their voices in the inquiry, we begin to open cracks in the dominant field of health and wellbeing research to show our stories of strength, resistance, and resilience, as opposed to common narratives of deficit and demise.

Outcomes as part of the larger study

- Membership of ARC project team, involvement in that research, and attendance at bi-monthly meetings.
- Membership of the Aboriginal Research Advisory Committee, which governed the project locally, ensuring adherence to cultural protocols.
- Attendance at bi-monthly meetings to provide milestone updates about the progress of the ARC study and doctoral study.
- Data recruitment and collection for qualitative components of the ARC, inclusive of yarns with Aboriginal young people, service providers and community members.
- Participation in dissemination activities as part of the Advisory committee, including assisting with Elders' participation in publication development and submission.
- Participation in publications as part of the ARC. These include:
    - **Smallwood, R.,** Usher, K., Marriott, Sampson, N., and Jackson, D. (2023). Understanding the importance of connection: An Indigenous exploration of the social and emotional wellbeing and resilience of a rural cohort of Aboriginal young people. *Journal of Youth Studies* (published online 18 May 2023). https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2213638 **(Q1 Journal Ranking)**
    - Walker, R., Usher, K., Jackson, D., Reid, C., Hopkins, K., Shepherd, C., **...** & Marriott, R. (2021). Connection to... addressing digital inequities in supporting the well-being of young Indigenous Australians in the wake of COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(4), 2141. **(Q2 Journal Ranking)**
    - Usher, K., Jackson, D., Walker, R., Durkin, J., **Smallwood, R**., Robinson, M., ... & Marriott, R. (2021). Indigenous resilience in Australia: A scoping review using a reflective decolonizing collective dialogue. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *9*, 630601. (**Q1**

Journal Ranking)

Dissemination of findings

This thesis is designed as a compilation thesis that comprises both traditional thesis chapters and works published in quality Indigenous and nursing/health research journals, as well as a peer-reviewed book chapter. Quality rankings of chosen journals have been highlighted. The dissemination of this work has been informed by a relational need for knowledge translation for the promotion of Aboriginal young peoples' voices and perspectives. Further explanation of this method of translation is discussed in Chapter 4.

Publications from this study

Smallwood, R., Usher, K., Woods, C., Sampson, N., & Jackson, D. (2022). De-problematising Aboriginal young peoples' health and well-being through their voice: An Indigenous scoping review. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 1*, 16. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.16308 **(Q1 Journal Ranking)**

Smallwood, R. (2023). Expressions of identity by Aboriginal young peoples' stories about historical trauma and colonisation within the Gamilaroi Nation. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 11771801221146777. (**Q1 Journal Ranking)**

Smallwood, R. (2024). Historical trauma and resilience: Finding poetics to amplify Aboriginal young peoples' voices. In. H. van Rooyen & K. Pithouse-Morgan (Eds.), *Poetic Inquiry for the Human and Social Sciences: Voices from the South and North.*

Smallwood, R., Usher, K., Woods, C., Saunders, V., and Jackson, D. (2023). 'We have our own stories to write, and we will write them': Defining resilience with Aboriginal young people. *Young, 32(3), 277-295.*

Presentations related to this study.

Smallwood, R. (2023) winanga-li: stories of love and hope with Aboriginal young people. University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Health Research Student Conference.

Smallwood, R. (2022). winanga-li – finding a place for poetic in Indigenous health research. 8th International Symposium on Poetic Inquiry, Cape Town South Africa, 25–27 May 2022.

Smallwood, R. (2022) Historical trauma and resilience: Yarns with Aboriginal young people. University of Technology, Sydney. School of Nursing and Midwifery HDR Student Welcome and Networking Event, 2 May 2022.

Smallwood, R. (2022) Historical trauma and resilience: Yarns with Aboriginal young people. Gamilaroi Culture and Language Sharing Circle. Bamba Ngamilawaanha: K/Gamilaroi Language and Culture Research Roadshow, 14 April 2022.

Smallwood, R. (2021) Historical trauma and resilience: Yarns with Aboriginal young people. University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Health Research Student Conference, 24–25 November 2021. **Winner** of Best presentation for School of Nursing and Midwifery and whole of Faculty

Smallwood, R. (2021) Transforming research stories through Indigenous Storywork: A methodological approach. Department of Rural Health, University of Melbourne. Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference, 13 October 2021.

Smallwood, R. (2021) Transforming research stories through Indigenous Storywork: A methodological approach. University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Health Research Student Conference.

Outline of thesis

The **prologue** began with the opening of the research ceremony, as a reflective piece to set the scene for reader, as if we were yarning under a big tree on Country, telling the story of who, what and where I have come from and how this has informed the relational accountabilities held in this ceremony of research.

This chapter, **Chapter 1**, provides the reader with an overview of the thesis including the significance, justification, context and the aims and objectives of the study. Included in this chapter are an overview of the thesis including dissemination outcomes for both this study and the larger Australian Research Council grant.

Chapter 2, the literature review, is presented as publication published in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* (Q1), titled: 'De-problematising Aboriginal young peoples' health and wellbeing through their voice: An Indigenous scoping review'. This publication focused on identifying Aboriginal young peoples' perspectives of health and wellbeing, using the method of Rigney's (1999)

Indigenist research principles. This chapter presents an interconnected picture of how Aboriginal young people understand their health and wellbeing. This review amplifies the importance of health being seen from a holistic point of view, including the importance of social and emotional wellbeing and young peoples' connection to Country, culture, and kin. This chapter includes two poetic occasions. The first is a reflection on the 'trap' that we can often fall in as health researchers when positioning the problems of Aboriginal health and wellbeing. The second is about the continuing role of Elders in our communities and the importance of Elders in relationship to our health and wellbeing. The review further highlights the lack of studies that examine historical trauma in relation to Aboriginal young people and their health and wellbeing in Australia.

Chapter 3, the methodology chapter, provides an overview of the Aboriginal research paradigm, including an overview of relationality and Country, epistemology (knowing), ontology (being), axiology (doing) and methodology. This chapter draws on several Indigenous scholarly perspectives on conducting Aboriginal research, and how these perspectives have informed both cultural and ethical considerations throughout this ceremony of research.

Chapter 4, the methods chapter, provides an overview of the research methods enacted within this research ceremony. This includes an overview of cultural governance, the role of an Aboriginal research agenda, and the role of the Aboriginal advisory committee. This chapter further presents an additional poetic occasion and artwork that is presented to the reader about the method-based tensions within the field of Indigenous Storywork.

Intermission is a sub-chapter prior to the three findings chapters in this thesis. This chapter presents an artwork that was created as part of understanding historical trauma with Aboriginal young people. Informed by the process of making art and poetics, this artwork draws attention to the living and non-living entities who relationally have informed my knowing, being and doing in this ceremony of research. This chapter further presents unidentifiable information about the young people who were part of this research.

Chapter 5 presents the first of three findings' chapters within this thesis. The chapter presents how the young Aboriginal people understand historical trauma and make sense of historical trauma and its impact on their lives, and the lives of their families and communities. The chapter further presents how the young people define the tangible experiences of historical trauma including the impact of our histories being silenced and the lack of recognition of wider society not acknowledging our pain and trauma associated. This chapter further presents a poetic occasion that speaks to the tensions of inexpressible and expressible loss associated with historical trauma.

Chapter 6 is the second of the three findings chapters presented in the thesis. The chapter presents a publication titled 'Expressions of identity by Aboriginal young peoples' stories about historical trauma and colonisation within the Gamilaroi Nation' that has been published in *AlterNative: an International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. This paper amplifies the voices of Aboriginal young people in this study who express the variable, fluid, and collective nature of Aboriginal identities as result of colonisation. These expressions include disrupted identities, conflicting identities, questioning identities, and blooming identities.

Chapter 7 is the third of three findings' chapters presented in the thesis. This chapter presents a publication titled 'We have our own stories to write, and we will write them': Defining resilience with Aboriginal young people' that is published in YOUNG Sage Journals (Q1). This paper amplifies the voices of Aboriginal young people and their understandings resilience associated with overcoming historical trauma. The young people stories identify that resilience as a collective, generational experience of strength, healing, and change.

Chapter 8 revisits the story from the prologue chapter and the remembering of this research being part of a ceremony. This chapter then provides a summary of the key research aims, findings and the unique contributions made to the literature. Finally, this chapter presents two stories as part of understanding historical trauma and resilience within Aboriginal young people and where this study's findings are positioned within the broader field of literature. This chapter concludes with overall conclusions, recommendations for research, practice, policy, and the strengths and limitations of this study.

Finally, the **Epilogue** is positioned as the closing of this ceremony and draws attention to the voices who are now silent.

Definitions

Gamilaroi / Gamilaraay / Kamilaroi / Gomeroi – These terms are used to describe the local Nation's name within northern New South Wales (NSW), including Tamworth and Quirindi. The accepted term that is utilised predominantly throughout this thesis is Gamilaroi, a choice guided by Tamworth spiritual Elder Uncle Neville Sampson. Further, the use of the Gamilaraay language has been used, translated, and corrected with the guidance of Uncle Neville. Permission to use this language has been sought widely across the community, led by Uncle Nev.

Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander / Indigenous / First Nations – these terms are used to describe Aboriginal people nationally and globally. I recognised that Australia has many diverse clans, tribal groups, and nations, and in adopting these terms I have carefully considered that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have preferred terms to describe their own identities, recognising their continued sovereignty and connection to land, sea and waterways. This body of work recognises that often these terms have been imposed on Aboriginal people, with no preferred consensus across communities, organisations, and within academia. As this study is informed from positioning and standpoint from within my community, the mostly commonly accepted term when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia is the term 'Aboriginal' or, locally, 'Gamilaroi' peoples. Within the context of global Aboriginal communities and academia, the texts presented in the thesis, 'Indigenous peoples' is the preferred global term. I should further note both 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' are used interchangeably depending on the context within the body of text.

Gamilaraay language

*Use of the words does not require capital letters, as they are not included in the dictionary

baawaa – sister

calala – The traditional name Tamworth was once called by local Aboriginal people.

guni ma – mother of all beings

gaayinggal – baby

murri – one of the many terms used in Aboriginal English that acts as identifier to other Aboriginal people about where an Aboriginal person is from. Murri people are in Queensland and northern parts of New South Wales

winanga-li – to hear, to listen, to know, to remember

yarran – red river gum

yinarr – woman

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has provided the reader with the significance, justification and context and aims of the study. An overview of the research design was presented, and the original contributions made as part of this work were outlined. An overview of the dissemination strategies is highlighted, including the contributions made to the larger project of which this sub-study is a part. Further details regarding dissemination strategies were presented, including publications and conference presentations. Additionally, this chapter provides a chapter-by-chapter summary to guide the reader clearly through each section of the thesis. The next chapter presents the literature review for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter overview

This chapter includes a publication, ‘De-problematising Aboriginal young peoples’ health and wellbeing through their voice: An Indigenous scoping review’ (Smallwood et al., 2022). In this article, the authors highlight the use of a Indigenist scoping review methodology, and the pertinence this lens has for trying to understand Aboriginal young peoples’ health and wellbeing in the literature. The narrative contextualises Aboriginal young peoples’ health and wellbeing in the context of a strength opposed to a deficit discourse; this is enacted by highlighting storied accounts of how Aboriginal young people see their health and wellbeing, including their experiences within the ongoing colonial systems we must engage. This chapter further presents two poetic occasions, the first being a caution to not fall into the trap of presenting our problems in the field of health research, so that we can open the possibility of telling our stories otherwise. The second being a dedication to our Elders and the role they have in sustaining our health and wellbeing always.

I begin the literature review with a cautionary tale of falling into a trap.

A trap, where we are socialised into framing the issues and statistics,
while problematising the people.

I begin to search through google scholar; I go looking for the problem and I
am confronted with the problematising of Aboriginal people, specifically
Aboriginal young people, and their challenges.

I get sucked down this rabbit's warren of deficit discourse and find myself comparing Aboriginal young people
with non-Aboriginal young people; I forget that they have not started the same race as others.

I then continue to compare numbers, facts and figures and the problematising continues.

Initially I am stumped, uncertain, and falsely reassured, 'surely as it is written it is true'.

I start to write, yet I am paralysed with blankness, uncertainty, and refusal to re-write the narrative of problems.

I am in a trap of caution.

I pull myself out and liberate one's-self, though painful, I come back to my research agenda and ever so softly,
my ancestors remind me 'to teach hope'.

Throughout the process, I am politely reminded by the giants of Indigenist research that I first stand on to chart
my own political and social agenda for liberation.

I am reminded by these voices around me who whisper that we as Indigenous researchers have a 'moral
imperative to teach hope' rather than demise, failure, trouble, and issues.

And by doing so, we come to a place of self-determination, transformation, decolonisation, and healing.

This is *Our* ceremony. This is *Our* obligation.

This is *Our* Agenda

Poetic transcription 2, 'A trap of caution' (R Smallwood, 2019)

Title of Article:

De-problematising Aboriginal young peoples' health and well-being through their voice: An Indigenous scoping review.

Authors:

Smallwood, R., Usher, K., Woods, C., Sampson, N., and Jackson, D.

Manuscript submitted to:

Journal of Clinical Nursing

Status of manuscript:

Published

Published date:

29th March 2022

Citation information

Smallwood, R., Usher, K., Woods, C., Sampson, N., & Jackson, D. (2023). De-problematising Aboriginal young peoples' health and well-being through their voice: An Indigenous scoping review. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 32, 2086–2101. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.16308

Statement of authors contribution

RS, KU, DJ, CW and NS involved in initial conceptualisation and design of the review. RS involved in all literature searching, screening, appraisal and extraction. RS, KU, DJ and CW involved in data analysis and results presentation. NS involved in embedding of cultural authority and provision of cultural advice throughout the review. RS, KU, DJ and CW involved in writing, redesign, and presentation of the paper. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Abstract

Background: The continued use of a deficit discourse when researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia is problematic. Understanding and challenging the researchers' position and the power of the words they use is important. It will ensure we do not persist in framing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as a problem to be solved.

Design: Indigenist review of the evidence of Aboriginal young people's health and well-being.

Methods: This review was conducted using an Indigenist approach to identify texts which amplified the voices of Aboriginal young people of Australia and presents a narrative summary of their accounts. This review is reported in line with the PRISMA-ScR reporting guidelines.

Results: Culture and connection are critical components of Aboriginal young people's health and well- being. Aboriginal young people describe feeling of powerless-ness to influence health and well- being of their community, and they understood the risks they and their communities faced. Young people identified the importance of connection to culture, community, and Elders as crucial to their social and emotional well-being.

Conclusion: By harnessing an Indigenous analysis, we were able to reveal a strong counter narrative of strength and resilience within their historical, social, and political contexts through the storied accounts of Aboriginal young people.

Relevance to clinical practice: Most of the currently available evidence about Aboriginal health and well- being is immersed in deficit discourse. Literature reviews being the foundation of research and informing nursing practice, we call for a purposeful shift towards the adoption of an Indigenist strength- based approach which emphasises the strength and resilience of Aboriginal young people.

Introduction

In 2019, a group of young Aboriginal Australian people wrote to the Prime Minister and his ministers asking them to challenge themselves to think differently about Aboriginal young people (Shay et al., 2019). In doing so, it was their intention to end the current situation where Aboriginal Peoples are perceived as a problem; to overcome this issue, they asked him to think differently and see Aboriginal young people as the key to unlocking Aboriginal brilliances, leadership, and imagination. By making their desire explicit, Aboriginal young people were making it known that they wanted to be heard, wanted to be tested and respected, and for us (government, policy writers, researchers) to expect the unexpected of them (Shay et al., 2019).

The purpose of this review is to understand Aboriginal young peoples' own experiences of health and well-being through their own voice. This goal has been achieved by the adoption of an Indigenous research approach to review the literature guided by Rigney's (1999) seminal work that articulated Indigenous research principles. Shay and Sarra's (2021) recent review of the literature has informed this approach in ensuring that indigenous voices are at the centre of research and informed by how this is applied to reviewing relevant literature on the topic of interest. As an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team of researchers, we are aware of the need to be critically conscious to shift the way(s) in which research paradigms can both shape and inform how Aboriginal people are reflected in the literature. Recognising this, we acknowledge that Aboriginal Sovereignty was never ceded in this Country we now call Australia. Furthermore, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (respectfully referred to as Aboriginal people throughout this paper) have ongoing deep connections to land, sea and water.

Reflecting on the plethora of research conducted on Aboriginal young people and researchers' pursuit to understand their health and well-being issues (Azzopardi et al., 2013; Blair et al., 2005; Marmot, 2011), we recognised that the space is predominately dominated by western constructions of knowledge as has been previously acknowledged (Sherwood, 2010). As a result, the production of this knowledge continues the deficit narrative of what is known and what is to be known about Aboriginal young people, particularly from the position of what they lack or need (Blair et al., 2005; Marmot, 2011). These perspectives have been defined by Fogarty, Bulloch, et al. (2018), as a deficit discourse in action. Fogarty, Lovell, et al. (2018) further claim there is emerging evidence that the deficit discourse has had an impact on the health and well-being of Aboriginal people and their lives both in social and political contexts. This, they argue, is evident in the scholarly literature that has framed and represented Aboriginal identity and experience in a narrative of negativity, deficiency and failure. Fogarty, Lovell, et al. (2018) caution that they are not wanting to deflate the problems present in the realities of disadvantaged and socio-politico-economic experiences of Aboriginal people. Rather, they are concerned the deficit discourse narrative evident in policy and related discussions aimed at 'alleviating disadvantage' in fact operates as a tool for defamatory, patronising and race-based discourse (Bamblett et al., 2010;

Doel-Mackaway, 2017, Fogarty, Bulloch, et al., 2018). Unfortunately, this deficit discourse has been used as a consequential reinforcement of the ongoing marginalisation of Aboriginal people and has rendered their voices, perspectives and worldviews silent (Bamblett et al., 2010; Fogarty, Bulloch, et al., 2018). These experiences and subsequent discourses have stemmed from the lasting impact of colonisation, particularly in countries that share similar colonial narratives such as countries in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States (CANZUS) (Smallwood et al., 2021). Hyett et al. (2019) and Pitama et al. (2018) highlight in their respective countries that the 'creation' and persistence of the deficit discourse continues to be problematic for Indigenous people, where (often like Aboriginal people in Australia), individuals and communities are positioned as being responsible for the problems they experience, while there is a failure to recognise the wider socioeconomic and historical-political structures faced by indigenous peoples globally.

Recognising this, we began by critically reflecting on this perspective as we attempted to understand Aboriginal young peoples' well-being. To do so, we started to unpack the notion of health from Aboriginal peoples' perspectives, whch encompassed the holistic view of body, mind, and spirit. The guiding principles, highlighted by Gee et al. (2014), informed this discourse through the construction of the concept of Aboriginal social and emotional well-being. The principles are as follows:

- Health as holistic
- The right to self-determination
- The need for cultural understanding
- The impact of history in trauma and loss
- Recognition of human rights
- The impact of racism and stigma
- Recognition of cultural diversity
- Recognition of Aboriginal strengths.

By acknowledging this Aboriginal holistic paradigm of health, we as the authors, choose not to provide, you, the reader, a list of statistics, case studies and figures of Aboriginal young people's health and well-being from a deficit lens; instead, we engage with the work of Rigney (1999), where he offers a unique position of how Aboriginal people engage with research. Rigney (1999), in his Indigenous research agenda, articulated a legacy of racialised ideology that continues to reshape and construct knowledge about Aboriginal people. Rigney (1999) affirms that overcoming such racialised oppression will not be achieved by simply changing the attitudes and values of non-Aboriginal researchers, nor adding Aboriginal researchers into the space; he argues that Aboriginal people must be involved in defining, controlling and owning the Aboriginal epistemological and ontological experience articulated in research. By doing so, we collectively carry the potential to strengthen the opportunity for emancipation and liberation from oppression (Rigney, 1999). Rigney (1999) proposes his principles as a pathway forward to begin to construct the need for a unique epistemological and ontological way towards liberation. We have summarised Rigney's principles below:

- Resistance—research is undertaken to articulate and be part of the struggle of Aboriginal people and recognise self-determination. It aims to support the personal, community, cultural and political struggles to heal from past oppressions towards the future.
- Political integrity—Indigenist research is undertaken by Aboriginal people, we must set our own political agenda for liberation, which include being responsible to the community of focus.
- Privileging indigenous voices in research is to be focus on the lives, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, aspirations, interests, and struggles of Aboriginal people. Centring the research towards giving voice to Aboriginal people (Rigney, 1999, p. 116).

Aim

Therefore, the aim of this review is to use an Indigenous approach to understand Aboriginal young people's health and well-being from their perspective. The following research question guided the review:

From their perspective, how is Australian Aboriginal young people's health and wellbeing currently experienced?

The review protocol and the representation of the included studies are articulated through the critical reflection of these principles proposed by Rigney (1999). Importantly, it was further informed by a previous review (Usher et al., 2021) that also used a reflective decolonising approach to scope Aboriginal young peoples' social and emotional well-being and resilience. That body of work began with the same challenges of being critically aware of the Westernised lens through which Aboriginal young people are viewed, understood and constructed in the scientific literature, the retrieved bodies of evidence all focused on the inadequacies and pit falls of Aboriginal young people rather than their strength, resilience and ability to bounce back. As highlighted by Fogarty, Lovell et al. (2018), the decolonising process can be seen as both a regenerative concept that reinforces strength-based approaches and as a deliberate mechanism to move away from dominant deficit narratives in Aboriginal health research. By re-framing our approach through re-designing our research focus, we were able to peel away the layers of what was presented to us from the perspective of a deficit narrative others have warned about (Fforde et al., 2013; Fogarty, Bulloch et al., 2018), and move towards incorporating literature that was holistic and strength focused in nature.

Method

This research approach adopted an Indigenous-led worldview. This was informed by several Indigenous people, who have undertaken significant methodological work in this space, both for and with indigenous people globally. Enaction of this methodology started within the politically charted agenda, stated by Rigney (2003), informed by an Aboriginal worldview, which drew conscious attention to Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and how we were able to reflect this in the findings using Indigenous narrative analysis (Kovach, 2010; Martin, 2008). Every stage of the review process (search, inclusion/exclusion, extraction, interpretation, findings) was guided by local Aboriginal peoples, both academic and non-academic. The chosen inclusion and exclusion criteria are reflective of this process of engagement including the use of the social and emotional well-being principles (Gee et al., 2014) (see Table 1). To further ensure a systematic approach, we have reported our process against the PRISMA-ScR guidelines (see Supporting Information 1).

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	**Exclusion**
Primary studies that include Aboriginal young peoples as participants and their voice	Studies that included comparison of non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal people
Aboriginal young people's voice about their perspectives of health and wellbeing **(Health is defined as term that is not just the absence of illness, but encompasses, social, political, economic impacts (Gee, Dudgeon et al. 2014).**	Studies that speak on behalf of Aboriginal young people or their issues/topic of interest
Demonstrated collaboration with Aboriginal peoples (studies conducted by and with)	Studies that show no engagement with communities Studies that conduct research on and for Aboriginal people Studies that focus on risk or concepts of risk-based analysis. Studies that are quantitative or mixed methods
Studies conducted in English or Indigenous languages (with English translation)	Studies outside of Australia
Studies Based in Australia	Studies that include populations outside of young/youth/teenager Aboriginal young people
Studies conducted 1990 - 2021	Studies outside 1990-2021

The chosen search strategy (displayed in Table 2) was developed from Usher et al.'s (2021) method, with assistance from two research health librarians. This was to ensure no studies were missed in the review. When the final studies were extracted by RS and JD, a summary and characteristics table was used (See Table 3). RS, CW, KU and DJ then familiarised (Rinehart, 2021) themselves with the studies, drawing out exactly what was spoken and not spoken about by Aboriginal young people. This was mapped and grouped, which informed the Indigenous approach through narrative representation of the studies. The team reflected critically across the presentation on the studies, with attention drawn to where the main groupings were connected, how they were reflected, or not, and where knowledge gaps were present in the literature as required in a scoping review (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2021).

Table 2. Search strategy

Population			**Context**
Young	Aboriginal People	Australia	Health and Wellbeing
young OR youth OR adolescen* OR teenage*	Indigenous OR Native OR Aborigin* OR ‘Pacific Islander*’ OR ‘Torres Strait Islander*’ OR ‘First Nation*’	Australia*	resilien* OR ‘mental health’ OR wellness OR ‘well-being’ OR ‘well being’ OR wellbeing OR strengths OR psychosocial OR ‘protective factor*’ OR ‘coping behaviour*’ OR ‘coping behavior*’ OR growth OR emotion* OR value* OR health OR ‘physical health’

Given this approach, all original studies included in the full-text screen were considered if they had community members or service provider voices alongside young people's voices; studies were removed if they spoke on behalf of Aboriginal young people (Shay & Sarra, 2021). Furthermore, we excluded studies that used comparative methods where Aboriginal people and conditions/behaviours such as substance abuse, chronic health conditions and mental health issues were compared against those of non-Aboriginal populations. Comparative studies reviewed predominantly occurred through positivist research approaches that were excluded in the title and abstract screen. The importance of a decolonising approach to the literature was also crucial when reviewing texts; therefore, studies that showed no engagement with or by Aboriginal people were excluded. In addition, literature that did not articulate evidence of Aboriginal authorship, community engagement strategies or acknowledgement of positioning of non-Aboriginal researchers with/in community were excluded from the review. Only Australian studies were considered.

Importantly throughout the process of engagement with the texts, we needed to ensure we did not apply blanket understandings across the diverse Aboriginal populations of Australia. To do this, we were guided by the local Aboriginal people involved in the project, by so doing, we demonstrated respect for their cultural safety and security throughout the review process. Uncle Neville Sampson, the Chair of the local Cultural Advisory committee, brought forward this review to the committee to ensure the inclusion of studies, analysis and findings were reflective of the cultural guidance given throughout the preparation of the paper. The robust committee discussion with both community members, peers and supervisors ensured the review was constructed from a decolonising position and that an Indigenous research approach was used, and a subsequent strength-based Indigenous narrative analysis resulted. Additionally, included studies written in English or indigenous languages of Australia were sought. We recognised that if we found any studies written in Indigenous language, the process would require seeking advice and translation of these studies. In the end, no such studies were located.

Search strategy

The search strategy included both a comprehensive search of the literature using search terms within library databases (CINAHL, PsychINFO, ProQuest, Embase, Scopus, Informit, Medline and PubMed) and included search terms (See Table 2) with adaptions from research health librarians. Additionally, two non-peer-reviewed Aboriginal databases were searched, but no sources were identified against the inclusion criteria at title and abstract screen (Australian Indigenous Health Info Net and AIATSIS—Research Publications). The additional search terms included were tested and kept broad enough to ensure no studies were inadvertently removed throughout the review.

Study selection and outcome

All identified citations were collated and uploaded to EndNote X9 (2020), and duplicates removed. Titles were screened by two independent reviewers RS and JD; this process was undertaken to ensure that each study included matched the outlined inclusion criteria. After full-text screening, the team met and discussed the final studies against the inclusion criteria.

The search yielded a total of 4295 citations; this included studies retrieved from full-text review of reference lists. Using Endnote, several citations (4242) were excluded using key title/abstract search terms such as risk-based study titles (smoking, sexual health, diabetes), and perspectives of health workers/service providers, comparative studies and study types that were either reviews or quantitative study types. After this phase, a total of 53 articles remained for full-text screening for inclusion, of which a total of 38 citations were excluded as predominately they were not focused on the perspective of young Aboriginal peoples' voices or their voices on health and well-being, including the voices of others on the issues of Aboriginal young peoples without the young people's perspectives/voices. After full review and data extraction, a further 8 citations were removed due to topic focus outside of health and well-being. A total of 7 studies were finally included in the current review. Included studies with characteristics and contexts are included in Table 3. A flow chart detailing this process is included in Figure 4 (Moher et al., 2009).

Figure 4. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

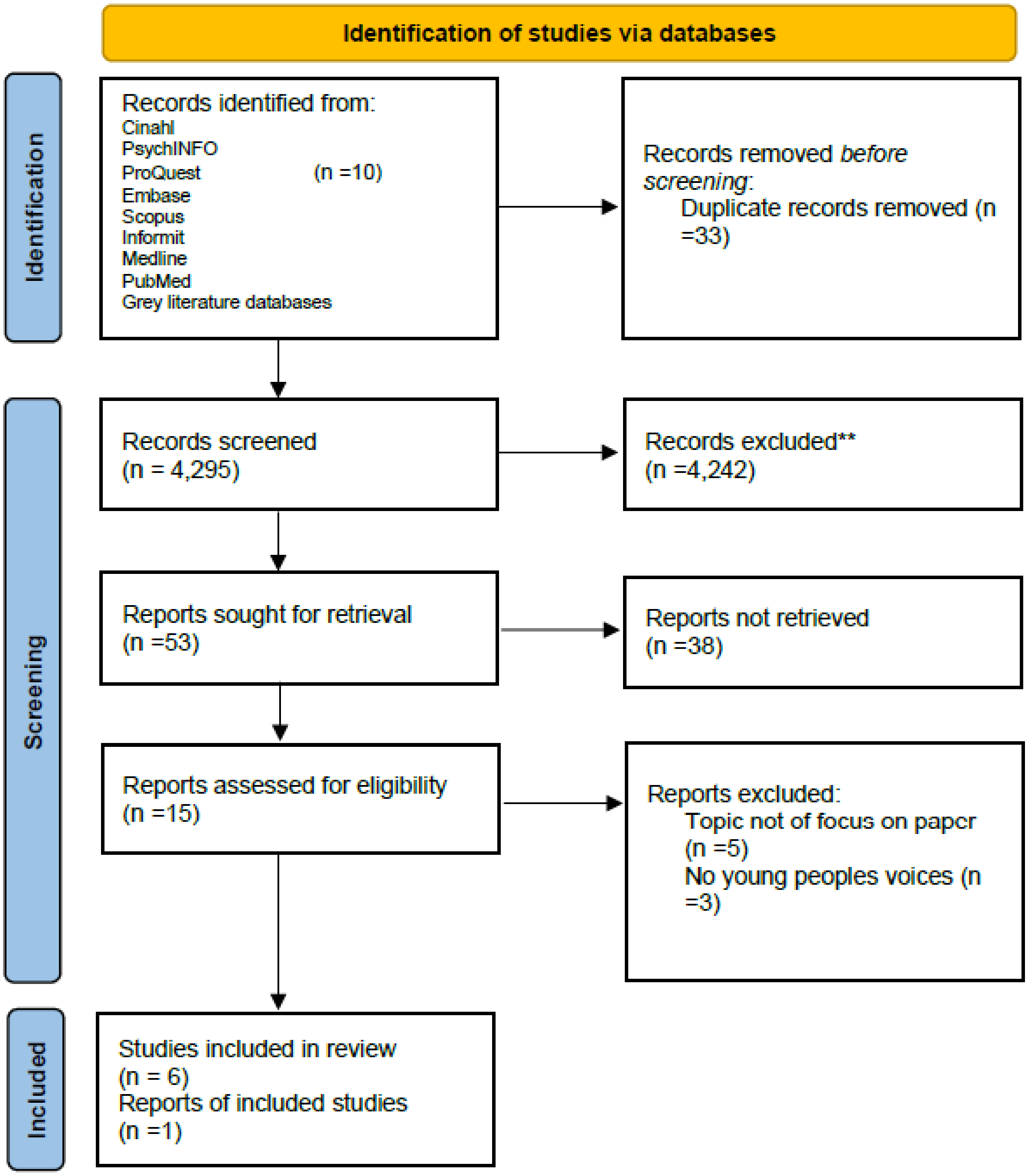
Identification of studies via databases
Identification
Screening
Included
Records identified from:
Cinahl
PsychINFO
ProQuest (n =10)
Embase
Scopus
Informit
Medline
PubMed
Grey literature databases
Records removed *before screening*:
Duplicate records removed (n =33)
Records screened
(n = 4,295)
Records excluded**
(n =4,242)
Reports sought for retrieval
(n =53)
Reports not retrieved
(n =38)
Reports assessed for eligibility
(n =15)
Reports excluded:
Topic not of focus on papcr
(n =5)
No young peoples voices (n =3)
Studies included in review
(n = 6)
Reports of included studies
(n =1)

Table 3 Characteristics and contexts of included studies.

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
Cerreto (2018)	The study aimed to gather stories from Aboriginal young people about their lived experience with encountering the justice system.	Qualitative design was employed to enable deep understanding of the lives of young people and associated experiences.	Yarning methodology was employed through yarning circles and individual interviews.	Independent report	Koori area	Urban/rural/regional	42 Aboriginal children/young people of various ages.	Recruitment of participants at two youth centres and four community sites, where either they were under supervision or were previously under supervision through the youth justice system.
Garay (2021)	The aim of the research was to privilege the voices, experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal young people accessing mental health (MH) and social and emotional wellbeing services (SEWB).	Qualitative Study as a sub-study of larger longitudinal study: Study of Environment on Aboriginal Resilience and Child	Face to Face, in-depth interviews, using yarning methodology. For analysis, thematic analysis was used (Braun and Clarke 2006).	Masters Thesis	Koori area	Urban/Regional Setting	10 Aboriginal young people aged between 16-25 years. Average age was 21.	Participants were able to participate if they participated in the larger SEARCH project. They were purposively recruited

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
	Then how their voices can build on the strengths and successes to better services for young people.	health (SEARCH). Results were reported against the Consolidation Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies (COREQ) (Tong, Sainsbury et al. 2007).						through local Aboriginal controlled health services (ACCHS). Inclusion was if they identified as Aboriginal, aged between 16-25 years and was seen for SEWB services in the previous 12 months within the local health district. Participants were also screened for inclusion using Kessler 10 Psychological Distress Scale (K10), participants were excluded if they scored <30.

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
Jalla (2016)	The aim of this research is to explore Aboriginal youth's perspective on health, wellbeing, and disability.	Qualitative design employed drawing upon research topic yarning principles (Bessarab and Ng'Andu 2010).	Yarning circles with storytelling that were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).	Masters thesis	Noongar area	Urban	A total of 24 children and young people were recruited, aged from 9 to 26 years, mean age of 15.9 years. Eight participants were diagnosed with a disability.	Recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. Identified through the ACCHs of which the young people attended. Inclusion was young people and children aged between 9 and 26 and having identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Participants were excluded if they were diagnosed with intellectual disability.

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
Mohajer, Bessarab et al. (2009)	The overall aim was to design a health program for Aboriginal adolescents, with sub-objectives to understanding perceptions, interests and goals of Aboriginal adolescents. The projected sought Aboriginal peoples' views on the needs of youth in community, to define topics for the intended health programs.	Qualitative design.	In-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Data analysis was obtained through thematic content analysis using matrices (Schutt 2014).	Peer reviewed	Noongar area	Rural	99 Aboriginal adolescents, mean age was 13 years with a range of 11 to 17 years. All participants were considered vulnerable or at risk, based on the assessment of the workers and teachers in the communities.	Snowball sampling employed of participants who were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, were marked as low attendance to school and have informed consent. Recruitment occurred through Aboriginal health workers and teachers who were connected to the participants' communities.
Mukandi, Singh et al. (2019)	Investigate the impact of rituals upon young Indigenous men's social and emotional	Qualitative design. Co-led Aboriginal project with	Participatory action approach (PAR), using video	Peer reviewed	Murri area	Urban	13 participants were interviewed, ranging from young	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander men were invited to

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
	wellbeing, their roles within their families/communities and their expectations. Including how they are enacted and challenged through racialised, cultural, and gendered expectations.	Aboriginal academic and community-based workers who live and work within community.	recorded brief interviews. Analysis through Indigenous standpoint.				teenagers to Elders. Among them were Traditional Owners, school pupils, university students, community workers, health professionals and retirees. Unidentified of exactly how many were young/youth. The extracted data only includes young participants' voices where the article made it explicit.	participate, using a selected network or snowballing technique of Indigenous men who are connected to the selected community.
Murrup-Stewart,	How do young urban Aboriginal people	Indigenous research	Yarning and knowledge	Peer reviewed	Koori area	Urban	20 young people aged	Aboriginal and/or Torres

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
Whyman et al. (2020)	experience and perceive culture in relation to social and emotional wellbeing?	paradigm design (Wilson 2008, Kovach 2010, Datta 2017).	analysis using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) and interpretation through Aboriginal epistemology.				between 18-28 years, with an average age of 22 years.	Strait Islander people, who were aged between 18-28 years, living in Narrm (Melbourne) were recruited. Recruitment was through using hard-copy flyers, social media and advertisement through Aboriginal spaces (on-line/in-person) and via relevant networks.
Murrup-Stewart Murrup-Stewart, Whyman et al. (2021)	How do urban Aboriginal young people in Narrm experience cultural and describe the SEWB impacts of these experiences?	Indigenous research paradigm design (Wilson 2008, Kovach 2010, Datta 2017)	Yarning and knowledge analysis using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) and	Peer reviewed	Koori area	Urban	20 Aboriginal young people aged 18 -28 with a mean aged of 21.67 years.	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, who were aged between 18-28 years, living in Narrm

Reference	Research Q/Aim	Study type	Methodology	Effectiveness or acceptability	Aboriginal Group names (based on location of study)	Region (urban, remote, rural)	Population	Inclusion in Study
			interpretation through Aboriginal epistemology.					(Melbourne) were recruited. Recruitment was through using hard-copy flyers, social media and advertisement through Aboriginal spaces (on-line/in-person) and via relevant networks.

Glossary:

Koori: Aboriginal people from Southeast of Australia's mainland

Murri: Aboriginal people from Queensland and Far Northern New South Wales

Noongar: Aboriginal people from Southwest of the Australian mainland.

Types of sources

The review considered all study types that were qualitative or indigenous research paradigm in nature. The inclusion of grey literature sources was considered, especially if all inclusion was met and the study showed ethical and cultural appropriateness in their approach. Grey literature in this context, is studies that were conducted outside of formal scholarly or peer-reviewed publication processes, these include studies that were conducted on behalf of agencies such as health and government organisations (Shrivastava & Mahajan, 2021). One grey literature report was included which was produced as an external research activity on behalf of an organisation, thus limiting organisational bias. All the included seven studies were qualitative in nature, primarily using either interviewing (individual/focus groups) or yarning as their method of data collection. The total number of Aboriginal young people in the total studies were 228, aged between 11 years and 28 years, with a mean age of 19.5 years. Studies were from various locations in Australia, including urban, regional and remote locations. None of the quantitative studies, systematic reviews, texts or opinion articles met the inclusion criteria. Studies published in English since 1990 were reviewed to ensure a comprehensive contemporary analysis of all relevant literature was included.

Quality appraisal

As this review is indigenous and decolonising in approach, it was decided that it would not be appropriate to apply a Westernised process such as quality appraisal to dictate the inclusion of studies that potentially could be discounted, yet valuable to this indigenous approach and agenda of the review. By engaging with an indigenous approach, studies were assessed for inclusion of community stakeholders and relationships, further if there was presence of application to the state-based application from the Aboriginal Health Medical Research Council (AH&MRC), where for ethical approval researchers are expected to engage with how, why and who will conduct research and what is the benefit or potential risk of this activity to community. Further during extraction, it was ensured that all studies included stated ethical approval, enacted appropriate methodologies and were explicit about the consideration of cultural obligations in obtaining knowledge from their participants. Thus, no formal quality appraisal tool was used, nor is one required for a scoping review (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2021).

Interpretation of the data

The interpretation of the data has been informed using an indigenous analysis, which has been developed using Rigney's (2003) Indigenous research principles as a foundational layer in the methodology. This enabled the researchers to move through the interpretation as a concept of 'self-in-relation' to the research data (Kovach, 2010, p. 14), where we learn in relationship to others, through a process of knowing and critical reflexivity (Nicholls, 2009). Adopting this approach allows space within the methodology to move beyond the confines of the mainstream research process to a deeper place of sense making within the context of the narrative (Kovach, 2010; Nicholls, 2009). This was enhanced by the two Aboriginal people on the review (RS and NS), who were continually guided by yarns with Aboriginal people from the local Aboriginal Cultural Advisory Committee and community members. In that way, the methodology was reinforced from an ethical starting place and positioned as a practice of respect and reciprocity in the community of relevance (Kovach, 2010).

Results

Across the seven included studies, all studies engaged within qualitative methods that enriched the process of storytelling and voice from and within the participants' stories. The studies considered the notion of holistic principles of health, and how one maintains health outside of the western notions of absence of ill-health; but more so the spiritual, physical, mental, and social considerations in health. This includes young people themselves recognising and navigating risk and negative experiences, including disconnection, loss of trust, and the political and social contexts in which they exist. Given the methodological approaches, emerging from the stories was the young ones' drive to connect, belong and embed cultural beliefs and values in their everyday lives. Which includes building trusting, respectful relationships to maintain strength, identity and feelings of belonging.

An interconnected picture: With Aboriginal young people

Young Aboriginal people see themselves as strong, resilient and deadly[1] , as evident from their voice stating their ability to know what it means to be healthy (body, mind, spirit) and how they are able to navigate and overcomes risks and build resilience associated with social and emotional well-being (Jalla, 2016, Mukandi et al., 2019). They recognise there are several components that influence their health and well-being, this includes having a job, taking care of family, friends and being part of their culture (Mukandi et al., 2019). This not only includes taking care of ones' physical, mental and social health (Jalla, 2016), but also recognises how young people within community must meet social and cultural obligations as part of being healthy and well within their local context (Mukandi et al., 2019). One young person from the Mukandi et al. (2019) study articulated this perfectly:

> Strong Black man? I don’t know … I reckon somebody, like… independent, takes care of his family, doesn’t walk out on anyone in his life, somebody who works, has a job, takes care of his family and friends, and just represents his culture, and himself, in a good way and that, and yeah, just be pretty deadly. (Mukandi et al., 2019, p. 258)

As part of staying healthy, being independent and socially engaged, young people identified that it is a not a one-size fits all solution or a quick fix, but rather it involves ongoing maintenance of health (body, mind, spirit), for example, exercising, having a healthy diet, and positive experiences with positive people, and being supported from both individual and external factors (Jalla, 2016). This was seen by young people as having a holistic view of health and well-being that challenges the notion of health as not just being the absence of ill-health, but as seen within a broader lens of social and emotional well-being context. When young people accessed social and emotional well-being services, they reported that services that treated them holistically were crucial to the overall effectiveness of the service and the subsequent treatments received (Garay, 2021). Often central to the idea of seeing oneself through a holistic lens and receiving help, was the understanding of being supported to maintain all components of the body, mind, and spirit (Jalla, 2016).

Understanding support in the studies was seen at various stages in these young people's lives; support was not only experienced from young people's families or friends, but it was also extended to people around them like Elders, health professionals, justice workers, teachers and at times (Cerreto, 2018) whoever was there to listen and offer support (Mohajer et al., 2009). Importantly, when understanding these stories of support, they were interspersed with stories of feeling being respected, building trust and feeling heard (Cerreto, 2018; Jalla, 2016).

Within the studies (Cerreto, 2018; Garay, 2021; Mohajer et al., 2009), the voices of the young people's account towards self-determination and feeling supported were interrupted by experiences of not being listened to, not being heard and of being stuck in systems. These experiences occurred often in spaces of the justice, health and education systems, where young people felt powerless and often felt like giving up (Cerreto, 2018; Garay, 2021). In this articulation of the need to be heard and listened to, young people also recognised they may never be heard in the spaces of which they (are forced to) engage: ‘They didn't know my story and they didn't ask. What did they think would change? My life was the same, I was the same, my stupid crimes were the same’ (Cerreto, 2018, p. 27).

Within this experience of powerlessness through the telling of adversity, notions of giving up and through the scene setting of their context, the participants articulated stories of generational crime, poverty and grief (Cerreto, 2018). They also spoke of the stories of the negative experiences of racism, not belonging, substance abuse and being stereotyped; these experiences were framed by how the young people made sense of their adversity in relationship to the world around them (Cerreto, 2018; Garay, 2021; Mohajer et al., 2009; Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021).

While at first glance this quote frames this young person in a narrative of trauma or from a deficit discourse, explained earlier in this paper as a tension, what is evident is that young people, despite trauma and being in trouble from birth, can still draw upon their deep connection to family, blood and kinship systems as a strength through one's affinity to family, 'I've been in trouble since before I was born. It's in my blood, my family… we were stuck… I learnt how to fend for myself' (Cerreto, 2018, p. 16). Building strength by positioning oneself outside of the discourse, challenging and resisting authority as a way to build hope, offers a counter narrative from an Indigenous perspective.

Consequently, these events described by the participants were storied with the pervasiveness of racism and all its manifestations in their lives; often occurring in places like school, including experiences of physical, verbal and emotional attacks (Cerreto, 2018). Subsequently, these young people were then labelled as the 'troubled one' or 'no hoper' stereotype, where the expectation from others is to fail. Ultimately, these stereotyped labels are internalised by the young person who may then begin to 'act out' as a way to overcome the hopeless situation they are exposed to (Cerreto, 2018, Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021). An example of this is the internalisation of the covert racism that occurs in relationship to expectations of self-achievement; young Aboriginal people who do set high expectations are often confronted by their peers who have internalised the notion of not being expected to succeed and they then shame their peers for trying to aim high (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021). To further explain this phenomenon, a participant in the study reported by Murrup-Stewart et al. (2021) accounts a story of the ubiquity of the problem, where in some instances young people compare themselves to an Australian racialised stereotype of what it means to be Aboriginal. The story told in this instance is when a young Aboriginal woman pulls out a book for enjoyment and was confronted by her friend who claimed this act was going against the expectation that Aboriginal people do not read:

> I pulled out a book she was like, 'what are you doing?' It was funny, the more she whispered the louder I got I was like 'what do you mean what am I doing?' She's like 'what are you doing you're being embarrassing?' I was like 'huh, did I just fart and I not know?' And she's like, 'blackfellas don't read' … I was like, 'blackfellas write books! (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021,

p. 5)

Despite this one participant's account and the demonstration of ‘speaking back’, young people still need to navigate overcoming these lowered expectations placed on them, by building their futures, this was recognised as getting educated (Cerreto, 2018; Jalla, 2016). Contextually, young Aboriginal people recognised their identity was not regarded or considered in school, where they felt they were expected to ‘tick a box’ and disappear into the fabricated narratives (Cerreto, 2018). The fabricated narratives relate to the broader experience of Aboriginal young people being taught in schools about the narrative of Captain Cook and the discovery of Australia. A fabricated truth, in this case in relation to the so-called history of Australia, asserts and contributes to the larger Australian narrative where the point of ‘discovery’ is considered the beginning of Australia. One of Cerreto’s (2018, p. 26) participants explains, ‘I wrote essays about Captain Cook, a happy white history where my people didn't exist’.

In understanding these narratives, young people often told stories of running from these low expectations and experiences of shame and racism; they speak of stories of finding places to belong. While sometimes young people choose positive groups and social situations to belong to, for example within sport, cultural groups and other cultural activities (unpublished thesis, First Author), often what was found in these studies was that young people engaged in risky behaviours such as substance abuse, petty crime and risky sexual encounters in order to achieve a sense of belonging in their peer group (Cerreto, 2018; Garay, 2021; Mohajer et al., 2009). Within these stories, one paper reported, young people experienced homelessness and found themselves trapped in cycles where frequently a stopping point for young people is the inevitable confrontation with their mistakes, brought under the hammer of the justice and child protective systems that either contribute negatively or positively to their lives (Cerreto, 2018). Negative experiences include police brutality and detention; or through unnecessary and harmful intervention (removal of children) and control on their lives and the lives of their family (Cerreto, 2018). Positive in some instances, where the justice system has enabled young people to be linked into specific cultural support embedded as part of rehabilitation and healing (Cerreto, 2018). Within this support, the people often working in the system for the young people are the Elders, who finally hear what young people have been shouting for (Mohajer et al., 2009). Where they find belonging in places of both family and community or in cultural rehabilitation centres, where emphasis is placed on country, culture and kin; often, the first time a young person can call a place home (Cerreto, 2018). Central to the young people healing, importance is placed on re-connection to culture or in some instances of finding their culture for the first time. Prior to these instances of connection, young people have experienced disconnection and loss of culture and identity (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021). This loss is expressed by young people as something that they lack or have missed, tied up in emotions of feeling divorced from a part of their identity, yet not able to regain or re-connect (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021).

Culture is constructed as a central component to their lives and is presented as something that is multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Some studies identified that culture was about knowing your identity and having a Strong identity (Mukandi et al., 2019; Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021). Where the emphasis of a place-based identity is crucial: ‘I think to be a Strong Black man, Aboriginal man… you need to know who you are, where you're from’ (Mukandi et al., 2019, p. 256). Other notions of culture were experienced by young people feeling the presence of culture as part of their lives. This was through either traditional practices or connection to people (Cerreto, 2018; Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021). In some instances, culture was seen as a backbone and central to the everyday way of being for Aboriginal young people. This was presented as a way of holding culture as central way of ‘being’ including holding shared beliefs with their family and community (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2020). Culture was perceived as something that was passed down as a generational tradition, that needs to be shared, taught and practiced throughout the everyday (Mukandi et al., 2019). As part of this everyday practice, young people identified that it is not something that someone just possess, that it is a process of ‘constant teaching, learning and education of others and yourself’, where often traditional practices such as dancing and art enacted as a conduit for teaching and practising culture (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 6).

Understanding culture, young people identify with it as a process of healing for them, it is about being part of something, and appreciating times of stillness and moments of reflection. A young person identified that culture offered healing, strength, and beauty and it was about feeling safe and being looked over by their old people through connection on a spiritual level (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021).

Young people identified through this practice and engagement of their culture, that connection occurred across several anchor points (Jalla, 2016, Cerreto, 2018, Mukandi et al., 2019; Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021), where they experienced connection to.

- Elders and Knowledge holders;
- Country; and

- Community.

Connection to Elders and knowledge holders was expressed and experienced in various spaces. Young people see that for their social and emotional well-being, they must connect, stay connected and re-connect with Elders and knowledge holders, as people who are able to help them and guide them through their life ‘being able to talk and sit around a campfire and just yarn’ (Garay, 2021, p. 81). This practice was identified as something that assists them spiritually and culturally (Garay, 2021).

Young people who have encounters with the justice system, identified that connecting to Elders was crucial to their healing, recovery and putting their life back together (Cerreto, 2018). While young people connecting to Elders was important, one young participant demonstrated that it was a two-way process of Elders connecting back to young people. This includes Elders connecting to young peoples’ trauma and experiences. One participant highlight:

She [an Elder] sat me down I was so shocked because she’s like ‘I can feel what your body was doing all day, and we need to talk about it because you are broken,’ and I just lost it because I was like, ‘what do you mean? How did you know that? I was smiling and laughing all day,’ and then she goes, ‘you don’t understand babe, we’re connected, I can feel every time, I can feel your heart break … I felt that’ (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 6).

Connection is experienced through the young people engaging with Country. This is across various spaces with various experiences. Similar to connecting with Elders, young people connected with Country as a way of spiritual healing, where they can sit, reflect and acknowledge and recognise the importance of connection to country (Cerreto, 2018; Jalla, 2016). The connection is experienced at certain times, or, throughout their everyday practice, such as crushing and smelling the eucalypt from a leaf (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2020). Other instances are mapping out times to engage with Country, and being safe on country, and to be present and to learn from Country (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021).

Connection is lastly expressed by young people recognising the importance of Community and how they belong and the relationships they have in Community. This relationship includes developing and being responsible and enacting reciprocity as member of the community. A young person in Mukandi et al. (2019) accounts, identified the important of having his cousins be there for him during a time of sadness and distress, as opposed to developing anger, he was taught rap and how to combat his negative emotions. Mukandi et al. (2019) goes on to further identify how the men in the community develop a Brotherhood, centred around showing each other loyalty, respect and support.

Discussion

The aim of this review was to understand Aboriginal young people's health and well-being from their perspective. Given the ongoing and significant advance of indigenous research and the ongoing methodological leadership and progression in this area, the need for deficit based, comparative, defamatory studies must be a thing of the past, considered as a part of Terra Nullius research era (Sherwood, 2010). Emphasis on the use of studies that only included Aboriginal young people's voices in this review enacted a purposeful change in viewpoint to understand how they see their health and well-being.

Across the studies, young people did not speak to be listened to, they spoke to be heard. A troubling sub-text emerged that created a sense of powerlessness, where despite finding voice, young people still face significant issues associated with not being heard. This could be argued as the ongoing oppression and marginalisation of voice, that often occurred in the spaces where it is most needed. This occurred predominately in the colonised systems in which all of us have engaged across the CANZUS Nations. Whether it be the education, health and/or justice systems; young Aboriginal people highlight the reoccurring oppression of their voice and their identity as secondary to the agenda of the system. Shay (2016) highlights oppression-based discourse surrounding the education system, as a well-oiled capitalist machine, that educates, organises and pushes students through a rigid set of curriculums fulfilling the needs of the teachers, professionals and ‘society’, not the students. This system fundamentally isolates and oppresses those students outside the dominant narrative.

Within the studies presented, young Aboriginal people recognised the importance of engagement with these systems, and they recognised, why they needed to connect with health professionals, their families, communities, Elders and the other supports around them to get educated and stay healthy. When engaging though, their narratives highlight the burden of these experiences and heaviness of surviving and thriving in these systems. To illustrate this, when young people engaged with emergency departments, seeking mental health crisis support, they were not listened to or heard; they were brushed quickly through an assessment and sent on their way (Cerreto, 2018; Garay, 2021). Similarly, Hyett et al. (2019) state that care was interrupted due to the stereotyping of indigenous people in Canada, where they found this was perpetuated by the deficit discourse taught and continued in health systems through policy, practice and research; subsequently failing indigenous peoples by failing to provide culturally safe health care. Within the literature, there is evidence of the systems and individuals lack of ability to recognise the impact of social and emotional well-being and their failure to recognise Aboriginal people's experience of loss, removal of culture, racism and stigmatisation, but also their cultural diversity, strength and self-determination (Gee et al., 2014; Hyett et al., 2019). What has been identified in other CANZUS indigenous populations is the need for the improvement and engagement with cultural relevant approaches to healthcare service delivery, that focuses not just on indigenous peoples issues, but nurses and clinicians receiving specific training to given proficient and culturally safe health care, that emphasises the need for clinicians to interrogate their own beliefs, values and privilege (Curtis et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2021). Where the promotion of relational approaches is integral, with the need for delivery and interactions to be centred around cultural values, concepts and practices guided by/with family and community engagement throughout; to empower indigenous people to be self-efficient and self-determined while receiving culturally safe centred health care (Curtis et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2021).

Understanding risk and the failings of the current systems, although framing young people from a deficit narrative, some of the perspectives of young people recognised the generational impact of being stuck and being part of the system prior to being born (Cerreto, 2018). Understanding this on a deeper level, young peoples' identities and experiences can be constructed within a social climate within a relational space of circumstances that either can enable or disenable young people (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008). If we move forward using a strength-based Indigenous approach as used in this review, it is possible to see young people as individual social beings, who are positioned uniquely, in cultural, social, political and emotional spaces. Understanding that individuals are influenced not from one experience or one system, but from multiple positionings and relational experiences, we can begin to understand the importance of addressing and supporting young indigenous peoples' social and emotional well-being globally (Edwards-Groves & Murray, 2008).

Young Aboriginal people are constantly forming and creating their identity and how they enact that within the society in which they are placed. Historically and contemporaneously, the placement of Aboriginal young people in the broader narrative has focused on the inadequacies they possess, as opposed to their strengths (Askew et al., 2020). In refuting the notion of the everlasting deficit and failure lens, most prominent in this review was the emphasis of culture in young peoples' lives and learning how to navigate risks. Wingard and Lester (2001) offer words of wisdom that can be learnt through the potential acknowledgment of risk: Understand

and know who you are, where you are from and what you and your family has been through, know and recognise your past and make others aware of this to make a difference. Further, they recognise that through this knowledge creation, pride evolves, and builds one's ability to see what they have been through, finding stories and finding ways to share, and finding those who will hear. Where young people draw upon their ongoing deep connection to their communities and important affinity to their family and kinship systems (Cerreto, 2018), this knowledge arises and supports them to move forward.

Extending on this strength, young people were drawn to culture as being central to their well-being and overall health (physical, mentally, spiritually). Understanding culture and recognition of this is crucial if we are to move forward creating and changing the way in which research engages with the health and well-being of Aboriginal Peoples of Australia (Salmon et al., 2018). Salmon et al. (2018), in their review of the literature around culture, health and well-being, identified the complexity and overlapping of factors that influence Aboriginal culture and well-being. Similar to this review, they found that well-being is experienced through Connection to Elders, Country, Community (Salmon et al., 2018). This includes people reconnecting to culture as a way of navigating out of detention and the justice system, and recognising the need for ongoing connection throughout their lives (Cerreto, 2018). Further, they identified that culture is crucial to their overall well-being and spirituality. Despite such significant evidence, the study identified that culture was still only indirectly or infrequently mentioned in mental health services when caring for Aboriginal people by clinicians (Salmon et al., 2018).

A significant difference in the Salmon et al. (2018) review to this current review is the recognition of colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal people, expressed as something that has occurred through dispossession, loss of identity and culture (Salmon et al., 2018). Although Murrup-Stewart et al. (2021) identified that young people experienced disconnection and loss because of their family not being able to identify and reported that young people still felt inadequate or lacking something as part of their identity compared to others. None of the voices of the young people in the studies we reviewed spoke about colonisation and understanding colonisation through the manifestation of historical trauma.

Historical trauma is a growing space in research, particularly in first how complex trauma is understood and further, how its impacts young Aboriginal peoples' health and well-being as part of their everyday experience in the modern world (Smallwood et al., 2021). Furthermore, culture is a multi-facet concept that has varying, overlapping impacts on health and social and emotional well-being (Salmon et al., 2018). Historical trauma and its relationship with culture remains greatly understudied in the context of Aboriginal young peoples' health and well-being in Australia, despite being recognised as fundamental to social and emotional well-being principles (Gee et al., 2014). Particularly absent in the literature is the production of such knowledge and understanding of the importance that such research must be conducted by Aboriginal people, with Aboriginal people and their voices at the centre (Azzopardi et al., 2018, Salmon et al., 2018; Smallwood et al., 2021).

Although we do not consider this a limitation, we purposefully only selected studies that had the presence of Aboriginal young people's voices, thus limiting the inclusion of a potentially wider range of studies. Further, the selection of only traditional peer-reviewed research studies limited research that may have been disseminated using non-traditional formats, such as art, audio-visual or oral methods.

Conclusion

This review was designed to understand young Aboriginal people's perspective of their health and well-being. Given literature reviews are the foundation of research that informs research, policy and practice, by using an indigenous approach and analysis, the review presents a strength-based counter narrative that highlights insights into the storied accounts of young people from their perspective and context. Identifying how young Aboriginal people foster strength and resilience, which is enhanced through meaningful recognition by the services they encounter, and by the adoption and meaningful embeddedness of the social and well-being principles of health (Gee et al., 2014). During the process of the review, an interconnected picture emerged about how Aboriginal young people enact agency in a highly racialised, often oppressive spaces, thereby expanding current understandings of the importance of culture, and the connectivity, relationality, and dependability of culture. Although an absence of explicit text within studies about the impact of colonisation was revealed, understanding this through a social and emotional well-being view of health allowed young peoples' stories to reveal the enduring impact of colonisation and its impact on culture, country, community and kinship systems; arguably something that all Indigenous young people potentially face within the CANZUS nations. Furthermore, this review has illustrated how disconnected young people have experienced loss, but also how they can rebuild their cultural identity through connection to culture, country, and Elders in order to forge a way towards resilience and strength holistically.

Relevance to clinical practice

Literature reviews are the foundation that inform nursing practice. As clinicians, nurse-researchers and academics pursuing research and policy development within the Aboriginal health and wellbeing space, a conscious awareness is required when engaging with this literature. What this review identified is that most current literature is informed by a deficit discourse perspective. By shifting consciousness and awareness of these issues, clinicians, nurse-researchers, and academics can be informed through the emphasis of Aboriginal young peoples' voices, their strength and resilience in the health and wellbeing space.

Elder I see you,
I see you working hard, I do, I see you.
Elder I see you, across time, you weave our people to their culture.
You hold them tight.
Elder I see you, you share, love and respect.
Elder I see you; you give your time and energy; you give it all.
Elder I see you; your feet are firmly planted upon her sacred ground.
Elder I see you; you heal our young ones.
You cuddle the old and believe for our future.
Elder I see you; you heal our trauma, hold our stories, and give us hope.
Elder I see you. What can I repay?
Elder I see you.

Poetic transcription 3, 'Elder I see you' (R Smallwood, 2019)

Chapter summary

This chapter presented a published paper, 'De-problemtising Aboriginal young peoples' health and wellbeing through their voice: An Indigenous scoping review' (Smallwood et al., 2022). The article highlighted the importance of viewing health through a holistic lens that considers principles outside of western notions of health being the absence of ill-health, including factors that are important for young people. These factors included connection and belonging with others, family and community support, access to culture, and feeling safe to voice their concerns. Pertinent to the larger context of this doctoral study, culture, health, and wellbeing remains largely understudied in the context of historical trauma inquiry. This is particularly present in the understanding of historical trauma with and by Aboriginal young people, further highlighting the need for research with and by Aboriginal young people to inquire, expand and decolonise a space that is still experiencing colonial induced oppression. The next chapter presents the methodology used within this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter overview

This chapter presents the methodology used as part of understanding historical trauma with Aboriginal young people in Australia. Within this chapter, relationality and Country are at the core of this approach. The chapter presents the development of understanding the unique epistemological (ways of knowing), ontological (ways of being) and axiological (ways of doing) and how this development informed the use of Indigenous Storywork. Methodologically, this study has been informed by the principles of Indigenous Storywork, which include decolonisation and the use of a Gamilaroi practice called winanga-li. This chapter also includes two poetic transcriptions. The first reminds us of our connection to Country and how all living and non-living entities have informed this ceremony of research. The second makes explicit the hopelessness that we can transfer to our children and the unravelling this can create for all our futures moving forward.

> This thesis began with a purposeful opening of a ceremony, inviting you, the reader, to come and sit with me, to be still, to listen and to acknowledge our beginnings as if we were physically together, sitting around a fire awaiting a ceremony on Country to begin.
>
> Our journey thus far has presented the purpose of and justifications for the study. The importance of de-problematising young peoples' experiences and amplifying their voices, particularly in understanding ways to promote healing and self-determination at the individual and collective levels, has been discussed.
>
> At this stage in the thesis, we come to the part of the ceremony where I show you how I, a Gamilaroi woman, mother, aunty, daughter, sister, friend, and researcher, came to be with and alongside the voices of young people as part of this research ceremony (Martin, 2008).
>
> This stage is not without its challenges or struggles. Existing in the colony, my way of knowing has been divided, separated, and attached. I am influenced by being colonised and what that has meant to the Gamilaroi peoples' journeys.
>
> I am obligated to share messages of our healing and to not cause harm.
>
> I am obligated to the relationships I hold with Country.
>
> And I hold this part of the ceremony in great importance.
>
> Come with me, as we walk in-between the spaces of knowing. In this way, I acknowledge the process of liminality, which for me is a state of confusion arising during the ceremony.

Introduction

> ‘Sit amongst and then come alongside the Stories of the ceremony of research.’ (Martin, 2008, p. 172)

This research is Gamilaroi research. I am not situated within any of the dominant western paradigms. I am informed in my approach by the continuing relationship I hold with Country. Country is all-encompassing. It includes living and non-living beings equally, including the connection we continue to have with the metaphysical dimensions beyond the physical world. My understandings of the metaphysical dimensions are not complete, nor will they ever be as they will continue to evolve, spiral, and grow. As part of my relationship to Country and these dimensions, I hold this research approach in a ceremony that contains our bodies, our minds, our hearts, our emotions, and our spirits, holistically with Country.

In this chapter I discuss how my research approach has been informed by the process of Indigenous Storywork methodologies and how this has informed the process of writing/ creating as a methodology that has also included use of art and poetic mediums informed by placed-based meaning making with Country (Benham, 2007). This chapter then leads into the methods chapter, Chapter 4, in which I explicitly state how I have conducted appropriate methods within this research ceremony.

Indigenous research

Indigenous research has no set paradigm, and there are no prescriptions or formulas (Linklater, 2011). Despite this, there are guiding principles and perspectives that have influenced the development of this approach (Linklater, 2011). To structure this chapter and explain this approach and the guiding principles, I first refer to Figure 5.

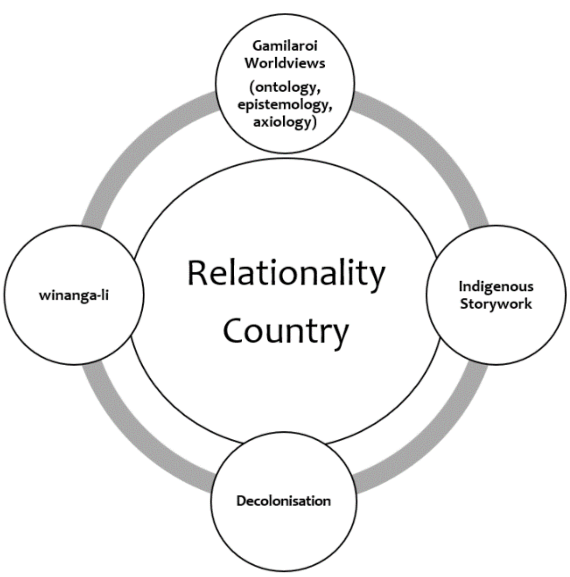

Figure 5. Aboriginal research approach enacted in research ceremony

Country and relationality

Relationality and Country are central; at the core and deeply embedded within my research approach (Figure 5). From the lessons I have learned along this journey, I believe that Country and relationality are core to any Indigenous research approach as an Aboriginal scholar (Wilson, 2008). This is not saying that I see these two as one and the same, but rather that Country and relationality are intertwined, ebbing and flowing through and around each other; connected through relationships within and outside of each other. In this way we remember Country and our need for connection and relationships as constant. Every action, interaction and experience we have together can have an impact, moving from one thing to the next, moving across temporal spaces of Country.

To understand relationality, it is important to note that Wilson (2008) and Martin (2008) presented the notion of relatedness as a core principle in their approaches to Indigenous research. Martin (2008), in discussing Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, highlights that all previous preparations leading to this point in the ceremony (referring to the methodology) are essential to acknowledging and ensuring the continuation of relatedness/relationality throughout. From this perspective, not only is relationality core, but it is also an ontological need. It guides the process of knowing/unknowing. And, as stressed by Wilson et al. (2008), it is integral to the use of Indigenous research approaches.

To be *relational* is to be *Aboriginal* (Wilson, 2008). Being Aboriginal is not an individual experience, but a collective, generational, and layered experience (Wilson, 2008). It relies on the relationships that are engaged throughout the research ceremony and beyond. These layers include the lasting and continuing connections held to our past, present, and futures (Linklater, 2011; Wilson, 2008). It is the connection and the acknowledgement of our ancestors and our future ancestors, *our children*. It goes beyond the physical confines and is captured in the connection we continually hold to Country and the layers that we do and do not see. For me this journey has encompassed the relationships I have held not only with the people around me, but also with other living and non-living entities (Martin, 2008), like the trees, rocks, mountains, sky, and spirits. It is not hierarchical, nor concerned with ego or superficiality or tokenism. It is the becoming.

> In Chapter 1, I presented the story of the tree that is located across from my house. A tree that was saved due to having a scar that tells a long-ago story of our ancestors removing the bark from the tree for the likely purpose of making a coolamon.
>
> A coolamon traditionally was used for the cradling of our babies where they were infants. It also had many other purposes.
>
> Throughout the stories of this ceremony, I will bring forth the story of this tree (see poetic transcription 4) and the role of a coolamon that not only holds our babies, but also enacts as a metaphor to carrying hope and love that we must hold for our children moving forward.

I hold the whispers from the trees.

A story shared of a tree – past, present, and future.

Located metres from my house.

A place where I live, learn, and grow throughout this ceremony. As do my children.

This tree has continued to send messages of hope, love, and resilience.

Showing me that despite colonisation, our pursuit beyond understanding trauma is to heal and promote healing generationally.

Poetic transcription 4, 'Remembering the story of the tree, always' (R Smallwood, 2023)

Gamilaroi worldviews

After placing relationality and Country in the centre of this approach, I will now discuss my positioning within Gamilaroi worldviews and how this has influenced knowing (epistemology), being (ontology) and doing (axiology) in this research ceremony (Wilson, 2008). Within this section, I further discuss how elements of decolonisation and critical consciousness have informed my perspectives in this research ceremony.

Epistemology – know/knowing

Martin (2008) emphasises the need for Indigenous scholars to know who they are, where they are from, and how they connect relationally. Martin (2008), quoting Weber-Pillwax (2001), discusses this process of knowing oneself physically, spiritually, socially, politically, culturally, and historically through one's experiences as an everyday task, as part of engaging with Indigenous research approaches. Knowing ourselves first and foremost, we then can imagine, create, and understand how this informs the academic work we are engaged with. Setting boundaries and tensions to acknowledge within the process of creating, writing, and knowing is imperative.

When reading Martin's (2008) work, I became conscious of my own understandings and how they shaped my way of knowing, personally and academically. This process of knowing self (within/outside of research) has not been without its challenges. Many conversations have occurred on the phone to other Aboriginal scholars, who have all walked this walk at varying stages. These conversations centred around finding ways to place our knowing, which is circular in shape (Aboriginal epistemologies), into the shape of a square (western epistemologies). In this approach, there will always be an overhang, and layers that are not within the square that can likely never be accounted for (Personal communication, V. Saunders, 2022).

Raising consciousness of this predicament and looking for how to account for these 'overhangs' brings me back to Bwgcolman woman Lynore Geia's (2012) thesis, which assisted me with unsettling my thinking while giving me words to understand the complexities, and simplicity of returning to the heart. Lynore states:

> Critical murri consciousness is complex, yet uncomplicated; the complexities arise when attempting to describe it in a western conceptual framework… critical murri consciousness is not a matter of the mind; rather it is a matter of the 'heart'. The use of the word 'heart' describes the symbiosis between the mind, emotions, senses, will and spirit, which moves through temporality, place, and space. (Geia, 2012, p.76)

Indigenous research paradigms are all unique in their characteristics and ways of knowing, doing and being (Linklater, 2011), yet they are collectively defined and understood through seeing knowledge as not separated, but connected holistically (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Thus, when pursuing understanding of complexities within this ceremony, I have been conscious of how I have engaged with knowledge. This includes stories, yarns, and teachings from the Elders, and the stories of the young people in this ceremony, my sisters, my brothers, my supervisors, and our community. Returning to these relationships repeatedly, through love and mutual respect, my way of knowing is grounded on the reciprocal encounters that have been part of this ceremony and beyond. Waters (2016) highlights how 'Aboriginal writers draw upon their own lived experience, offering insight into the real experience of real people to produce political, historical, sociological tales embedded in class, gender and identity' (p. 25).

The emphasis on time and place here is crucial, as it seeks to build knowledge within knowledge, spiraling to times, places, spaces of knowing, that are circular, spiraled configurations of both personal and professional growth. 'Spirally placed knowledge' as expressed here will be used with an emphasis throughout this thesis, as it understood like our Songlines, moving through spirals and dimensions that tether us to place and movement across and within Country. Songlines are a foundational part of Aboriginal culture in Australia, where they are shared Elder to Elder, carrying lore and stories that tether us to time, place, and space across both the stars and lands of our people.

Thus, holding our lore, our obligation to others, and our relationality to all things, we as Aboriginal scholars recognise that there is no end point needed here to determine the false sense of knowing that some people have endeavoured to reach. Acknowledging the narratives of our young people that the academy espouses, that knowledge will not help our young people, particularly if they are continually positioned as 'at risk' or as a problem on/in society (Smallwood et al., 2022). This is not a story that will demand me to speak *about* our people. In speaking with the people who inform my position, it is clear we have had enough of that; enough of being told what is best for us and for our young people.

Acknowledging that our knowing is temporally *placed* (Linklater, 2011; Geia, 2012; Martin, 2008), we recognise then that 'Country is the keeper of knowledge… Country gives the knowledge… it guides us and teaches us. Country has awareness, it is not just backdrop. It knows and is part of us' (Gay'wu Group of Women, 2020, p. xxii, cited by Rickwood, 2020). From this positioning, our knowing is informed by the entities who are part of Country and us – such as, for example, the tree mentioned earlier in this chapter (see Poetic transcription 4), which was almost destroyed but is now saved and becomes part of the spiral of knowing that, in many ways, has ontologically reminded me to carry hope and love always. Moving through the spiral of knowing does not require force; it lives within us, and it grows, gains more depth and texture through our continued commitment to the relationship of knowing and unknowing.

It requires curiosity, reflection, and accountability; understanding that we are not outsiders looking in, we are within the circle we wish to understand (Benham, 2007; Martin, 2008). Importantly, tensions in this space are held and reconciled, and each dimension of understanding is considered in the notion of deeper understanding (Wulff, 2017). Wulff (2017) explains that these tensions are pertinent to deeper understanding of the pedagogy of emancipation, stating that a ’single or preferred notion or understanding could dominate and thus create limits’ (p. 1) – acknowledging, always, that our knowing is relational.

Ontology – be/being

Martin (2008), in her outline of an Indigenous research approach, emphasises the need for relational epistemologies grounded in a relational ontology. Relational ontologies are the consciousness of self and other, to remind us always of the interrelatedness and interdependence within ourselves and with our surroundings (Martin, 2008), while always remembering that we are equally within Country. Entities, in relationship with other entities, are where ‘all things are recognised and respected for their place in the overall system’ (Martin, 2008, p.207).

Additional to relationality, and crucial to this approach, is the need for hope. Not the kind of hope that is falsely followed or believed in, but a hope that is critical in nature. Critical hope, as originally posited by Freire (2021), is the grounding of our way of being in the world that creates opportunity for new possibilities and ways of understanding that challenge us to critically examine the power structures around us and how they influence our ways of knowing, being, and doing. This kind of hope, and the teaching of this hope, reminds us of our incompleteness as humans, and of the need for our growth and progression to be grounded in practice (Freire, 2021). Freire (2021) posited that ‘Hope is an ontological need… I am hopeful, not out of mere stubbornness, but out of an existential concrete imperative… necessary, but not enough. Alone, it does not win… We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water’ (p.2). Without hope, we can quickly find ourselves in the state of hopelessness that I believe can unravel us, leaving us lost and shaken. In addition to Freire, Plenty Coups’ narrative, as presented by Lear (2006), influenced my understanding of hope. Plenty Coups’ story is one of triumph and dreaming, born during a time of colonial growth in North America, Plenty Coups’ story captures a kind of hope that was transformational to his community, who would see the result of colonisation shaping and turning upside down their whole way of life. Many others who faced similar circumstances lost their battle to hopelessness but, unlike them, Plenty Coups’ ability to see a new world beyond just being colonised brought forward new possibilities in his future and of his community, to ensure he was able to protect what he could while being oriented towards the future of possibilities and potentialities.

Lastly, I want to share a poetic transcription about how hope has informed my ontological tethering. This poetic occasion (see Poetic transcription 5) captures a few experiences of which I have been a part and have been witnessed by older generations, who have shared implicitly and explicitly their lack of hope for young people and their futures. For example, many times, I could be sitting around a table with young people, their parents, grandparents, aunties and uncles, and the conversation would bring forth the lack of hope the older generations had for young people, both collectively and individually. By sharing this poem with you, I am making hopelessness explicit, so that I can illustrate the kind of hope ontologically needed throughout the sense-making process of this ceremony.

All I hear is the failure I am.
I hear your voice, I am here.
I am no hope, no good and bad.

All I hear is the failure I am.
I hear my future; it is written for me.
I am no hope, no good and bad.

All I hear is the failure I am.
I hear your voice, you giv'n up on me.
I am no hope, no good and bad.

All I hear is the failure I am.
I sit here with your voice, cold and lost.
I hear that I am no good and bad, what a failure I am.

Poetic transcription 5, 'All I hear' (R. Smallwood, 2023)

Axiology – do/doing

Grounded on relational epistemologies and ontologies, the axiological component to this ceremony is the showing of how this approach remains accountable to the relationships as part of this research ceremony (Barlo et al., 2020). Wilson (2008) explains that 'the responsibility to ensure respectful and reciprocal relationships becomes the axiology of the person who is making these connections… Our axiology demands that we be accountable to these relations that we form' (p.79). Barlo et al. (2020) propose eight principles of our axiology or, as they call them, 'Relational Accountability' (p.46). These principles are respect, reciprocity, relationship, and responsibility, with four sub-principles: dignity, equality, integrity, and self-determination (Barlo et al., 2021). While these principles do not offer a prescriptive approach to how one enacts Aboriginal-informed axiology, it is important to acknowledge the role they play within the research ceremony. While much of my axiological work is explained in Chapter 4, I will briefly outline the main principles in the context of this ceremony.

Respect is one of three principles core to learning Gamilaroi Culture. Respect, in addition to how we treat each other interpersonally (Barlo et al., 2021), also applies in the context of obtaining and using knowledge. Throughout this thesis, I have carefully curated the use of the knowledge that I have gained/learned in relation to where I sourced the knowledge from. Some knowledge has been left out, and the knowledge that has been used, particularly cultural knowledge, I have only used with permission from the people who informed me, while ensuring they had an opportunity to read or hear what I had written before dissemination.

Reciprocity, like relationships, is layered and complex. As Barlo et al. (2021, p. 47) highlight, it is not just 'like for like' (p.47); rather, it is dependent on the relationship one is part of with others holistically. At times, this might mean you could be giving your time completely to others, or you might be pulling back and finding other ways to honour and give your energy towards them. As Barlo et al. (2021) also note, reciprocity is the modelling of responsibility, held and acknowledged. Lastly, relationships, as highlighted previously, are core to Aboriginal research and involve respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity to all living and non-living entities (Martin, 2008). Within the research approach, these 4 Rs of research (Archibald, 2008) drive and inform the ways in which we do good research with our communities, remaining obligated and always accountable to others. This includes how we write and speak about our communities.

Rigney (1999), in his seminal work, articulates the principles of Indigenist research and these in turn informed the basis of Karen Martin's work in the creation of her Quandamooka ontology (Martin, 2008). Similarly, I have drawn from these principles in the formation of my understandings of Gamilaroi worldviews. Rigney challenges the notion that we are here in this field of work for the purpose of academic pursuit, scaling, or promotion; we are instead here for our communities. We are obligated to our communities, while acknowledging that within our communities, ‘research’ remains a dirty word (Smith, 2021).

As Aboriginal scholars we are not separated, or unattached to our communities; instead, we are accountable and responsible for our actions, even if the academy does not agree; we must always challenge the why and how behind the intent of research.

I provide some guidance on how I have worked between the layers of community obligations and the expectations of the academy. Rigney (1999)’s principles of Indigenist research offered a framework for engagement which guided how I went about research with young people. Rigney’s principles are:

> *Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research* – research is undertaken to articulate and be part of the struggle of Aboriginal people and recognise self-determination. It aims to support the personal, community, cultural and political struggles to heal from past oppressions towards the future.
>
> *Political integrity in Indigenous Research* – Indigenist research is undertaken by Aboriginal people, we must set our own political agenda for liberation, which includes being responsible to the community of focus.
>
> *Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenist research* – research must focus on the lives, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, aspirations, interests, and struggles of Aboriginal people. Centring the research towards giving *voice* to Aboriginal people. (Rigney 1999, p. 116)

As highlighted in the literature review, Rigney’s principles offer a positioning to de-problematise young peoples’ voices and ensure that young people are heard within the systems in which they engage – including research (Smallwood et al., 2022). Tuck (2009) eloquently wrote to researchers and her community more broadly with a call to suspend the use of damage-focused research on Aboriginal communities given the long-term effect this has on ‘thinking of ourselves as broken’ (p. 409). Tuck (2009) highlights that we are not broken, we are not depleted or dependent. We are many things, beyond just this damaged view. Thus as Aboriginal researchers, we are responsible to the communities to which we are connected. This re-imaging offers ways to not only chart an agenda for liberation from oppressions, but also to imagine the possibilities and ideas that are generative towards amplifying our strengths, resilience and hopes within and beyond research.

Throughout Chapter 4, I will discuss how I have embedded my understanding of ethics and values, as core to my axiological perspective and ways of doing in this research ceremony, including the enaction of an Aboriginal research agenda (Smith, 2021).

Methodology

Returning to Figure 5 at the beginning of this chapter, I want to draw on three components from within this figure that relate directly to the methodological considerations as part of this project. These three components are decolonisation, Indigenous Storywork, and winanga-li.

Kovach's (2010) seminal book *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts* highlights the politics of knowledge in the field of Indigenous research as a direct result of colonisation. Alongside the devastating effects of colonisation on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples globally, Kovach highlights how 'Western science, in particular, has worked to first subjugate and then discredit Indigenous knowledge systems and the people themselves' (p. 77). Further, the academy has contributed to the marginalisation of our knowledge by monopolising what counts and does not count as knowledge (Kovach, 2010).

Reconciling the contested space of Indigenous knowledges, a lens of decolonising practice and theory has offered transformational opportunities for Indigenous scholars globally to acknowledge the tensions between living between two worlds of colonial-settler societies and Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing (Kovach, 2010). Founded on critical theory, Kovach (2010) highlights that decolonisation must be accounted for in contemporary Indigenous inquiry 'because of the persisting colonial influence on Indigenous representation and voice in research' (p.81). Recognition of this power over Indigenous communities is crucial in the field of Indigenous inquiry; as highlighted by Smith (2021), 'research' is a dirty word in our community because of the history of exploitative studies that have subsumed our stories and knowledge.

Indigenous inquiry, as highlighted by Kovach (2010), is about using methodologies that inform our method of research to enable a power-shift so that the community and/or participants are in control of the research activities and outcomes. Further, an outcome of using such approaches ensures that the usefulness of the research is accounted for by community, as opposed to simply collecting data and leaving community without any benefit or use. Many Aboriginal authors highlight that more than two decades of health research had not benefited our communities (Bainbridge et al., 2015). Further, by the community defining the parameters of the research approaches and presentation of the outcomes, the knowledge generated stays with the community to ensure they are self-determined in its use and in the potential for other additional community-led projects. Importantly, emerging out of the Indigenous research space, we are focused on our healing and transformation (Smith, 2021), remembering that we do not just do research for research's sake.

As highlighted by Kovach (2010); to achieve such desired outcomes as part of the research ceremony, the method of story must be a powerful avenue in the field of Indigenous research. Further, as result of our stories being subsumed and used by western researchers in culturally inappropriate ways, Indigenous Storywork recognises and responds to the historically exclusive dominant 'story', while aspiring to 're-cover, re-cognize, re-create, re-present and 're-search back' by using our own unique ontological and epistemological constructs' (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 6). Further, this movement is reliant on relationship and balance – that is, it is intertwined with people, place and story (Benham, 2007; Kovach, 2010). This means that as part of the research process we are not reliant upon one's ability to 'extract data' but do so in relationship to the participants and the stories of research, by representing the stories as the *gift* they are, so that our Storywork is generative towards our healing and self-determination as Aboriginal peoples (Archibald et al., 2019).

Kovach (2010) acknowledges her journey through research stories as a holistic, raw and inspiring movement that was transformational and healing to both the participants and researchers. Benham (2007) focuses the attention on the researcher, to acknowledge the narrative, where it is told in community, and how it is embedded in place and space. Place is considered the land to which it is connected and meaning-making is developed. Space regarding story is in relation to the time and history in which the story took place, represented as a metaphysical metaphor (Benham, 2007). Ultimately, then, the context of stories, and the connection to the telling of that story, is reliant on meaningfully considering the variable viewpoints within the focus of inquiry – recognising that by focusing on one or two viewpoints, we potentially could silence or other those within the community of focus, thus deeming the research findings irrelevant to the wider community (Benham, 2007).

Understanding Benham's work on story and research relevance to community and placed-based positioning, I was drawn to the work of Atkinson (2002), who developed her research approach around a concept called Dadirri. Dadirri originates from the languages of Ngan'gikurunggurr and Ngen'giwumirri peoples of the Daly River region in the Northern Territory, Australia. Dadirri means 'inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness' (Miriam Rose Foundation, 2023). Dadirri informed Atkinson's development of a methodology that is relevant to her research participants and the research outcomes of understanding intergenerational trauma. Like Benham (2007), Atkinson (2002) recognises the importance of space in the methodology by the practice of deep listening, but also how this practice was informed by the following principles and functions:

> Knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to the community; ways of relating and acting within community; a non-intrusive observation, or quiet aware watching; a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; a reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; and, having learnt from the listening, a purposeful plan to act, with actions informed by learning, wisdom and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge. (Atkinson, 2002, p.16)

Acknowledging the practice of Dadirri, I too, wanted to ensure the stories of this research approach were relevant and authentic to the voices of young people as part of this ceremony; and, further, to ensure I was responsible, accountable, and reciprocal to all the voices and relationships as part of the ceremony, including those that are silent. Prior to reading Atkinson's (2002) work, I was on Country as part of a Gamilaroi women's gathering and prior to engaging with the cultural activities of the day, a traditional knowledge holder whispered a word four times as lines of ochre were painted across my face. This word was winanga-li. After reading through Atkinson's (2002) work and developing my methodology, instead of using Dadirri I sought permission from Uncle Nev Sampson to explore and use winanga-li in my work. I think it is important to note that Atkinson (2002) also highlights in her text another Gamilaraay word that means deep listening, 'winangargurri' (p.15); however, given my continuing connection to my community, the Elders and knowledge holders around me in this ceremony, I continued with the word that my community had given me.

Winanga-li is a term that is defined in the Gamilaraay dictionary as four concepts: to listen, to hear, to know and to remember. Through a process of engagement, I sought permission from Elders and knowledge holders to explore this concept in my research approach. Munro et al. (2019) used winanga-li in their approach, guided by an Aboriginal standpoint for the practice of yarning with Aboriginal health students in understanding their cultural safety in higher education. Winanga-li guided my sense-making and engagement with young peoples' voices and offered space to engage deeply with not only what young people were saying, and its importance and relevance to their healing, but how I engaged deeply with the representation of the stories of the research. For example, some stories have been written, some have been captured using poetry and others have been represented through art-based mediums. Importantly, as highlighted by Benham (2007), the use of such differing formats is necessary as part of the ethical and cultural representation of research stories. For further context to how I have used multiple formats in the process of Indigenous Storywork (please see Appendix 1).

Critical to the use of winanga-li, the process involved continual reflection on the relationships held within the research ceremony (Atkinson, 2002). My actions were accountable and reciprocal to these relationships as an integral part of the use of Indigenous Storywork. West et al. (2012) highlight that reflexivity in this approach is vital, not only due to the relational nature of Indigenous research approaches, but also in terms of how a researcher critically examines their actions at each stage of the research process. West et al. (2012) state that reflexivity 'is an essential process in reshaping research methodologies to address the elements of the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda and implementing the principles of Rigney's (1999) indigenist research' (p. 1584) – remembering that these principles are focused on emancipatory goals of self-determination, political integrity and privileging of voice (Rigney, 1999). In the following chapter, I further highlight the use of critical reflexivity and how this has informed the process of data analysis and representation of the research findings in this research ceremony.

Chapter summary

This chapter, like the prologue, began with a reminder to return to Country, both physically and metaphorically. Through this returning, this research approach highlights the importance of relationality and Country informing our positioning, our being, our knowing and our doing, including how one enacts the Aboriginal research paradigms culturally and ethically. The next chapter presents the method enacted as part of aspiring to do good research with the Aboriginal young people and living and non-living entities who have informed this ceremony throughout.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter overview

This chapter provides an overview of the method used to address the research questions in the research ceremony. The chapter will further discuss the cultural and ethical research practices used as part of the ceremony, introducing key concepts such as Cultural Governance, an Indigenous Research Agenda, and the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research.

Additionally, the role of the Aboriginal research advisory committee will be discussed, including the ongoing relational approaches used as part of conducting from within the community this research belongs to. This will include the ongoing community engagement activities that have been enacted at each stage of the research ceremony. Further, the recruitment strategies, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations will be discussed.

Cultural governance

Aboriginal people and their communities have had longstanding issues with researchers placing their priorities and interests over the needs of Aboriginal communities (Rigney, 2003). Often researchers engage with community with an agenda that often is misaligned to the goals and needs of community. Navigating the health research space is often complex for Aboriginal researchers and requires constant reflection on the many paths walked in order to remain accountable to the community of focus (Williams et al., 2021). Often Aboriginal researchers are conflicted, with completing agendas resulting in unspoken and spoken tensions that create space for gnawing anxiety and power imbalances (Martin, 2008). To work through these anxieties, ongoing relational approaches to research are essential. Community responsiveness is a must to ensure the development of authentic and trustful relationships between communities and the researchers who work with them.

As a Gamilaroi yinarr, nurse and community member, I bring both personal and professional experiences into the health research space. From the very beginning I was conscious of the impact research has had on our communities, with research remaining a ‘dirty word’ in the community (Smith, 2021). Navigating this space meant being accountable for avoiding tokenistic gestures and tick-box approaches when seeking ethics approvals (Bond et al., 2016). It also meant that in seeking to do better, the negative experiences I had previously worked through became valuable lessons towards my conduct of not only ethical research, but cultural research that involved an ongoing process of reflection, re-direction, and connection. Developing cultural governance with Aboriginal communities remains mostly an uncharted space in health research in Australia (Bond et al., 2016; Gwynn et al., 2015). However, this is changing.

The tensions are unlimited, the need for community involvement from varied Aboriginal controlled organisations is complex, and community politics remains a space of uncertainty and careful progress by all those involved (Bond et al., 2016). In addition, my earlier experience, I was given some core advice from a fellow baawaa during my early stage of designing my research project: ‘As Aboriginal people in our community, you learn protocols and obligations from being connected with community; knowing and implementing these protocols and obligations is the doing component of this process’ (Personal communication, K. Taylor, 2018).

As a Gamilaroi calala murri yinarr, I am accountable to the protocols and obligations (my understanding of cultural governance) that surround me, situated both internally and externally within my community. Internal cultural governance allows me to recognise the way in which all elements are understood and translated into the implementation of my research project. To clarify, the research project I engage with must recognise, honour, and uphold the beliefs, ideas, and values I hold internally. If not, I would be in conflict with the project, and this would then impact my ability to complete the project to a successful level from my viewpoint (Wilson, 2017). Externally, cultural governance will also be translated into how a project is received by community, and how the values, beliefs, ideas, and knowledge within the project are portrayed to the community – in particular, how the community receives the project and engages with the project and team (Dudgeon et al., 2010).

Recognising cultural governance and the way both internal and external governance have a role in this research ceremony, enacting a research agenda has been foundational to keeping this ceremony on track, for my community and the obligations and the protocols I hold as a researcher in this space – a space that requires me to hold and honour the protocols and obligations gifted to me throughout by my community, not as a right but as a privilege to be held only if this remains at the forefront of my critical conscious as an Gamilaroi woman.

The research agenda

Smith (2021), in her ground-breaking book, *Decolonising methodologies*, has demonstrated that all research has an agenda and that the agenda behind research prior to Indigenous research methodologies was to continue power domination and imperialism over the world's First Peoples. Honouring space for this agenda is an act of self-determination and recognises that Indigenous worldviews have continued to thrive and survive despite colonial displacement (Smith, 2021).

The research agenda is as follows.

Self determination

The research agenda and obligations will reflect the spiritual, historical, cultural, social, political, and economic contexts that transform the experiences, lives, positions, and futures of Indigenous Peoples (Martin, 2008). Its primary aim is to promote self-determination, development, recovery, and survival of Indigenous peoples (Smith, 2021).

Transformation

The research agenda will be open to new understandings and knowledges. It will break free from the hegemony of the dominant system (Wilson, 2008). It will recognise when cultural harmony is shifted or unbalanced. It will recognise this unbalance as a need to transform and recreate a new way of knowing, doing and being grounded in an Indigenous viewpoint (Wulff, 2017).

Decolonisation

The research agenda will aim to be decolonising and recognise when colonisation has occurred. This thesis is positioned in a context that is influenced politically, socially, physically, spiritually, and psychologically to continuously recognise the ways in which we needed to continue the decolonisation process (Smith, 2021). It recognises that even Indigenous research poses a threat to Indigenous people and communities (Kelley et al., 2013; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Thus, it must uphold rather than undermine cultural integrity and knowledge (Rigney, 2003). As such, the agenda will ensure the research does not use Indigenous knowledges or language without permission. Similarly, it means the research project and the researcher will have no ownership over the stories contained within this thesis; rather, the study and the thesis will merely be a vessel in which the stories are told and shared (Martin, 2008). It also recognises that all Indigenous people are facing the same problems with research processes and the development of this agenda must always remain open, honest, and willing to share.

Healing

The research agenda and obligations held, are primarily aimed at healing (physical, spiritual, psychological, social, collective, and restorative) (Smith, 2021). The research agenda will have an ongoing role to ensure it does not objectify the young people of the ceremony and it will fill its role in community, and by community (*by/with* and not *on*). It will recognise social mores as an essential process in which Indigenous People live, learn, and are situated within (Martin, 2008).

Mobilisation

The research agenda and obligations will privilege voices of the young people of the thesis. It will be accountable to thoughts, ideas, challenges, and notions of the present and place as priority. The research will thus be guided by the young people and will acknowledge Elders, Traditional Owners, Ancestors, and others who contribute to this ceremony. It will produce opportunities to mobilise on a local, national, regional, and global level (Smith, 2021)

In addition, embedding this research agenda, I have reflected on the use of the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Indigenous research (AIATSIS, 2021), which has four principles: 1) Indigenous self-determination, 2) Indigenous leadership, 3) impact and value and 4) sustainability and accountability. These will be discussed in the Ethics section below in addition to the NHMRC's four ethical principles for human research.

Aboriginal Research Advisory Committee

As stated previously, this project is part of a larger Australian Research Council (ARC) grant, which has two study sites, and at these study sites there are two different research advisory committees based in rural and urban communities. This project, as a component of the ARC project, has been guided by the Rural Aboriginal Research Advisory Committee.

The advisory committee oversees research in partnership with an Aboriginal Controlled Health Organisation and the University of New England. The co-chairs of the advisory group are Uncle Neville Sampson and Professor Kim Usher. The advisory committee meets bi-monthly; several Aboriginal people from the community attend, including Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal people from health organisations (government-run, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health

Organisations (ACCHOs), and other health organisations, such as health network groups and Aboriginal research students). Membership of the committee is for Aboriginal people only; non-Aboriginal people and researchers can seek support and advice for their projects and support for research projects is given if the committee deems them appropriate to the community. The permissions for community support are then given by the CEO of the ACCHO. The committee itself has been successful, with several community-based grants and high-level research grants having been governed and implemented by the committee from beginning to end.

Over the research period of this ceremony, from early design to dissemination (see Figure 6), I have attended bi-monthly meetings with the committee. In addition to this bi-monthly update and progress report, the advisory group helped this ceremony with the following:

- Cultural support and guidance of the ceremony.
- Strategies to support and foster community awareness and engagement of the project, including recruitment and dissemination of findings.
- Use of Gamilaroi language and gifting of knowledge that culturally guided the ceremony.
- A safe place to share challenges and achievements throughout, including critique of methods used and discussion of ideas/concepts emerging from the literature/data.
- Dissemination strategies that include knowledge translation activities with Aboriginal young people in the community

Furthermore, through this committee, I was supported in connecting with individuals outside of the face-to-face meetings to discuss specific issues arising out of analysis or presentation of the results. As an example, one member of the advisory group, set up a meeting with a group of local Aboriginal women to discuss with me the findings in the literature review regarding the positioning of risk and how the young people in studies navigated risk. We yarned while doing some weaving, discussing keys areas which I identified and how best to present what was found in the Indigenist literature review. More recently, I have met members of the group and other community members regarding the positioning and presentation of the findings chapters, particularly around young people and their experiences of identity. These are only two examples of how the ongoing relationships developed through the committee have enabled the enaction of the research agenda in this ceremony. Acknowledgment of the members and community members' support has been demonstrated by either co-authoring papers and/or acknowledging the committee/community in publications and conference presentations of the thesis. This process has been guided by the committee.

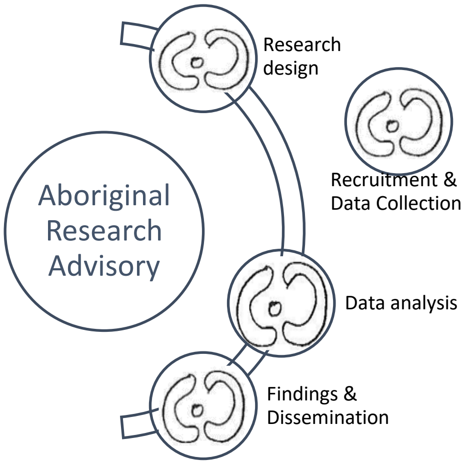

Figure 6. Aboriginal Research Advisory Committee and key involvement within ceremony stages

Recruitment strategies

A total of 15 Aboriginal young people aged between 18 and 24 years consented to and participated in the study. The age group of 18–25 years was selected for two reasons. In the original ARC project, a decision was made to include adolescents from the age of 18 because these participants were at a stage of sufficient maturity to effectively address the questions. Originally the study proposed to cut off the age range at 22 years. After discussion and based on advice from the NSW Aboriginal Research Advisory Group, the age range was increased to 25 years.

The young people were either living in the rural region at the time of interview or had previously lived there. Due the nature of snowballing recruitment via social media, some participants were friends/family of those who lived at the rural site. Thus, two participants shared their experiences from their communities.

Aboriginal young people were recruited by an Aboriginal Research Assistant (employed and supported by the advisory committee) to complete a survey as part of the ARC longitudinal phase. After the survey they were invited to elect to participate in an interview. These names, with permission of the participant, were given to me to contact potential participants for an interview. The following inclusion criteria, which were consistent with the wider ARC criteria, were used (these inclusion criteria were):

- Participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Participants were aged between 18 and 25 years
- Participants were willing to yarn with me face to face or via Zoom.

Approximately 20 young people consented to a yarn after their survey. Ten of this group were under the age of 18 years and were excluded consistent with the decision by the ARC project group, who were governed by the decision of their individual Aboriginal Research Advisory groups (Urban/Rural) that young people participating in the yarn needed to be over the age of 18. Three were uncontactable, three requested information but did not proceed to consent or participation and three were given information and participated in an interview. After only three young people were successfully recruited into the study for a yarn, I returned to the Aboriginal Research Advisory committee and sought advice about strategies to increase recruitment. The committee suggested using the committee's community research Facebook group, where, after ethical approval, the remaining 12 participants were recruited using snowballing recruitment techniques and via wide distribution of the study across community pages and local groups. This included young people who originally saw the post on social media participating in the study, then recruiting their friends and family to consent and participate. This approach is consistent with a purposive snowballing technique employed in research to recruit participants (Parker et al., 2019).

After participants contacted me, they were informed of the project and given time to consider their participation, and at this point I sent the 'participant information and consent form' (PICF) for their consideration (Appendix 3). This was to ensure they had the time to make an informed decision prior to participation in the study. During this initial contact, they were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw at any stage they would be supported and encouraged to do so. Further, I informed them if they had any questions prior to consenting, I was happy to discuss these with them. No participants withdrew from the study after consenting.

Data collection

In early 2020, COVID-19 had reached Australia, and we went through our first of many lockdowns.

Across the university, all face-to-face data collection ceased. An ethics approval was submitted and approved, and the consent process (Appendix 7) revised to allow the interviews to be conducted via tele/videoconference. Only voice recordings were collected. No videos were recorded via the Zoom platform. Ethical considerations have been discussed in detail below and are inclusive of the AISTSIS Code of Ethics (AIATSIS, 2021).

Interviews were conducted using a conversational approach; this was achieved through what has been described as yarning, using an informal and relaxed discussion (Geia et al., 2013). A yarning guide was developed in collaboration with the ARC project team, with specific questions associated with both studies (see Appendix 4). Geia et al. (2013) further explain yarning as a journey both the participant and researcher share to build a relationship while visiting topics of interest to the research. The 15 yarns lasted between 19 and 59 minutes. Yarns were transcribed verbatim by an external scribe and I re-listened to them, removing potentially identifiable information and making sure they were an accurate representation of what was said.

As per the ethics approval, the yarn transcripts were shared with the young person to clarify statements. It was decided, despite initial concerns over re-traumatisation following discussion with the Aboriginal Research Advisory committee, supervisors and young people in early design, that the ability to review a transcript was a relational approach to give young people the opportunity to control their data. That could include an opportunity to fix errors, correct where their meaning might have been misunderstood or lost, or control elements of the data they wished to remove. See Text Box 1 for an example of the consent process regarding review of transcripts. Most of the young people replied to the response with no changes, two did not respond to the file being sent, and one responded with changes and clarification of their ideas presented in the yarn. This process of transcript review is a commonly employed strategy used in qualitative research and is reflective of the relational approaches in this ceremony to amplify young peoples' voices authentically (Hagens et al., 2009; Kovach, 2010).

Text Box 2. Pre-interview consent process regarding review of transcript

Researcher:	Do you agree to have it audio recorded and transcribed?
Participant:	Yes, I do.
Researcher:	So, you know that after we have it transcribed, I'll send it to you via e-mail and then you can – or via however you want me to send it to you and you can review it and add in or take anything out that you wish?
Participant:	Yes, I understand.

To address wellbeing and distress concerns, with my supervisors' guidance I developed a distress protocol (Appendix 6); this protocol both gave support and outlined steps to follow if the participants or I experienced any instances of distress throughout data collection period. Further embedded into the ethical approval, participants in the consent process could have me call them 24 hours post-interview and one week post-interview to check in. All participants were happy to consent to this process. See Text Box 2 for example from participant transcript. In instances of distress, the protocol was followed and they were flagged to the supervision team. Fourteen of the 15 participants reported no signs of distress. The one participant who reported distress during the first 24-hour period stated they experienced mild distress and were able to speak with a family member and resolve this distress directly after the research yarn. No further distress was noted by this young person or any other participant during the data collection.

Text Box 3. Pre-interview consent process regarding follow-up support

Researcher:	So, what I'm doing as well is do you agree for me to contact you tomorrow and just check in how you're going and then maybe a week later and just say, hey, how are you going, just checking that you're okay?
Participant 6:	Yes

Data analysis

Methodological quandaries arising out of Indigenous inquiry, story-based methodology and sense making are evident in Kovach's (2010) careful examination of the context in which research stories are used in the academy by Indigenous scholars. Sharing of stories between the community and researcher is thus held in a balance, entrusted to the researcher, demanding we hold an obligation to the telling of stories authentically while avoiding the pressures of communicating stories as expected in western academic methods and presentation (Benham, 2007). Kovach's work, and this thesis, acknowledge the heinous reputation research has in Indigenous communities globally. We must continue to navigate and identify the ongoing tensions we collectively hold in our roles as we write the spoken, from within traditional and cultural paradigms (Kovach, 2010) while ensuring that we, as Aboriginal researchers and storytellers, continue to have a voice with and by our people to reframe notions of injustice and empower our collective and individual self-determination (Rigney, 2003; Smith, 2021).

Holding these obligations and tensions in the research ceremony, as suggested by Kovach (2010, p. 101), my process of analysis first and foremost was to honour 'the talk' of the young people's stories; the analysis itself was not within the stories, but through my role as the listener to the stories and how this process is both articulable and in-articulable in the confines of this body of work (Kovach, 2010). I present here, through both artistic and poetic representation, the complexity of data analysis within the Indigenous research paradigm. The figure below (Figure 7) was created as I was yarning with a critical friend about how best to describe the process in which I could view the stories, to ensure I was accountable and obligated to the truth telling of this process. I later reflected on this drawing and developed a poetic work called 'Do You See What I See?', a piece that continues to acknowledge the unfolding work I have continued throughout this thesis as part of the sense-making journey – something that I feel will continue to be placed on a spiraling journey of tensions and celebrations.

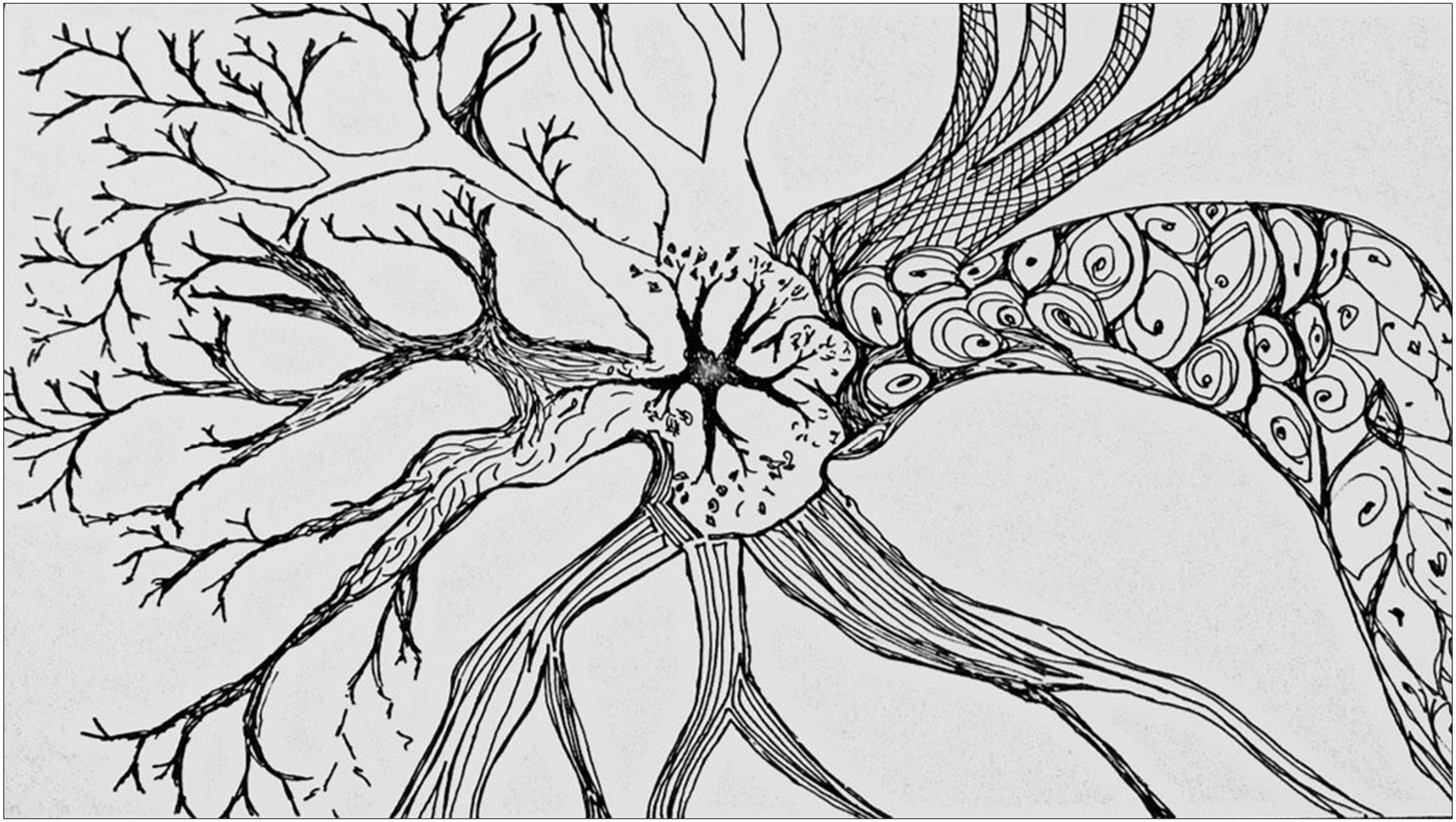

Figure 7. 'Do you see what I see?... A top-down tree?' (R. Smallwood, pen on paper, 2021)

‘Do you see what I see?’

Do you see what I see?

A top-down tree.

No not really, I don’t see. Can you explain it to me?

Nor can the words on paper

Nor whispers and yarns, can explain this top-down tree

It begins with stories and spirals

Painted through the aisles

Of places and people,

Who’ve all fought off some vile.

When you ask, you see, about explaining this tree, what word can be found, that’ll make you see?

Poetic Transcription 6 Do You See what I See? Smallwood, R. (2022)

Do you see what I see?

A top-down tree.

Data analysis, or analysis of the young peoples’ stories, was a process that upon reflection occurred over many non-linear cycles of knowing what I needed to do, versus sitting in a space of not knowing what to do. Initially within the Indigenous storywork space I was reassured that presentation of the findings need to honour the process of telling (Martin, 2008), that is accountable to young peoples’ voices. Further how this telling was represented through a reflective process of this telling occurring on Country, grounded by my ontological and axiological positions I held as part of my positioning in community.

Recognising this process of data analysis, we are positioned as Indigenous researchers in a place of knowing-unknowing, a place that recognises the tensions between the written and the unwritten, to create room to acknowledge and present authentically work with and by young people. Thus, potentially in the image above you may see a top-down tree, or you may see a placenta tied to a set of blood vessels giving it life, or you may see something different. It is variable and highly contextual depending on the lens you bring to the image and your interpretation of that image. Acknowledging the temporal dance, we all make as sense-makers in spaces of certainty and uncertainty. For more context of this process and the acknowledgement of this temporal dance, see Appendix 1, which reproduces an edited book chapter as part of my poetic sense-making that has laid room for the unwritten and written tensions of this space I have been working within.

Nor can the words on paper.

Nor whispers and yarns, explain this top-down tree.

As noted by Kovach (2010), there continues to be an ongoing debate about undertaking 'data analysis' in Indigenous-led inquiry – how to do so, and the best way to honor the whole story. Often, researchers overcome this by adopting a mixed methods approach that uses thematic analysis to group and code the stories, then apply an Indigenous story approach over the telling of the stories through both self-in-relation interpretation and representation of their voices as accurate as possible (Kovach, 2010).

Benham (2007) expands on these tensions in describing how she was able to Indigenise the narratives of research, noting that there are several components that an Indigenous scholar must consider. These include our existence as Indigenous is both in dualistic and parallelistic spaces; and how we all differ, which ultimately influences our interpretations. When embarking on data analysis, limited methodological guidance was offered in the field of Indigenous storywork or narrative work as proposed by Benham (2007). Thus highlighted a place of uncertainty for me, as a novice researcher; I had to uncover and recognise these tensions, and capture them in this body of work, like a collision of beauty.

To 'capture' these tensions, I drew from Rinehart's (2021) examination of abductive analysis to give me the ability – and, I guess, permission – to make my way through the sense-making of this process. Abductive analysis is an active and interpretive process undertaken with the research yarns (Rinehart, 2021). I have presented this process visually (see Figure 8).

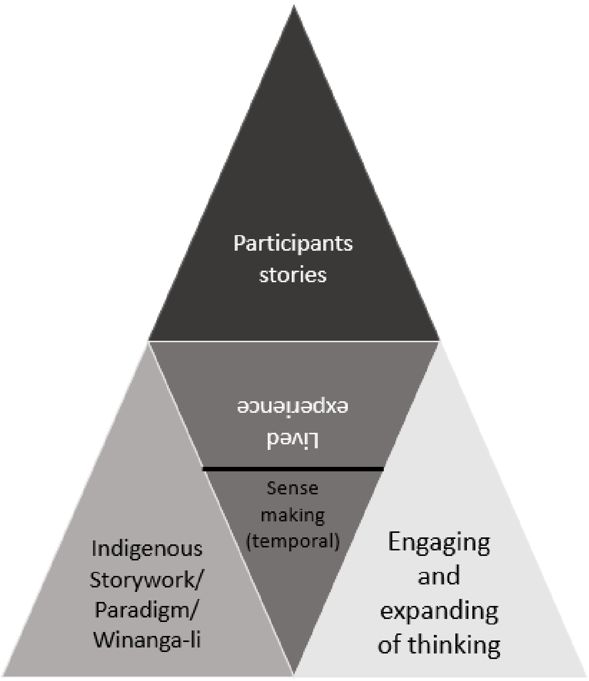
Participants stories
Lived experience
Sense making (temporal)
Indigenous Storywork/ Paradigm/ Winanga-li
Engaging and expanding of thinking

Figure 8. Abductive analysis and data interpretation (Smallwood, 2023, p. 5)

The explanation for interpretation is:

1. Participants' stories or the young peoples' stories were placed at the pinnacle of the triangle to ensure that whatever direction the work was taken in, the focal point of the work was always the obligation held to the young peoples' stories and voices.
2. 'Lived experience' and the sense-making (temporal) drew from Kovach (2010) to examine the Indigenous writer self in relation the sense-making. This can be seen as my lived experience as a Gamilaroi yinarr, who has grown up in a colonial society and has needed to unpack colonial thinking, to understand my sovereignty and identity as a calala murri yinarr, Then taken these lived experiences through a mirror of reflection to build on the sense-making work as a temporal activity, emphasising the time, place, and space of the stories, where space is a metaphysical metaphor as described by Benham(2007).
3. 'Indigenous Storywork/Paradigm/winanga-li' acts as visual metaphor, being placed at the bottom of the triangle to show that all the work and sense-making is guided to the Indigenous research paradigm, the ceremony and ensuring that meaning-making is based on the grounds this work is tethered to, winanga-li, the practice and praxis in which knowledge arrives through and on Country (Benham, 2007).
4. 'Engaging and expanding of thinking work' is what Rinehart (2021) proposes as 'time

> work', where, to build sense-making, we must have a critical understanding of the wider field of inquiry, but also recognise the 'outside of thesis activities' that add unimaginable contributions to the body of work. This for me was often sharing and yarning across community about the sense-making I was making from the stories, where from each yarn or text written, I went out and took time away from the computer to reflect and engage my body and brain in different activities that allow my brain space to unpack and re-pack certain aspects of the work.

Handling of the 'messiness' of this process required a variety of techniques, such as using NVivo v12, printed transcripts (with highlighters and hand-written annotations) and reflective processes such as journalling and creation of artworks and poetry. Being guided by Rinehart (2021), the positioning of these activities solidified and reassured the process, while aligning me within the Indigenous Storywork process to allow for creative methods of storied presentation of findings (Benham, 2007). I also used some aspects of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), by firstly coding the data, then clustering the codes into layers of themes/stories and questioning, interrogating, and expanding on this as an ongoing, iterative process of reflection and layered reflexivity (Rinehart, 2021; Nicholls, 2009).

Layered reflexivity is identified as 1) self-reflexivity, where the researcher identifies and dialogues with their hidden assumptions that may underpin the sense-making, and 2) inter-personal or relational reflexivity, a process of challenging the relational role/s we have in the community and in research, and how we adapt and push these layers to remain related to the sense-making, the community, and the intent for research. This creates an opportunity for a dialogue with young people, supervisors, and community members to highlight and challenge tensions as they arise. Finally, 3) collective reflexivity and catalytic validity is the place at which the journey arrives, where the dialogue and participation between the researchers (young people and I) is equal, transformative, and reciprocal for all participants.

Understanding this data analysis method as a bricolage of approaches, I first engaged with the stories and voices of young people through a deep listening process. Using the practice of winanga-li, I would listen, hear, know, and remember the stories of the young people. This was done in various places and contexts, such as while walking out on Country, or sitting in a quiet dark place where no other sensory stimulation could take away my focus from the deep listening practice. Ensuring the practice of winanga-li was centred on the spoken, including the silence, tone, and cadence of the voices and how this listening was felt within me as the listener. This practice has been defined by others (Woodland et al., 2019) as hearing through the body or as a way of whole-body listening, first presented by Aboriginal philosopher, Elder and leader Ungunmerr (2017) as Dadirri or whole body listening.

This practice was continually engaged with throughout the data analysis process. For example, I would have the audio files playing while I was coding the transcripts in NVivo, or I would sit down and do some painting while listening to the young peoples' stories, and this ultimately informed my sense-making. Rinehart (2021) highlights this step as 'taking your time' and not being pressured by the haste or urgency of academic work to swiftly code, determine themes and categories, which can potentially cut or remove or shift meaning from the intention of the participant/s yarns. Taking time gives the researcher space to question their own knowledge, assumptions, to have a scrutiny of the evidence, whilst creating opportunity for new ideas to emerge and be considered to a point of reconciliation and validity (Rinehart, 2021).

After this initial coding through both physical annotation, use of NVivo and creative methods, I started grouping the codes under common areas that were reflective of how I made sense in relation to the research questions and how this was reflective of the young peoples' stories. At this point, where the grouping of codes was meaningfully engaged with, I was able to develop three distinct storied areas from the young peoples' yarns, with sub-stories emerging to deepen each story presented. This preliminary grouping work was presented to the supervisory team, with excerpts from the young peoples' yarns, evidencing my sense-making in relation to their voices, which were then discussed in length. The discussions were often framed around obligation, the ceremony, the intent for research, the young peoples' stories and how all of this made sense in relation to the broader field of study.

After these stories and sub-stories were confirmed by the team (supervisors and myself), I presented them to the young people, highlighting to them in our correspondence that I had developed these storied areas and sub-stories from our yarns. This was a positive experience for both them and me, as collective researchers; it affirmed that the process was on track and that we had achieved our obligation to the sense-making and truth telling of our planned intentions from the beginning. As per ethical approval and participant permission, I presented these storied areas across the community, only showing the grouped stories and sub-stories with no-identifiable information. This was shared broadly in both physical and online spaces, such as the advisory committee, external advisory committees and online presentation run and led by Gamilaroi knowledge holders. After these confirmatory activities were complete, I commenced the write-up of each chapter, with each story having its own chapter. These are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Research ethics and ethical considerations

For a research study involving humans, ethics approval is vital and requires a rigorous review of the aims, intentions, relationships, and overall methodology of the research ceremony. Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) play a vital role in the Australian system of ethical oversight of research involving humans as they help to ensure ethically acceptable methods as part of the research process (National Medical Health and Research Council (NMHRC), (2007).

When conducting research with and by Aboriginal people, in addition to addressing the NHMRC principles it is necessary to recognise the long legacy of harmful research conducted on Aboriginal people globally and within Australia (Smith, 2021; Williams et al., 2021). I have further considered the AIATSIS Code of Ethics principles as part of this research ceremony. These principles are in addition to above discussion presented in relation to Cultural Governance and embedding an Indigenous research agenda.

The following four principles from the NHMRC and AIATSIS for ethical research are described below.

AIATSIS Principles

Indigenous self-determination

Recognition of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to self-determination is fundamental to all research conducted in Australia (AIATSIS, 2021). That included the upholding of Aboriginal peoples' right to be informed about this projects' aims and intent. The use of knowledge appropriate guided by knowledge holders in community and the ongoing relationships embedded as part of this ceremony. This included the recognition of Aboriginal peoples' diversity and differing perspectives and worldviews and how it is meaningfully considered as part of the research ceremony. This was considered as part of the young peoples' rights to choose to consent and in being open and honest about the consent process, the withdrawal process and what would be done with their knowledge once it was shared. As part of the recognition of young peoples' diversity, the research process used an open yarning format to allow space and room for the young people to consider their multiple viewpoints as part of understanding historical trauma. That includes recognition of the impact of colonisation on their access to cultural knowledge and associated traumas. Throughout the ceremony, I have meaningfully engaged with Aboriginal people part of my community and have shared the ceremony intents and aims widely to ensure, that even though I am part of my community, I as a researcher am accountable alike all people as part of my community.

Indigenous leadership

Aboriginal research should be led by Aboriginal people, include genuine decision-making responsibility by Aboriginal people, and be informed by Aboriginal values, priorities, perspectives, and voices (Rigney, 1999). As part of this research ceremony, the Aboriginal Research Advisory committee has guided this project throughout its entirety, including the guidance and governance of Senior Elder Uncle Neville Sampson. In addition to this localised process, the larger ARC project is governed by Aboriginal woman, professor, nurse, and midwife Rhonda Marriot. As part of this two-leadership process, and to ensure the research was reflective of the priorities of my community and the needs and values of young people, I employed ongoing widespread community dissemination strategies to ensure participants and community members were continuously informed of the aims, intents, and processes of this research ceremony. This included having open and honest conversations with concerned community members including the intent of the outcomes of the research. This has been reflected throughout, including in the presentation of results, authorship of community contributions and acknowledgement of the ongoing ceremonial relationships. Additionally, I advocated for a senior Aboriginal researcher as part of my supervision team, to offer both academic and cultural advice. In addition, my supervision team as whole has always been constantly reflective of ensuring the needs and priorities of my community were authentic, including the recognition and pushing back of deadlines as part of the academic systems.

Impact and value

Research ethics is founded on the shared understanding of benefit, impact, and value of the research project. As part of ethical and community approval, ongoing investment regarding the establishment of authentic relationships within my community was crucial through this ceremony. Often the benefit of the research is discussed openly by community members as almost a way to ensure the research intent and value was not placed within the academy/personal agendas, but within the community. As part of the consent process, or pre-consent, young people were spoken to about the project after developing rapport and trust.

Using a yarning approach, prior to consent and during collection, and remaining open to the intent and aims of the project allowed me to be guided by the questions asked by the young people regarding what the meaning of their story being shared meant. This included being open about the intention for dissemination in traditional academic formats and community knowledge translation projects.

Sustainability and accountability

Respect and recognition of the diverse world views of Aboriginal people is about understanding the impact of the research long after completion of the project. That includes both a present- and future-focused mindset as part of the ceremony, including recognition and navigation of the use of cultural knowledge and language through a lens that is informed by the community members responsible for its use in the ceremony. Due to the varying viewpoints and life experiences of the many Aboriginal people who were part of this ceremony, this would involve multiple discussions with different knowledge holders about the use of cultural knowledge and language, including how a decolonial lens can be applied to ensure use of such knowledge is not at risk of being used in the future for the wrong or potential harmful ends.

NHMRC Principles

Autonomy

A plain participant information sheet was provided and explained in full prior to consent. Young people were informed that their identity would be protected throughout this process and they would be assigned a pseudonym. Verbatim quotes and were used only if they contained no identifiable information. Additionally, prior to data analysis the young people had an opportunity to remove, change or adapt their transcript. Ethical approval was sought to do this and is commonly employed strategy in qualitative and Indigenous research (Kovach, 2010). They were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. All young people were given their transcript for review; one confirmed they were happy with the transcript, one adapted their transcript by removing identifiable information and expanding on their original thoughts; all other participants were aware of their transcripts being used and were happy with that.

Beneficence

The young people received a full explanation explained of benefits and purpose of their participation in the research process. The analysis and representation of their stories were further highlighted to them throughout the research process and opportunity was given to them at each stage to dialogue with me, including early stages and during the write-up and dissemination of the study. They were also informed of the Aboriginal Research Advisory committee's role through the project and were made aware of the advisory committee Facebook page, where relevant updates were provided for their information.

Non-maleficence

The 'do no harm' principle was embedded in every aspect of the ceremony of research. A distress protocol was developed and approved for ethical approval and the young person agreed at time of consent to be contacted by the researcher 24 hours post-interview and one week post-interview to discuss any concerns or distress. As stated previously, only one young person experienced distress and that was resolved after speaking with a family member. A process was developed for managing any distress experienced by either the young people or myself as the researcher. During data collection I attended regular meetings with my supervision team and, despite not having any experiences of distress, the team supported me throughout the whole process.

Justice

Prior to consent, during consent and after consent, young people were made aware of the benefits, their rights, and reasons for participating in the study. If potential participants were informed of the project but did not contact me, their silence was considered to indicate that they were unwilling to consent or participate. Throughout the study, the young people were made aware of every stage of the progress of the thesis, including conference presentations, publications, and opportunities to attend community events focused on the larger ARC project activities. Throughout the process of consent, young people were reassured that at any point in time, they could withdraw without repercussions, and that I would support them through this process.

Ethics approval

This project sought human research ethics approval at the University of Technology Sydney; a level 3 application was submitted (High risk, due an Aboriginal population focus). The project further sought approval from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) NSW branch. This process includes a rigorous process of answering a 5-question impact statement specifically focused on self-determination and Indigenous research principles. It is also Included evidence of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation support for the study, reference group names and contact details and project members' experience (CV) and description of their experience with conducting research similar to the proposed project. UTS ethics approval was granted on 26 November 2020 and AHMRC ethics approval was granted on 16 February 2020.

Data collection took place between April 2021 and December 2021. Ethics approval for a variation was sought in March 2021 to allow for data collection to be undertaken via tele/video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data management

During the study, all research artefacts (audio recorded consent, audio recording of interviews and interview transcripts) were stored in compliance with the University of Technology Sydney's Data Governance Policy, which complies with the Australia Code for Responsible Conduct of Research. The following measures were enacted to protect the privacy of participants: the transcripts were stored on a drive at UTS in a password-protected file only accessible to the research team; all transcripts were given a number and a pseudonym; all identifiable information in the transcripts was removed; and no physical copies were kept of the transcripts (when transcripts were printed for data analysis, this was after the identifiable information was removed. After analysis, they were destroyed in a privacy locked bin at the university. All consents were recorded due to the interviews taking place via video/teleconference. Consents were extracted from the original transcripts and the consent process has no identifiable information within the process as per the verbal consent process.

Supporting documents

The following table provides an overview of the list of forms and resources developed, submitted, and approved as part of the ethics approval process. Copies of all documents are provided in Appendices 2 to 7.

Table 4. Ethics approval documentation

Name of documents	Description	Appendix
UTS Approval	Email for UTS Research Officer Approval	2
Participant Consent and Information Sheet	Contains participant information and consent sheet.	3
Yarning Guide	Yarning guide for interview process.	4
AHMRC Approval	Approval letter stating my PhD project sits under the ARC approval.	5
Distress Protocol for participants and researchers	Protocol for distress and support information for participants.	6
Verbal consent script	Revised consent process because of COVID-19.	7

Chapter summary

This chapter has provided the reader with an understanding of the methods used in this study. This includes the integral role of the Aboriginal Research Advisory committee in this project through all stages, from early design and recruitment through to sense-making and dissemination. This chapter gives the reader a thorough understanding of how each component of the method was enacted and how it was reflective of the chosen methodology, aligning with the original intention for the research to be guided by a research agenda and the notion it being a ceremonial process and the obligations held throughout. This includes an Indigenous method of data analysis, through multiple formats including artwork, poetics, and written explanation of the chosen method. Finally, the chapter presents the rigorous ethical approval obtained to ensure the young peoples' rights, roles and reasons behind their participation was at the centre of inquiry.

The next chapter is an intermission chapter that presents a work created as part of the sense-making process of understanding historical trauma with Aboriginal young people. Additionally, it provides a summary of information about the Aboriginal young people who participated in this study.

INTERMISSION

Chapter overview

Within this chapter, I present a creative work as part of the sense-making journey I have taken to understand historical trauma and resilience with Aboriginal young people. Prior to presenting this piece of work, I draw attention to and focus on the relationships that have informed this ceremony. Additionally, I provide an overview of the young people included in this study and some unidentifiable information pertaining to their location and connection to the Gamilaroi Nation.

Within this ceremony of research, I have drawn on the relationships that have informed my knowing, being and doing throughout. These relationships include people who have guided me, through both the gnawing anxieties and celebrations. But it has also included other entities, both living and non-living.

Before I begin to show you what the young people in this study shared with me about their perspectives of historical trauma, I want to return purposefully to these relationships; by bringing attention to them, I honour them and acknowledge that in many ways this not just my story, but also theirs.

I will now present these relationships in a story format. I have already told you some of these stories, but now I will complete them and position them purposefully in this thesis. After presenting these stories and the relationships they have to this ceremony, I will then share an artwork I created as part of my sense-making process of understanding historical trauma among Aboriginal young people. The artwork is titled: 'winanga-li – relationship to love and hope' (Figure 9). I have worked on this painting since 2021 and started it initially share the beauty and love I have for the relationships I have with living and non-living entities in this ceremony of research.

The rock – Little Wave Rock

Little Wave Rock is the first image presented in this thesis (see Figure 1). Little Wave Rock is in the foothills of the Moore Creek Ranges, about a 40–50 minute drive from Tamworth.

When I first started working on a project with Uncle Nev, he took me out on Country to see this place. Overwhelmed initially, I remember almost crying about the story that this rock had for the local people of the Gamilaroi nation. A place of gathering, connection, and ceremony.

As highlighted previously, I went through most of my adolescent and young adult life not really connecting to what it means to be Aboriginal beyond just what we were told and stereotyped as.

Laid out for all to see, you arrive at the rock and its expansive nature as it sits across the landscape is mesmerising. From afar, you can imagine how it got its name. The formation looks like the massive waves you would see on saltwater Country, that come crashing down onto the sands. Up close, you have another perspective; you feel the roughness of its surface and see the tiny living mosses and grass spread out over its hardened surface.

Metaphorically, this rock for me shows our lasting and continued connection as the Gamilaroi peoples that have always been here. While our experiences and representation within wider society seem almost at times absent or forgotten, places like Little Wave Rock reflect our belonging and our continued connection to our mother, our guni ma. The presence of this rock reflects the presence of our connection.

The Tree – ‘the hope tree’

I first made mention of the tree in Chapter 1, sharing a story of hope and hopelessness. In Chapter 3, again I made mention of the tree, and the story I am bound to tell a story about our hope, love and dreaming.

Many years ago, when I first started hanging out with Uncle Nev, he would take me to several different places around our Country that tether our stories to a time before colonisation. In one of these places, a tree located within a school that holds much history for Uncle and his family, a tree was going to be removed and cut down. I am not sure why, but I believe it had something to do with landscaping or some other reason with the school’s system. It was almost removed, cut in half, but prior to the completion of removing the tree, Uncle Nev’s son rang him and said, ‘Dad you got to come have a look at this tree, it has an old scar on it and I don’t want it to be removed’. Uncle tells me that quickly got in his car and went to the school where his son was working and ensured the tree was not removed.

Years later, when new visitors would come to town and want to go out on Country with Uncle, he would always make sure we drove down the road the tree faces, telling them the story of how he and his son saved that very tree.

A few years on, roughly 18 months into my thesis journey when my husband and I were looking for a place to buy, the house across the road directly facing this tree was up for sale. After some negotiations we were able to buy the house. Although I knew of Uncle Nev’s story about the tree and would share the story with family and friends who dropped by, the ‘hope tree’ and I did not really develop a relationship until about two years ago. This was during a time when I had lost someone close to me who no longer could see hope. Unfortunately, this is a story defined by whole way of being and the message that I was ontologically tied to, about the risk of going down a path of hopelessness.

The tree and I have yarns now, and in many ways, it has taught me many things about who I am and who I aspire to be. Even when we sit and acknowledge our trauma, if a tree could be cut in half and almost destroyed, we can carry on; we just need hope moving forward.

Above the tree line,
In a place called little wave rock,
Whispers bellowing, the skies dreaming.
A tree survived, scarred.
A scar of time, everywhen,
A day, a moment, a breath,
These places mark us,
A resting home is here for all of us.
On Country, a source for life, watching us, with us.
To ensure we care, whilst her branches march for the sky.

Poetic Transcription 7, 'Remembering our story' (R. Smallwood, 2023)

The Sky

Reflects the growing and learning journey I have undertaking in understanding Gamilaroi spirituality, a spirituality that considers the creator, our mother, and the metaphysical world around us. Over the course of my thesis journey, I have also sat and dealt with grief, and acknowledging Aboriginal concepts of spirituality has brought me peace in times of great distress and loss, remembering that our spirits who no longer walk with us here physically still stay with us, just in different ways and messages. The spiral configurations reflect the growing and learning journey I have been on as part of my epistemological understandings of knowledge being placed in Country (see Chapter 3, section Knowing/know).

Magpie

The magpie is my chosen personal totem, to which I am connected to as an Gamilaroi murri yinarr. As a result of colonisation, our totems, or our skin groups were mixed up and muddled. The passing down of our totems ceased for many of our disconnected mob. In the artwork you will notice that she is upside down; this is to reflect that sometimes the world we live in just does not make sense. Moving beyond just being troubled by this loss of our cultural knowledge and place, I yarned with some knowledge holders about different experiences I have had with the magpie and asked if I could affiliate myself with being a magpie (personal) totem. Although not a traditional totem, in addition to the stories I have told, the magpie also reflects the story my mum and dad have given me, one that is both black and white.

The person

Understanding of ourselves being part of Country, placed in a relationship that considers us equal to all living and non-living entities, the woman in this artwork reflects the connection we continue to have despite colonial disruption, reminding us to find places of quiet, still awareness and peace through the journey of knowing.

The Spirits

Behind the tree, our spirits and ancestors remain there with us always. Recognition of our spirituality and the connection with the spiritual world reminds us that we are always accountable for our action always.

The absent coolamon

In Chapter 1, I shared a story of a young baby being birthed, and through that process of birthing the coolamon holds us in the safety of our family and Country. As we move through life, these practices from prior to westernisation of birth practice ensured we remained tethered and accountable to Country. The absence of the coolamon in this artwork draws on the metaphorical nature that this ceremony has recognised as part of carrying our hope and love for our futures – even if sometime is hard to find in moments in moments of stress and despair.

The artwork

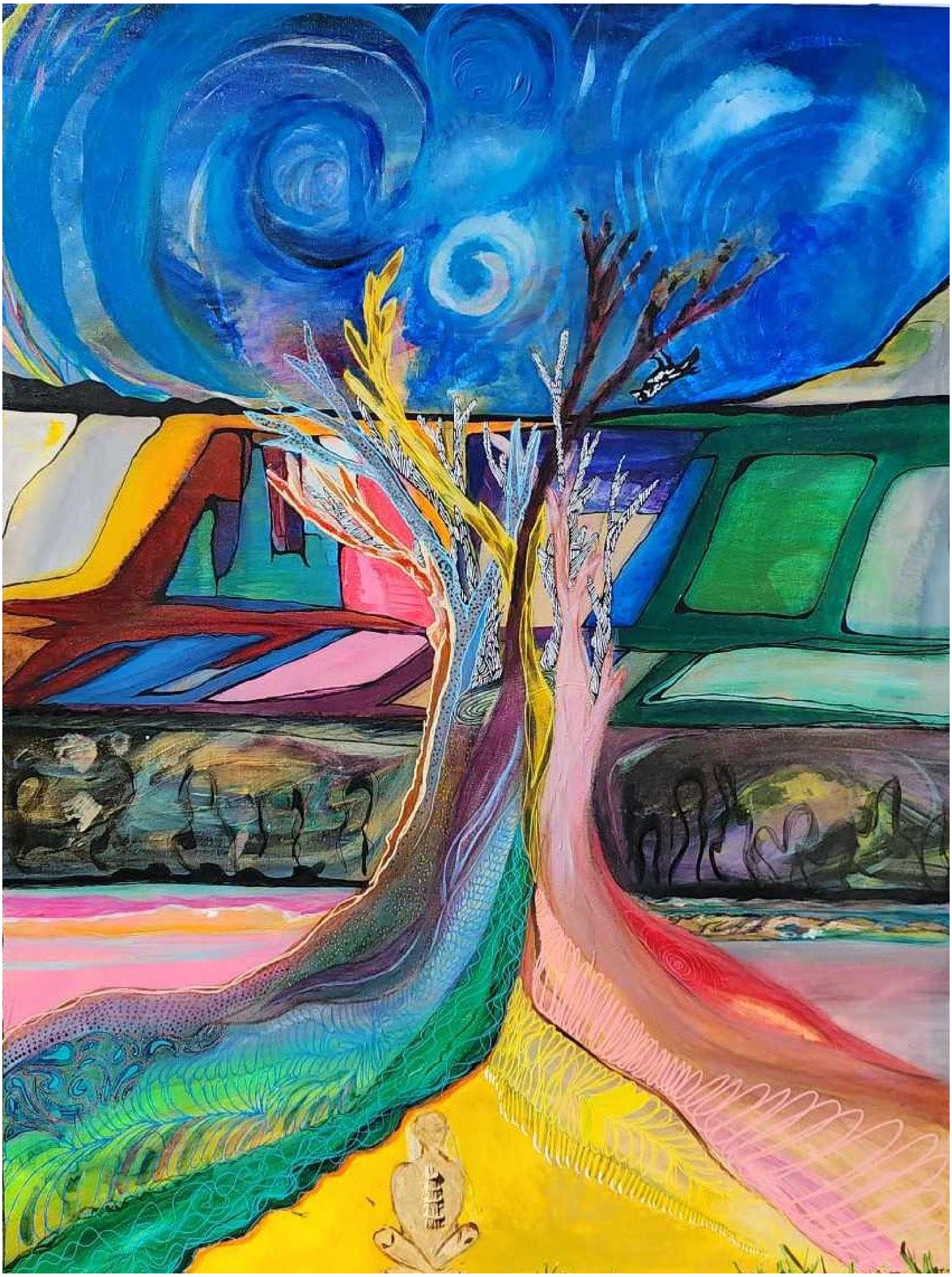

Figure 9. ‘winanga-li – relationship to love and hope’ (R. Smallwood, acrylic on canvas, a work

in progress, 2023)

Young people in the study

The young people in the study were aged between 18 and 24 years at time of interview; however, I did not collect any demographic data and focused instead on their journeys. The young people consented to be represented by a chosen pseudonym that aligned with their chosen gender. A summary of de-identified profiles is provided below to give context of the young people and their stories.

Miri is a Gamilaroi woman from the rural site of the ARC. Miri recently left her hometown to study at an urban university and at the time of interview was in her first year of her undergraduate studies. Miri is still connected to the rural study site as her family and friends continue to live here.

Pearl is a Gamilaroi woman from the rural site of the ARC. Pearl had not lived in the community for a few years, living in an urban setting to complete an undergraduate degree in teaching.

Essie is a Gamilaroi woman from the rural site study site. At the time of interview, Essie had just moved from the community and was living in a rural city while completing an undergraduate degree. Essie has recently commenced working in an urban setting within the healthcare sector.

Rachel is a Gamilaroi woman lived in an urban setting. Rachel's family are from the rural community and return on a regular basis. Rachel is currently undertaking an undergraduate degree in an urban setting.

Anita is an Aboriginal woman who currently lives in the rural community, working within the public healthcare sector. Anita completed her undergraduate degree just prior to data collection and had lived in the rural study site just under 12 months at the time of the interview.

Faith is an Aboriginal woman with connections to the Saltwater people. Faith's family have lived in the rural community for many generations. Faith is undertaking her undergraduate degree and has worked in various support roles in the community.

Mary is a Gamilaroi woman from a rural town near the rural study site. Mary completed her HSC in the rural study site and her family lives in the rural community. Mary is in an urban setting working towards an undergraduate degree, nearing completion at the time of the interview.

Linda is an Aboriginal woman from a rural town near the rural study site. Linda's family have had connections to the rural study site for generations. Linda works in her community in development and support roles.

Brooke is a Gamilaroi woman from the rural study site. Brooke grew up and completed her HSC in the rural site. Brooke completed an undergraduate degree a year prior to yarning with me and works in an urban setting in her field of interest with Aboriginal communities in an urban setting.

Michelle is an Gamilaroi woman who was born and raised in the rural study site. Michelle continues to undertake her undergraduate degree while living in the community. Michelle would like to continue further studies and training after her first degree.

Marcia is an Aboriginal woman who is connected to the rural study site through her connections at her urban university. Marcia has finished her undergraduate degree and is looking towards postgraduate studies in an urban setting. Marcia is connected to the Saltwater people in NSW.

Eleanor is an Gamilaroi woman and her family is from the rural study site. During her early childhood Eleanor lived off Country and at the time of interview recently returned to the rural community. Eleanor is interested in completing her nursing or completing a certificate in a community support field.

James is an Aboriginal man from outside the rural study site. James was connected to the study through another participant from the rural study site through university. James has completed an undergraduate degree and is interested in supporting community-determined support activities as part of the Aboriginal communities that he works within.

Simon is an Aboriginal man who lives in the rural study site. Simon moved to the rural site a few years prior to data collection. Simon works in community support service roles and is passionate about helping Aboriginal communities. He has completed many certificates in education, including certificates in health.

Archie is a Gamilaroi man from the rural study site. Archie at the time of interview shared how he was looking for a job during the COVID-19 pandemic. Archie's family are from the rural community, with most of his family and friends living locally.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented an artwork titled ‘winanga-li – relationship to love and hope’. This artwork honours and remembers the relationships that have informed this research ceremony as part of the journey to understand historical trauma and resilience with Aboriginal young people. Additionally, the chapter gives an overview of the Aboriginal young people who are part of this study, including their relationship to the study site and other information about their stories.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

This chapter is the first of three findings' chapters presented in this thesis. This chapter presents how the young Aboriginal people understand historical trauma, or as it is phrased in this chapter 'Making sense of Historical Trauma'. Within this chapter, their stories guide the reader through how then they define historical trauma in the experiences they have been a part of, or their families or communities have been a part of. This includes how they have experience colonisation and identifiable layers of expressible trauma; they have experienced as loss that at times, has not been expressed explicitly as historical trauma. This evolves into the young people explaining how they define these experiences, in colonised systems and some of the intricacies they have navigated as young Aboriginal people in this contemporary place we now call Australia. This chapter presents one of the first poetic occasion from the findings that was written in reflection to the stories shared by the young peoples' experience of loss, titled 'Within you', a method of researcher-voice or *vox autobiographia*.

Experiencing colonisation

The expressible trauma

Through reflection and deep engagement with winanga-li, an unsettling occurs, an unsettling of the words spoken but not heard, words spoken but not vocalised. Spaces are left over for those that are part of the yarn, to bring out larger stories then the one spoken here within the written (see Poetic Transcription 8). When making sense of colonisation, and, further, when articulating how they understand historical trauma, what is left over in the narratives is the expressible trauma, leaving room for the unspoken sense-making of understanding historical trauma. This unspoken sense-making first comes to light through young people expressing themselves in ways that place them within their narratives, within their stories of the everyday. They define this through experiences of both historical narratives and present-day experiences.

The historical narratives include the impact of the Stolen Generations, slavery, displacement, removal, and loss of culture. Within the loss of culture, a general feeling arouses a form of transgenerational passing of the internalised fear of not being able to hold on to culture and their identity, as something that has occurred because of colonial removal and punishment of culture and its uses in the everyday. 'That you came from such strength and such knowledge, and we had to hide that, and we were made to feel ashamed of that and they were killing us for being that, like how can you not be attached to the trauma?' (James).

The meaning of historical trauma is seen through young peoples' lived experiences, or the passed-on experiences from their family. Faith identifies that she makes sense of the trauma by identifying how her father was impacted by the Stolen Generations and the subsequent result of his family being removed from their culture:

> That's one thing that still makes it trauma. As well, some of the— my dad's generation, he was directly affected by the Stolen Generation and stuff like that. He wasn't allowed to claim his culture otherwise he would have been taken from his family. (Faith)

The present-day experiences are expressed in ways of making sense of historical trauma as a living entity, or as the everyday experience of Aboriginal people in a place we now call Australia. James expressed how he has a continued emotional attachment to these experiences and the continuation of this trauma in his everyday:

> I guess there's a lot of trauma leftover and the more research I do and the more digging I do to find out about my ancestors and to learn about my culture I'm met with a lot of obstacles and barriers and sometimes it - the trauma is really blatant. Sometimes it's like, oh, X, Y and Z physical action happened and that was horrible, and people shut off— people just shut off because of that and then sometimes it's like— it's a lot more insidious and it manifests in the way that people act and it manifests in issues that people have, but they don't know why. (James)

Young people in this study articulate the tangibility of historical trauma. Through interpretation of the stories shared, they make sense of historical trauma to exemplify experiences of trauma. The traumas are not expressed specifically in the context of James' quote, except his belief that the trauma is lived and transmitted in communities.

> Yeah. I couldn't pinpoint one single location. I just know that it's this thing that's just lived and transmitted. You see people from a broken home and then it's like you just expect them to be self-aware enough to be able to identify everything wrong with them and then go and break that cycle in one generation? (James)

Within James' account of making sense of historical trauma, he identified that the trauma is transferred in multiple ways; it is not just about a single point of location. Within his narrative, he sees himself as fortunate; he compared himself to his cousins, who he considered to be not so fortunate:

> You see the way that some of my family— they've like— that's why I'm fortunate to grow up where I am, because my cousins and that are all in jail. They're not doing good. They didn't have good upbringings. (James)

When defining what this trauma means to him, it raises unanswerable questions of how he can see himself as fortunate in relation to his cousins, who were in jail or in the system for issues that he sees as related to the impact of colonisation. These questions leave the reader or writer of these yarns to consider: how does one get lucky or fortunate? How does one assure their upbringing? Further, is luck even a factor in what we are trying to understand about the nature of historical trauma and how young people make their way through the trauma spoken here by the young people?

Miri adds to the making sense of the trauma carried in the community by drawing on her knowledge of colonisation and its impact on people and their parenting. Highlighting how children's negative behaviours in community can be linked to colonisation, she noted:

> She used to get thrown rocks at her place. Yeah, it is a bad community because so— there are bad parents; they've been influenced from the traumatic past of what— the colonisation, so that is why everything is like that is because they are not treated equally. (Miri)

Miri further shifts her understanding of colonisation, traumatic pasts, and parenting to explain how she perceived Aboriginal people in communities being treated differently. She alluded to potential experiences of being spoken to badly about being an Aboriginal person or living in a bad neighborhood, and the passing of trauma generationally through the internalisation of what others have said to young people.

> The things that people say, that gives a traumatic effect on them from all the generations that have been passed down. That— obviously that's going to have an effect on what people have been saying about them and how they're going to take that. It's made them who they have been and who they are today if that makes sense. (Miri)

James and Miri alluded to the complexity of trauma and trauma experiences when understanding colonisation. In relation to the perception of bad parenting, it clearly speaks to what is known about transgenerational trauma and the transmission of trauma from parents to their children because of traumatic experiences. Miri's story adds an additional layer, that within these communities people face potential microaggressions, discrimination, and racism that has further carried through the generations because of colonisation. Miri then expressed how young people are shaped in community by what is said about them and how this can unfold on how they act out their roles and expectations in community.

Faith, like Miri and James, highlighted that 'trauma' is a continued experience in community. She emphasised that mob is not through this trauma yet; this was particularly displayed when Faith spoke about the Black Lives Matters protests in 2020, during the time of our yarn. Faith spoke to this pertinent point in time:

> Reakeeta: How do you think this is passed then? How do you think it continues?
>
> Faith: It's still so significant at the moment because we're not through— I don't think we're really through it. There's a lot of trauma still going on and looking at everything going on at the moment with Black Lives Matter movement, the— yeah just globally that in a— globally it is still a massive issue yeah. That's one thing that still makes it trauma.

To further exemplify this experienced definition of what this trauma is to these young people and how young people see that the trauma is continuing, Miri shared a deeply personal story that, if repeated in detail, would identify her and her family to the community of focus in this study. In broad terms, her narrative accounts for the experience of deep loss of a loved one, a significant cultural leader, where her and her family's voice was unheard and unrecognised by others. This experience made her, and her family, feel weak and disempowered. She related the experience and feeling that not much has changed since colonial power had taken over the lives and rights of Aboriginal people:

> We didn't get a say in it, we didn't get to— we didn't get listened to. It's just like— that's when I realised that nothing has changed. People are still acting like they're king and queen of us, they're in charge of us still and it's like we're weak. (Miri)

Temporarily, Miri and Faith share common frustrations at the notion that 'nothing has changed' and 'I don't think we're really through it'; that we, as a larger collective group of Aboriginal people, are not out the other side of the trauma caused by colonisation. What was empowering about this narrative, despite the experience of deep loss and hurt, is that Miri's motivation for sharing this narrative evolved out of a desire to ensure she was heard and listened to – that she could do her part and speak up about these issues in her family and community. Being acutely aware that as part of her sense making of historical trauma was feeling and knowing the loss of culture through a significant person and how important it was for others to recognise and acknowledge this loss, while capturing this, yet not explicitly identifying the trauma.

> Then that just hit me that we're still beneath them, and it's good that— that's why I wanted to be a part of that. Because… that's what made me be like, okay, I want to talk about it… I was like, this needs to be— someone needs to do something about this. It's just not right. Otherwise, we're going to end up all forgetting, which is not all what I want, at all. No. (Miri)

As though the sharing of these narratives contributed to a reliving of the trauma, Faith, Miri and James articulated the loss here as a devastating consequence of colonisation; the loss and the trauma could be seen as something that the community is still moving through, still trying to make sense of as it relives the trauma day after day. James highlighted that for him and his community, the generational trauma is a constant plague on community. One of these plagues is seen by James as racism, a pervasive weed that can be experienced through the subtly of racism or covert experiences of racism.

> It's always the mob helping the mob and I can always reach out to people, but I guess it's just our ability or inability to deal with that generational trauma and those things that are constantly plaguing us in the community, like racism and— for me it's undercover racism. It's that subtle diet of racism. Like, oh, was that— that felt a bit racist, you know? (James)

This historical and present positioning of this trauma, within the eyes of the Aboriginal young people in this study, draws upon a deep lasting trauma that, although expressible, can be identified in ways that give the reader an 'ah ha' moment of 'like seriously, it is right in front of me'. Yet, when asked, when engaging on a deeper level of hearing the yarns, listening to them over and over, what emerges is the space between words, where most is unspoken, where meaning comes knocking through the silence of loss. Highlighting the (in)expressible, we begin to unpack the multiplicity of the notion of understanding historical trauma as something that requires complex understanding and appreciation of the lived experience of young people within their context. Young people recognise that this trauma is a generational trauma, that they are not through it yet, that even a few more generations of change are needed before people and communities struggle out of the harms caused by colonisation. Recognising the intangibility of the trauma at times requires the articulation of the trauma through the sharing of narratives that are glittered with stories of loss, of fear, of breaking cycles, and of speaking out.

Loss experienced as a result

Building on from the living embodiment of trauma and the experiences to define the expressible, young people articulated the feeling of loss as a result of colonisation and how they understand historical trauma. This loss is expressed as a subsequent outcome of the neglectful practices that occurred during the eras of colonisation, including removal, massacres, and displacement of Aboriginal people. Family and kinship structures were destroyed, people were removed from traditional lands, and traditional and cultural practices were lost, including entire languages. The devastation of the experience of loss is a serious consequence in James' view and this is experienced as an outcome of colonisation. Like Miri and Faith, he feels that we as a population are not through these consequences (traumas) yet.

> That's taking away whole generations of culture. If I haven't been able to learn about my family and I'm not the only one [that] had it happen. There's been so many people, whole families have

> been lost because we just don't know. It's devastating. It has a serious effect on just— it's a national thing. We've lost languages. We've lost full cultures just because of the negligence of colonisation It's still so significant at the moment because we're not through— I don't think we're really through it. (James)

Unpacking the loss experienced is personal for the young people in this study. The loss experienced is not distant but is part of their everyday narratives. Faith expressed that she feels she has missed out on her culture and the cultural and family experiences that are intertwined with an Aboriginal person's identity; Faith feels she has lost this connection. This loss is further explored by Faith as impacting here own social and emotional wellbeing:

> Yeah, very much so I have missed out on culture, cultural experiences, family experiences. Yeah, I think that overall has had a very big effect on my own personal social and emotional wellbeing but also just knowing how much something as little as what's happened to me has affected me. I very much am a strong believer in historical trauma and how it affects. It affects everyone's broader life. (Faith)

Young people, in their stories, connect to the understanding of historical trauma through loss, and how this trauma can be seen as impacting on their physical, mental, social, and emotional wellbeing. Young people see their health as poor, particularly in relation to mental health. When reflecting on the narratives of young people, they see the mental health issues and the wellbeing of their fellow Aboriginal peers and families as something of a crisis.

> I think definitely mental health wise as well. I was just thinking about it. All my dad's side— so my dad's side is Aboriginal. I think honestly, I could say almost all of his siblings have mental health problems… The only people I know are literally people of colour that have… it's just so much more prevalent for sure. (Rachel)

Young people in this study see how the experience of colonisation can be linked to poorer health outcomes for themselves and their families. This is seen as a tangible thing that can contribute to the realisation, that at some point in their lives, they could be faced with impending loss of their own lives, and those of others. James sees how his family history of cardiac disease as something tangible for him, to realise the need to ensure he can finish what he needs to get completed in his community.

> You might be a leader within our family for health and you'll still die of a heart attack at 47, so that's the one thing is the heart health. That's that average life expectancy. We see that in my family. That's a real and tangible thing. That's like I have less time than a white fellow to go and get my stuff done and make progress for my people. (James).

Several of the young people in the study recognise that from the point of colonisation, all the issues faced by Aboriginal people can be attributed to the experience of colonisation, including issues like mental, physical, spiritual, and social health. Mary explains:

> We have diseases and all these kinds of things, mental and physical issues with Indigenous people that were caused and that can be traced back to colonisation because they are the ones who brought it over. I just think that even though it happened over 200 years ago, it still impacts our mental, physical, cultural, and spiritual health today. (Mary)

Mary further identified in her personal narrative how her family was made to live in a colonised world, forced to learn new ways and forget about their culture and way of being. This was expressed as a loss, including how her grandparents are not being able to teach her about her totems or anything about her culture. Totemic responsibilities were historically passed within clan and family groups. Mary expressed this experience on deeply personal level.

> They were made to live in a colonised world and made to learn their ways and to forget about our own. So, our people lived in— me personally, my great, great grandparents couldn't teach me about my totems and couldn't teach me about all these kinds of things because they didn't know themselves because of intergenerational trauma. (Mary).

Some young people experienced the loss as generational transfer, being disconnected and not being able to identify as an Aboriginal person. Marcia, in her story, described how this has resulted in feelings of shame and loss: 'still, within you, have that hurt of the people before you whose identity was denied, and you know that'. Marcia imagines the sadness experienced by people who had to suppress their culture due to colonial practices and interventions. She considers that 'they didn't get to live a full life as who they are, and that culture would have been stronger then while it was being suppressed, and that's sad' (Marcia).

Although these narratives highlight a deep sadness and collective pain, Marcia recognised in her narrative that in society, young people have navigated tensions through embracing identity as a strength. That mob, for identifying is embraced. Yet the 'shame' element attached to colonisation is identified whereby young people now feel shame at not knowing their family histories or not knowing where and who they are from or where or how they are able to identify.

> When being black wasn't really a thing to be proud of, and then so that sort of shame that comes with that, and then how that's handed down and creates a tension for our young people now who— where it's not shame anymore. Yeah, I think that— like, the shame might be gone, but then there's new shame in: oh, well I don't really know my family story and I don't really know where we're from and what our culture is And people feel shame for that, but then also I think

> you do still, within you, have that hurt of the people before you whose identity was denied and you know that they didn't get to live a full life as who they are, and that culture would have been stronger then while it was being suppressed, and that's sad. (Marcia)

Marcia made sense of the trauma that is carried within the body. She expanded on the emotions that are experienced by the carrying of these traumas and how these feelings manifest into deep emotions such as anger, suppression, and sadness. Anger, from Marcia's perspective, is an emotion that comes from acknowledging the true injustices imposed on Aboriginal people because of colonisation and understanding how some peoples' whole identities were lost and taken. Marcia then uses this knowledge to make sense of why some families have leaned towards solutions such as drinking and substance abuse and how this continues generational transmission of trauma:

> Reakeeta: Yes, so that suppression, and do you think, then that suppression or that hurt has then carried through certain elements, or has it then been passed down'?
>
> Marcia: 'Yeah, I definitely think so and I think it's also made people angry to know because now we can look back and see the injustices that were done, and we feel hurt for those before us who experienced that, and then we also feel angry for that because we know it's taken away from them and it's taken away from us. I suppose also for some families those stories, you know, people turn to alcohol and things like that and then that has a very clear intergenerational impact for the next generation and the generation after.

Within you, I am carried
Within you, I am here
Within you
Within you, I do not disappear
I linger, waiting near
Waiting to appear
Within you, you feel doubt,
Within you, you are wanting to shout
Within you I am the hurt that you carry, the demon within, the one that holds YOU ‘account‘
Within you, you feel Shame
Loss
And hurt
Within you.

Poetic transcription 8, ‘Within you’ (R. Smallwood, 2021)

Experiences in colonised systems

Young people in this study made sense of historical trauma, expressing their experiences and their communities’ experiences in the political, justice, educational, and health systems. Pearl painted a narrative of the lack of recognition of the lasting impact that the Stolen Generations has had on people in her communities. This is seen not through the explicit removal of young people themselves, but through the intergenerational flow-on that has contributed to the removal of culture, practices, and identity, or, in her example, how young people rebel against a system that has historically oppressed their cultures and way of life and continues to oppress them in systems such as the judicial system.

> Especially if it was you taken away and you’re robbed of your culture and knowledge, and you were brought up to fear being Aboriginal, you were brought up to fear the white system. Of course, you’re going to teach your children that too. I think that can be problematic in a white world, because therefore a lot of children do rebel against school or the government, and then they end up in the judicial system that’s against them, really. (Pearl)

Pearl as part of her recognition of colonisation, expanded her imagining of what her ancestors have been through and how the transmission of trauma continues in community.

> I'm putting it into such blunt terms, but the rape of an Aboriginal woman which produces children that have to grow up with their mum as some sort of servant or something, which used to happen not too long ago, actually. How is that not going to impact the children of today? Children are still— our young people are still being influenced, because their parents or their parents' parents were taken away— were taken away from them, or they were taken away. They have suffered political damnation as well. They've— we weren't even considered human for a very long time. It's only in the last 50 years or something that that's legally happened. (Pearl)

Pearl further highlighted that not only have Aboriginal people been impacted by colonisation, but from the point of the colonisation the ecosystems of Australia have been 'muddled up', with Aboriginal people and the systems around us having needed to rapidly adapt in order to survive. Through this rapid adaption, Pearl noted the complete change from a traditional system with intact traditional knowledges and practices passed down for thousands of years through initiation and ceremony. This tension of loss of knowledge within the systems is spoken about across the stories of the young people. This tension is further exemplified by the experience being passed down, whereby Aboriginal people have faced an abrupt and chaotic change to our way of life. This has resulted in lasting loss and the flow-on disruption of all systems:

> Like I said, a lot of people don't feel like they know that they're— their identity. They've kind of been robbed of that. How can that not be, I guess, put on their children? How are their children going to grow up feeling, when they see that their parents or their family members, or their community is still suffering from the injustices of the last 200 years? (Pearl)

Linda draws her meaning by understanding the trauma like Pearl, and the impact on communities and parents. She feels that older generations are 'stuck in their ways'. Linda highlighted that often this can be seen as the lasting damage between Aboriginal people and the colony, because of colonial practices such as the Stolen Generations. This has resulted in communities' continuing distrust in the government, which was raised by several young people.

> So, I think the historical trauma from back then, it still impacts very negatively on our relationship with services and especially government organisations, because our own families lived it. (Linda)

Simon drew attention to the justice system and the experience of 'shitty cops', alluding to the systemic issues that are taught through intergenerational experiences. 'You can get told that the stove's hot and then your one interaction with the police is not that good. Then you're left to believe that all your life, I think'. Simon further noted that this issue has possibly worsened in recent times with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with poor trust in the system among communities because of the lasting impact of the Stolen Generations. Due to the nature of pandemic life seems to be changing so quickly, compounded by negative experiences and interactions with the system.

> A virus happens, and you're all stuck inside. Everyone was taken away from their families, or most people, in the Stolen Generation. Then who's to say that that doesn't happen next week? Life changes so quickly. One day it's normal and then the next you're not allowed to go outside. Yeah, so if you're always told that something's bad and then your one experience is bad, you're never going to trust or have a very hard time breaking that, and especially in community services. (Simon)

Linda highlighted that Aboriginal people have varying ways to be supported, like connections with community and family or through accessing services. She noted how the delivery of care is varied, particularly drawing attention to the fact that when Aboriginal people do access supports through the systems, the delivery of care is different to what family and community offer. 'We kind of use our family and our connections to help us, but sometimes it's not enough and we don't access all of the services that are out there to support us like we probably should' (Linda). Linda, in making sense of these experience, highlights that perhaps the cultural acceptability is lacking in these services: 'But I think that also comes down to maybe not enough culturally appropriate access to services and resources as well' (Linda).

Linda suggested that services need to be created to empower young people and build programs that focus on fostering resilience. In her explanation, she drew on experiences where the system has not worked, or the government has chucked money at 'tick-a-box' programs that do not address the needs of our community. Frustrations arise in this moment, because from the way in which these tick-a-box programs evolve, she infers that government is just throwing money at problems, yet communities are still plagued with trauma. Often these programs are funded for the short term, and once the funding is exhausted, the government assumes that communities' issues are solved. Linda highlighted the gap between service provision and the effectiveness of these programs within community in addressing trauma.

> Like us Aboriginal people, we're still living with trauma every day, but we're also getting more trauma inflicted on us each day. So I think the government's chucking money in because they're saying Aboriginal people are the problem and we're sorry for what we did years and years ago, so they tick a box and we'll chuck money into programs that aren't actually beneficial to helping the future, they're just kind of an apology, have some money for six months, 12 months and then

> don't whinge to us that you guys are still the highest crime rate or things like that. (Linda)

Defining the experiences

Young peoples' experiences outside the colonial systems have drawn further on the experiences of the everyday tensions of being Aboriginal in a social world still moving through colonisation. These experiences include being stereotyped for being Aboriginal, and what this means in their lives. They also include the way that non-Aboriginal people in Australia, who were able to settle and own land, had the opportunity to create generational wealth, unlike Aboriginal people, who experienced not being able to own equity, and being paid in sugar, flour and alcohol. Young people in this study identified not only the financial implications of these actions, but how it has had a lasting impact on physical (diabetes, chronic kidney disease) and mental health. Lastly, young people had experienced the hurt of colonisation not being recognised or acknowledged by the wider Australian society. This can be attributed to young people hearing false narratives created around colonisation as 'settlement' and 'peaceful' sharing of land by our people with Great Britain and its settlers. By defining these experiences, young people make sense of historical trauma not through traumatic experiences, but through a lens that considers how colonisation has contributed to their experiences in the present.

Stereotypes of being Aboriginal

Aboriginal young people have experienced what is means to be Black, to be labelled and stereotyped for being Aboriginal. They see this through the placement of labels on them such as being 'freeloaders', not wanting or being able to achieve in higher education, not working, or being classed within the lower socio-economic class in troubled communities. 'I think you are definitely labelled. Like there's a lot of labels get put on us. We're freeloaders. We don't work. I guess that is a massive stigma around being Indigenous' (Brooke).

This is further experienced when criminal activity occurs in communities. Aboriginal young people see and hear stories of Aboriginal people being the troublemakers, especially if young people are from communities that are known to have high rates of crimes and disturbance. Miri shared her experience from her community, which has been stereotyped as a 'bad' community 'It's below the train tracks, it's where I used to live. It's like as soon as you talk to someone today about, if – I live in XXXXX, you're just like, "Oh my gosh; why do you live over there? It's so bad over there." They're judging it straight away' (Miri).

Michelle expanded on this experience, describing how people assume criminal activity has been committed by Aboriginal people in the community.

> I think it puts a stereotype on those kinds of people because when crimes happen, they automatically just jump to Indigenous people are the main cause for stealing and stuff… It would make them feel like they're constantly being targeted and that no matter what they do, they're always going to be to blame. (Michelle)

When making sense of these experiences, and of their understanding of historical trauma, young people draw the links from the days gone past of the expectation of what it means to be Aboriginal and how these attitudes and values have transformed and carried over to the present. This was particularly prominent in the how young people wanted to make change and attend further education.

> I think it's created this stigma or stereotype and it's affecting us as Aboriginal people wanting to succeed in further education. Further education may get better but there's always this stigma around— from— I don't know, from the past, that Aboriginal people can't further their education. (Anita)

On the other side of this labelling, Marcia drew on her experience of being stereotyped by Aboriginal people, making sense of their actions in terms of the lasting stereotypes imposed on Aboriginal people about not wanting to access higher education or employment. In terms of lateral violence in communities due to the experience of oppression and colonisation of Black bodies, Marcia experienced this after attending private school and pursuing higher education, being challenged with not being a 'real' Black person because of her achievements.

> People get caught up with Aboriginal is synonymous with being poor, and that's like, where did that come from? Or it's like, you're not a real black because you went to a private school when there's all these scholarships for— not to go to private schools, but it's like for some reason you can't be successful. Crabs in a bucket-type of stuff. (Marcia)

This was not the experience described by the young people in this study; some, who disclosed that they have lighter skin, note that they are able to navigate the stereotypes because they appear to the wider public as non-Aboriginal. Essie considered that she is 'lucky'; even though her grandma was dark and experienced what it was like to be labelled and stereotyped, Essie was able to avoid this. This was expressed differently by Pearl, who although does not appear Aboriginal, due to having a lighter skin tone, still felt that racism and racialised stereotypes impacted her and created a number of negative emotions within her. These emotions have caused her emotional distress, even from just hearing and witnessing racism within her community. This was particularly targeted at her lived experience of growing up in an area that was considered a lower socio-economic area or 'problem' community.

Financial Impact

Young people in this study understand that colonisation has had not just personal or professional impacts, but also further financial implications for young people through generational wealth. This is seen as non-Aboriginal people historically having the ability to access, claim and own land, creating generational wealth and inequality in an ever-growing capitalist society. James articulated how Aboriginal people, in his experience, historically and currently have not been well equipped to learn how money works and what actual generational wealth looks like.

> What, non-Indigenous have had 250 or 270 whatever years to do it. We can't just do that straightaway. Some people are just not equipped to do it. They haven't been given the same start in life that other people have had when it— not everyone is equal, so there's going to be those social issues that continue; there's going to be those mental issues that continue. (James)

Expanding on a pertinent point that due to the nature of social inequalities, such as housing and financial independence, Aboriginal people potentially still face significant stressors associated with lack of financial freedoms, and these stressors create ongoing issues in community.

Understanding this experience through an equity lens is to understand that Aboriginal communities have a lot of work to do to catch up in building generations of wealth and addressing social inequities. Linda also expressed a view that there is difference in the value of money for Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people; in her story, these differences were noticed by her non-Aboriginal partner. Linda drew on her knowledge of colonial practices that impacted her grandparents and ancestors:

> You can link things, like my partner's always saying that me and my family don't really have— we don't value money, we'll just hand money out or [put] some on the pokies and things like that. But then it's interesting when you actually look back into what happened to our ancestors and stuff and my own grandparents, they weren't ever given a freedom of money. (Linda)

The experience of Linda's forebears being paid in sugar, flour and alcohol is not an uncommon story in communities. Linda's story highlights the implications of colonial actions that can be linked to what we are now seeing in communities with high rates of diabetes, substance abuse, debilitating morbidities, and mortalities in our Aboriginal communities. The acknowledgement of the historical treatment of Aboriginal people, as in Linda's example, can be a way to understand how the legacy of colonisation continues to enfold our communities, and how we understand our lives of being Aboriginal and the implications colonisation has had and continues to have on our health and wellbeing as a population. Linda's drawing attention to these historical interventions raises critical points in continuing how we more broadly within health and wellbeing research, recognise colonisation as a determinant of health and our understanding of colonisation not just as a historical intervention, but something that continues to impact us as Aboriginal people.

Hurt of colonisation not being recognised

Young people recognise the hurt of colonisation, and the lasting pain it has caused people, particularly those who were part of the Stolen Generations. This pain, although personal and reflective in the lived experiences of every Aboriginal person, is not reflected in the wider communities, whether local, state, and national. Amid the Black Lives Matters movement in 2020, young people experienced the hurt of colonisation not being recognised by others.

> With this whole thing that's going on there's a lot of support with Indigenous people at the moment going you're part of this movement too. But there's also a lot of vile people going around going, oh what are you mad at? Like that was in the 1700s. Those sorts of things I feel I can very much. (Essie)

This impacted on a personal level through experiences of hurtful, ignorant people telling young people 'get over it' or 'it's in the past', or the former Prime Minister Scott Morrison diminishing our continued experience of surviving colonisation. Young people in this study spoke directly to what Mr Morrison had said and how he had disregarded Australia's violent colonial history.

> Well, look at how the Prime Minister's saying right now, he's saying that there was no genocide. I'm pretty sure he's saying, oh, we didn't have a violent history and that Indigenous people didn't suffer. Are you serious? (Mary)

Young people also experienced this in spaces where they were learning alongside their peers, with the trauma and experiences of colonisation disregarded by both teachers and students in the young peoples' classes. Miri reflected that this was a sad experience, and it was through her mum sharing the true knowledge of colonisation that she was able to see how little has changed.

> It was really sad. When mum made me realise where— my people don't even— I used to think everything was fair, everything was equal. This was when I was younger but then I was like, we're still living in this world though they don't treat us very well. (Miri)

Essie had experienced in how her teacher spoke about Aboriginal people in the classroom and how their lack of care impacted on her peers in her class.

> Once again, schools did teach about Indigenous things but it was like they didn't care what they

> were teaching about so it gave the effect that, "oh well, if they don't care why should I?" So I feel like a lot of kids just don't care. (Essie)

Not learning our true histories

Young people saw learning the true history of colonisation as something that is absent from, fabricated or skimmed over in the school curriculum. Some of the participants spoke about learning about the true history of colonisation in early adulthood, often when they were working towards higher education. Rachel highlighted that the true, abhorrent history needs to be shared with people from a young age, across both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. 'I think it's important when you're young to learn about the harshness of it. Because when you're a kid, you hear about bad things and go that's awful. That's so bad. But I don't think kids understand colonisation' (Rachel).

Pearl further expressed the view that due to not learning about colonisation until later in life, she was not able to identify or draw from her culture, something that she now considers foundational in her life. She was not taught about genocide, or massacres and the lasting impact colonisation has had on our communities. 'I knew I was Aboriginal. I knew that, but I never really knew what it meant until recent years' (Pearl).

Mary highlighted through her sense making that she felt not learning this at a young age impacted the cultural knowledge she could have accessed earlier in life, including cultural activities that act as a conduit to understanding culture's larger role in Aboriginal young peoples' lives. What was foundational for Mary to learn about her culture and her identity, was engagement with the activities available to her as an Aboriginal student in the higher education setting. Mary further expanded on the absence of our histories in her schooling years, expressing frustration at how this negatively impact Aboriginal children today.

> It is a big thing still now because there's protests and initiatives and articles all about how Australia doesn't have any Indigenous studies specific to Indigenous people. They don't have those support systems; they don't have that— they're not giving us that education on our history. But I think it's definitely got an impact. It doesn't impact negatively, but it doesn't— it strays away from the fact that we're not learning about our own history. (Mary)

Young people spoke about the tension during education and their formative years of learning about the richness of other cultures, while Aboriginal culture and history was portrayed as inadequate or lacking compared to western cultures. Mary highlighted that in her school they often would refuse to recognise the strength and innovation of Aboriginal people and their systems in maintaining our way of life prior to colonisation. Mary highlighted:

> They won't talk about how we used to farm our lands before they came here. They won't talk about how we used to have our own way of life and how we used to live, but they always throw it in our face, you wouldn't have this, and you wouldn't have that. But we still have our own way of life and they're too busy teaching us about others. (Mary)

Miri added that when learning about colonisation, the teachers and the history books emphasised that colonisation 'was a peaceful settlement' and 'everyone is alright now'. Miri added to the complexity of these narratives, highlighting how most of what has been written about our colonial narratives is from the perspective of non-Aboriginal Australia, alluding to the need for Aboriginal young people to hear Aboriginal peoples' perspectives on colonisation.

> The book was written by white people so it's like we don't even have the same from an Aboriginal person, an Indigenous person. We don't have that view or opinion. We never got to see those views from Aboriginal people. We watched white videos, white people talking about it when we don't even have the perspective of the people who were being taken over. (Miri)

Miri related how, after she had learnt this at school, she went to her mum about this experience of learning about colonisation. Miri's mum informed her that the history presented to young people in school is often distorted, untruthful and unrepresentative of Aboriginal peoples' perspectives. Miri shared. 'I've learnt the wrong thing. It has definitely put trauma onto my life, and I have heard of it but not in the right way'.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has uncovered how Aboriginal young people understand historical trauma through looking at the historical and present-day experiences of colonisation. This includes expressions of tangible loss, drawing attention to the Stolen Generations and removed family members that resulted in widespread loss of identity, loss of cultural practices, and loss of languages. This loss and subsequent traumas were articulated by some of the young people as a continuing experience of colonisation; they expressed this in describing how they see the colonial systems continuing to oppress and subjugate Aboriginal people. These accounts were then deepened by the young peoples' stories describing their everyday defining experiences, such as being stereotyped and labelled, while wider Australia continues to ignore colonisation and the truth of this experience for Aboriginal people in the present.

The next chapter is the second findings chapter as part of thesis; it includes a published article on Aboriginal young peoples' expression of identity in terms of understanding historical trauma and the impact of colonisation.

CHAPTER SIX

Chapter overview

This chapter presents one of the findings from yarns with Aboriginal young people, which sought to understand how they define historical trauma, its impact on their lives, the lives of their families and communities, and how they see communities overcoming these impacts. This chapter incorporates a paper published in *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. Titled ‘Expressions of identity by Aboriginal young peoples’ stories about historical trauma and colonisation within the Gamilaroi Nation’, the paper explores how identity has been expressed by young people in varying states, dependent on the spaces they engage in and the interactions they have in these spaces. It identifies four forms of identity: 1) Disrupted identity, which is expressed as historical fear of identifying and tension between identifying and disconnection; 2) Conflicting identities, expressed as the experience of gatekeeping by others and living in the middle; 3) Questioning one’s identity, what it means to be Aboriginal, seeking to affirm your identity and the experience of imposter syndrome; and 4) Blooming identities and how young people draw strength from trauma regarding their identity, empowering others to do the same or finding their identities and accepting others in community through the journey of identifying. This chapter presents the second poetic occasion from the findings that was written in reflection to the stories shared by the young peoples’ experience of identity, titled ‘This is fine’, a method of participant-voice or *vox participare* was used. See Appendix 1 to read this piece or use the QR code below to listen.

Title of Article:

Expressions of identity by Aboriginal young peoples' stories about historical trauma and colonisation within the Gamilaroi Nation.

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Title

‘Expressions of identity by Aboriginal young peoples’ stories about historical trauma and colonisation within the Gamilaroi Nation’

Abstract

On the grounds of the Gamilaroi Country, young Aboriginal people yarned with an Aboriginal woman about historical trauma as a result of colonisation. Data analysis or sense-making of the yarning transcripts was achieved through the emphasis of placed-based meaning by using a Gamilaroi practice called winanga-li. Analysis was strengthened by the use a of an abductive analysis from a standpoint that is reflective of Country. Young Aboriginal people expressed historical trauma through their understandings of how it has impacted on their identity. Their experiences of identity are fluid and ever-changing and the way they expressed their identity in different spaces can strengthen or unsettle their identities. This paper emphasises how their insights can offer hope and a way forward for future generations guided from within and by connection to County, Culture, Elders and Community.

Introduction

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous (hereafter respectfully refers to Aboriginal people) identity continues to be a widely contest field in Australia and globally (Shay & Sarra, 2021). Despite identity being a well explored and conceptualised field in several disciplines, it is usually conflated with various political ideologies, grounded in Western philosophy and epistemologies (Shay & Sarra, 2021). Highlighting that much of what is known about identity and the expressions of identity in the social, political, cultural contexts for Aboriginal people is outside of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing (Shay & Sarra, 2021). Further, Shay, Brown and Shay (2021) state that the health and education space is saturated with research undertaken by non-Indigenous researchers, often problematising Aboriginal young people, their identities, and their experiences in colonised systems. Rewriting these narratives with Aboriginal young peoples’ voice is crucial (Smallwood, Usher et al., 2022), to do this, research must be conducted by and with Aboriginal people and their perspectives, their voice and the researchers’ obligation to the sharing of their stories with them is crucial (Rigney, 2003; Martin, 2008; Kovach, 2010).

Aim

The aim of this paper is to share the stories from the 15 Aboriginal young people who were co-researchers in a doctorate study. The study aims to understand the impact of colonisation within the historical trauma space. This paper will present one of the three collective stories/findings as part of the doctoral work, about how young people identified historical trauma as expressions through understanding their identities as Aboriginal young people in Australia.

Background

Historical trauma is defined as a collective complete trauma, inflicted on a group of people who share a group identity, being Aboriginal people, who have been impacted by colonisation and despite this, continue to thrive with continued strength, resistance, and sovereignty of being this countries First Peoples. Colonisation and effects on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people have been well-documented across the settler-colonies (Smallwood, Woods et al., 2021). To this author's knowledge, limited Indigenous-led studies have been conducted with, by and for Aboriginal young people. The understanding of historical trauma takes a multi-level approach that considers the individual, family, and community levels (Evans-Campbell, 2008). At each of these levels where there is presence of protective factors that includes a person's connection to their identity, their cultural expression and engagement within their communities as they are defined and imagined (Dudgeon, Mallard et al., 2002; Smallwood, Woods et al., 2021).

Design, methodology and analysis

The methodology is positioned within the Indigenous research paradigm that is built and nuanced on relational ways of knowing, being and doing as an Aboriginal person. This has been done through the use of an Indigenous standpoint (Nakata, 2007; Wilson, 2008), guided by the political use of a research agenda (Smith, 2021). Additionally, the methodology was informed by Indigenous Storywork and the principles of telling of stories in research that align both culturally and ethically to the context of sense-making (Kovach, 2010).

The intended research questions for the doctorate study were:

- What do Aboriginal young people understand by the term historical trauma?
- How do Aboriginal young people perceive the impact of historical trauma on their lives and the lives of their family or community?
- How do Aboriginal young people recognise collective or individual resilience to help

overcome the impact of historical trauma?

The Storywork methodology was further informed by using placed based meaning (Benham, 2007), where story is reliant on relatedness and time, place and space in the methodology. This was enabled by the project being gifted the use of a Gamilaroi word winanga-li by Elder Uncle Neville Sampson (Munro, Brown et al., 2019). Winanga-li means to listen, to hear, to know and to remember. Winanga-li through interpretation of the stories has been both a practice of deep listening and reflexivity to ensure sense-making was reflective and accountable to the amplification of the young peoples' stories, their contexts, and the lived experiences from the researchers (PhD student and young people) (Nicholls, 2009; West, Stewart et al., 2012).

Given the nature of the Indigenous research design methodology and methods, the research worked closely with local Elders, co-researchers (young Aboriginal people) and community members. We would meet to review project aims, methods, analysis, and findings. At the point of storied areas being confirmed, this was shared with no identifiable information included in the sharing process (Kovach, 2010). Additionally, ethical approval was sought from both University of Technology Sydney (REF: ETH20-5373) and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) (REF:1812/21)

To aid interpretation, the stories were familiarised by listening and relistening to stories, then coded using NVIVO v12. After coding using a bricolage approach of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006; Byrne 2022), the transcripts were re-read and audio files were re-listened to, once familiarity was achieved, analysis and stories were formed using an abductive analytical approach to build sense-making to answer the proposed research questions (see Figure 10). This is explained by Rinehart (2021) as an active and interpretive process, where researchers undertake activities to build meaning from which the research data is engaged; this is done so through organisation, labelling, challenging, writing up and contemplating ideas in reflection to the study and the wider field of inquiry.

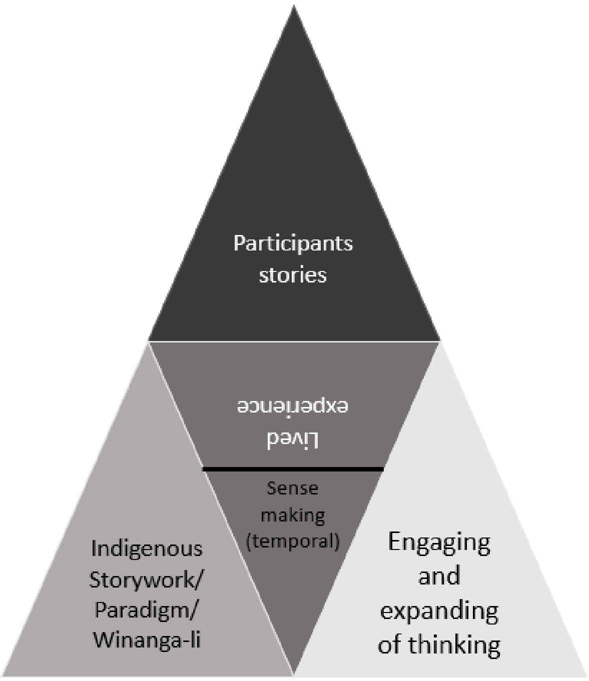
Participants stories
Lived experience
Sense making (temporal)
Indigenous Storywork/ Paradigm/ Winanga-li
Engaging and expanding of thinking

Figure 10: Abductive analysis and data interpretation

Young Aboriginal people and participation in the study

The participants were invited to participate as co-researchers in this study from the rural site, that is within the Gamilaroi Nation and mostly identified as Gamilaroi. The young people all identified as Aboriginal and were aged between 18 to 23 years. Recruitment used a purposive and snowballing recruitment approach between January 2020 and December 2020. Participants who wished to engage in the study were sent information regarding the study and were asked to contact the researcher if they wanted to ask questions or intend on participating. At this time, if participants agreed to participate in the study, they were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time and were given options regarding follow up support. Participants also consented to having their transcript returned to check, so they had an opportunity to remove, expand or clarify on what was said in the interview.

Data collection

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an ethical variation was granted to permit the use of videoconference and teleconference methods to continue to collect participant yarns throughout the lockdown times. The project employed yarning as a method of data collection, a culturally legitimate method (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by an external provider with whom a confidentiality agreement was enacted. During data collection, field notes were collated and used to aid in the process of analysis. After analysis, the Aboriginal young people and community were presented the results and were given opportunity to reflect, question or interrogate sense-making. This is a process of member checking commonly employed in Aboriginal research by and with communities (Kovach, 2010).

Results

From the analysis, four storied areas and eleven sub-storied areas emerged specifically relating to expression of identity in understanding historical trauma as a result of colonisation (See Table 6.1). Quotes from the participants using pseudonyms are included.

Table 6. Storied and sub-storied areas

Storied areas	**Disrupted identity**	**Conflicting identities**	**Questioning your identity**	**Blooming identities**
Sub-Storied areas	Historical fear (from colonial intervention) of identifying	Gatekeeping of identity by others	Questioning what it means to be Aboriginal	Drawing strength from trauma
	The tension of identifying	Living in the middle	Searching to affirm your identity	Empowering others
	Disconnection		Hitting imposter syndrome	Accepting identities

Disrupted identity

Historical fear of identifying

Young people recognise that colonisation and the subsequent interventions such as the removal of children and assimilation practices had an integral role in how Aboriginal people identify today and what it means to identify. This was experienced by the young people themselves, by their families or by their peers. Linking identity to historical trauma was brought forward through the yarns as young people made sense of identity and how it has been shaped by both public and private interventions. For example, public through the removal of children of fairer complexion, known as the Stolen Generations, or private, where families who were able to pass as non-Aboriginal did so, out of fear of removal or intervention from colonial practices. They see this as a trickle-down effect of colonisation where the fear of identifying at times surpassed the desire to publicly identify as Aboriginal. James articulates ‘There was— people who are black, like visibly black, stopped identifying, because it was just easier to be white, because they were getting killed and treated like animals. It was— you know what I mean?'

These experiences shaped how these young people navigate their everyday lives and how they currently identify. Essie, Simon, and Faith all experienced discovering they are Aboriginal in their adolescence. Faith explains for her, this was an identity crisis, where she felt it impacted on her wellbeing 'I very strongly think that it significantly affects our overall wellbeing. I personally very much think so. I didn't actually find out that I was Aboriginal until I was 12, 13. So I went through a bit of an identity crisis about 13, 14 and I had no idea what was going on. It took me probably two or three years to wrap my head around'.

Essie shares her experience of the ingrained fear passed from her nan's experience of her children being taken:

> As I said I went most of my life— not most of my life— until high school without acknowledging being Indigenous because my nan thought it was to be shamed upon because her mum was like, we are Italian. We can't be Indigenous. You'll get taken away if you're Indigenous. Had that ingrained in my nan's head. I wasn't raised with all the community based and the connection to land and all that. I feel like I did miss out. But I have this unique look on it if that makes sense.

Marcia and Brooke highlight that because of this historical disruption, a shame of what it means to identify is entangled with emotions that shake or unnerve people emotionally 'disconnected or unsettled in any sort of way then that creates— yeah, it just rattles things and then they get handed down to you (Marcia)'. Marcia has seen people who have been questioned or threatened regarding their identity which has put their wellbeing at risk, particularly when peoples' identities are rejected or threatened by other peoples' opinions 'Because if people tell someone that they don't belong, that immediately unsettles you and it's not— that's harder to move past'. Brooke identified that due to the nature of the Stolen Generations, not having connection to community and Country can affect the mental health of people who are lost and unsure of how they identify. She articulates the tension of both connected and disconnected mob, 'I think people who don't have connection to community though feel it a lot worse than say I would or others who have strong ties with their community'.

Disconnection

The experience of disconnection was spoken about by the young people as something of a loss, of not having enough connection, or community to strengthen their identity. Young people feel the tension of being brought up believing they are not Aboriginal, then later finding out they are Aboriginal. Reconnecting is challenging for young people, particularly in making sense of how they identify and what it means to identify within their present day lives. In Simon's story, he recounts finding out his identity after his nan died, the pain of losing his nan is exemplified through the experience of disconnection and loss of identity for himself; it has caused ripples in his family relationships with his father, aunty and uncles who do not claim their identity out of shame. Highlighting the ongoing experience of disconnection and its impact on his life, Simon said:

> My nan never mentioned it all. She only left letters when she passed. Really big divide in our family because me and my sister feel like it's something not to be ashamed of, whereas the rest of the family chooses not to acknowledge it at all and just play on… if I had more connection or if she was still alive… (Simon)

For Simon, and for many of the young people who have identified later in their adolescent years, the tangible experiences of disconnection are further politicised and emphasised in the process of obtaining acceptance through 'Confirmation of Aboriginality' at a local Aboriginal land's council level. This confirmation process requires community acceptance of identity, in addition to self-identification and evidence to support this for validation of family ties to a specific community/place. Simon links this disconnection to his experience of not being able to obtain confirmation of Aboriginality 'personally trying to join and land council and then you realise that you can't really be accepted into a community where you don't know. Then that's where self-validation comes in. Then that whole business comes through.'

Michelle shares her insights of always identifying through her mum, but still experiencing disconnection by never really knowing her ancestors or country:

> Michelle: Well, my family, we've got no proof or no actual documentation proof— well, me and mum don't, to prove where we come from and stuff like that. We don't have, you know, it's a lot of work to go back and find that cultural line.
>
> Reakeeta: So, what does that mean for you?
>
> Michelle: Well, it means that part of our family, like we don't know where they are, where they ended up. You know, we don't completely know the extent of where we completely came from.

Tension of identifying

The tension of identifying was experienced by the young people in this story as having a historical narrative of what identity means to them and how this has shaped the way in which they identify today. Rachel expresses the tension of her family, where her father and herself identify, but her father's brothers and sister refuse to identify out of what she believes is the ingrained shame around identifying as Aboriginal and of the complexity of understanding identity and what it means to identify; ‘they’re just ashamed. Not only do they have all this trauma from other generations but it’s like they also have this lack of identity, or they think it’s wrong to be who they are. I don’t really understand’ (Rachel).

Pearl adds to this complexity, by reflecting on how this disruption to identity has shaped the way people exist. If they were not taught the generational reasons for identifying, then how does one grasp or regain this understanding ‘That definitely influences how they’re going to be, how they’re going to identify. If they don’t know their family, they don’t know where they come from. How are you supposed to grasp that cultural connection and sense of belonging? You kind of have to start again, in a way’ (Pearl).

Within Pearl’s account, the tension of identifying is articulated through her understanding of parental beliefs on how their child should identify or not, often out of real or perceived fear of not belonging ‘I’ve spoken to people that have only recently started identifying as Aboriginal, because their parents told them not to, because it— they would be excluded, that they wouldn’t fit it’ (Pearl). Pearl in her sense making believed this has been influenced by the historical actions and consequences for people identifying as Aboriginal such as the removal of Aboriginal children from classrooms at non-Aboriginal parents’ request. ‘I think before 1973, I think, if you had an Aboriginal student in your classroom, and a white student or white family said that they didn’t want that Aboriginal student there, that Aboriginal student was removed from education’ (Pearl).

Conflicting identities

Gatekeeping of identity by others

Young people sense there is a tension to live across two spaces and this is reflected in how they identify. This tension grows from others’ expectations of how they identify and attitudes towards their choice to identify as Aboriginal. Simon shares tension from working with people who disrupted his Aboriginal identity,

> saying that you’re claiming and then, oh yeah. How— you’re supposed to be Caucasian. You’re supposed to be white. I don’t know why you’re defending people. It’s not like you’re that Aboriginal yourself. I think people only want to change when they want, so I’ve let them know how it makes me feel’ (Simon)

Rachel shares an experience of her identity and how she feels she is not black enough to enter into a black space, which raises this concept of gatekeeping of Aboriginal identity of others, including gatekeeping yourself and your own expectations on whether you should identify, including the colour of skin ‘I feel like going in I was like oh god, I don’t really look Aboriginal, I’m going to go into this mob and they’re all very clearly Aboriginal. They’re just going to be like why the fuck are you here?’ (Rachel). This experience highlights how the judgement of others can be internalised, creating a conflicted identity or conflicting view of what it means to be Aboriginal.

Marcia, in her sense making around identity shares the tension of young people living in an Aboriginal community and being accepted and embracing Aboriginal heritage, only then to then return home and not feel accepted or embraced by their family for identifying. Marcia raises ‘That’s like all sorts of peoples’ identity, like people who are LGBTQI. It would be hard to be so comfortable in that and then to not be accepted by your family. I think it’s a similar sort of idea’ (Marcia).

The tensions and complexities raised here are from the young peoples’ lived experiences of identity and the conflicting notions of what it means to identify, how people identify and who can identify in the everyday context.

Living in the middle

Young people spoke of living in the middle and walking two worlds, one being Aboriginal and one being non-Aboriginal. Within these two worlds, they are expected to live in the middle to contend with expectations placed on them as actors in society. This experience was identified as risky for the young people in terms of misrecognition of the wider dominant society, and possible repercussions if they choose to identify. Participants highlighted that most people do not recognise or understand the dual roles Aboriginal people enact in their everyday lives and the tension this presents for young people throughout their personal and professional lives.

Linda shares her experience where she identifies in a black space with her community, her family, and her workplace, and where her culture and identity are embraced. Whereas within her white friend group, being fair skinned she is not recognised as a ‘physical‘ black person, and she experiences the tension of hearing racial comments and slurs.

> When you’re out with a group of friends, you’re kind of in the middle and have to navigate which way you are. But also hearing a lot of racial comments and stuff, because people say it without thinking because you’re not a physical black person in the room. Yeah and I kind of see it as like

> I have a white life and a black life. (Linda)

Pearl raises this dual world as a jeopardy for young people, because they are having navigate complex spaces, where they are being raised black, and to understand what that means to be Aboriginal, whereas at school or in the colonised systems, she senses the expectations to be white and how this raises questions and upsetting experiences for herself and peers.

> We're moulded to be white. These kids don't identify with this westernised way of being. They just want to be out on country. They want to be learning their cultural connections, their identities, but they're not allowed to. Legally, they're not allowed to. So, the loss of culture, over the last 200 years, has probably left – and myself included – us feeling quite lost, us feeling quite 'What's happening? Where do we identify? Where do we fit?' Because on one hand, it's just like, oh, we're part of the oldest living culture in the world, but we have to be white. We can't just be fully this anymore, which is quite upsetting. (Pearl)

Questioning your identity

Questioning what it means to be Aboriginal

Questioning identity was experienced through young people hearing stories of removal of children or their families living from place to place to avoid removal. They bring forward stories of this disruption and this trauma, of the experience of dysfunctional parenting, substance abuse and the questioning of historical and present-day consequences of loss of culture and the link to their cultural wellbeing. Young people raise questions about what if culture was not suppressed, what if families were able to pass generational strength opposed to lies 'Yeah, I think having to suppress our culture and our identity and then being brought up on lies and not with strength' (Marcia).

Young people emphasised the importance for families to generationally pass down Aboriginal culture and identity. Marcia raises questions about the disruption of culture and identity, speaking to how her grandparents were forced to move off the mission and be disconnected from their culture and identity 'I think that if we had been able to maintain our culture and our identity, probably those issues wouldn't have happened because we wouldn't have been forced off the Mission and we wouldn't – my grandparents wouldn't have been forced to move around, and then it would mean that when they were adults, they would have been able to be part of our community' (Marcia).

Pearl raised further that she was concerned about how the questioning of identity can impact on wellbeing and how young people, if not given the tools or strength, could internalise the way they may be positioned as outsiders or deficit to others. ‘We’re from different— if you’re going to say this stuff to me— they try to get into that mind space of defending themselves, then that can perpetuate an act-out kind of thing. I think it’s just a hard way to think.’ Pearl draws attention to the experience of young people growing up in areas where young people experienced stigma, labels and racism based not only on their race or skin tone but also because of their postcode or location within a town.

> Reakeeta: Because your postcode defines you, or your location of where you live
>
> defines you?
>
> Pearl: Yeah, it really influences identity, and feeling confident in yourself and your wellbeing in general, really. So, when you’re questioning yourself, you’re questioning your identity, you’re questioning perhaps your colour of your skin and your postcode you’re not - yeah, I don’t know how you would be strong in wellbeing

This positioning of self against others is spoken about as a huge divide in what it means to be Aboriginal and how Aboriginal young people experience the tension of casual racism and questioning of their identity. Acceptance of Aboriginality is important to a young persons’ wellbeing and Pearl particularly sees non-acceptance as a risk to young people if they are not supported in their identity and cultural wellbeing ‘Especially when you don’t have anyone behind you saying no, no, no, it’s okay. You’re Aboriginal, you’re not— you need to be proud of yourselves, because a lot of kids don’t have that.’

Searching to affirm your identity

Young people in their stories brought forward the constant need to respond to questions about how they identify and the proof they need to identify. They expressed these experiences as an everyday burden of being Aboriginal that at times is inarticulable and answerable to only feelings of the stress and pressure to affirm identity. James experienced this in his life at different points in time, which he feels as a heaviness when he is doing his own research to identify his family roots and the challenges that brings to invest time and energy into this process.

> It’s emotionally draining and emotionally straining. It’s having to continually answer the same questions from non-Indigenous people. Well, you don’t look Aboriginal. Yeah, that’s because my family was raped. That’s because they were all herded onto missions. How often do you want me to keep explaining to you the same story? Just go and get educated. I’m sick and tired of explaining it to you. (James)

Aboriginal young people spoke about the constant pressure to defend and explain their identity. Young people further articulated that the uncertainty around their identity raised questions about how they access cultural knowledge or if there are certain hierarchies they must navigate around, particularly if they have experienced identifying as Aboriginal without passed on cultural connections to country and practices. Pearl raises this as a tension of how she exists in the higher education system, where she is trying to conform to white pedagogies versus accessing cultural knowledge and connection:

> While I'm studying in a white world. I'm just like— I'm still trying to conform to this way of being, and in my spare time I'm like, okay, how can I know my cultural connections, my family? What does this mean? What does that mean? Am I allowed to know that? Am I not allowed to know that? Can I speak up about this stuff? (Pearl)

Hitting imposter syndrome

Young people experience the political tensions of their identity and how this relates to their success in their career and professional life. James describes this experience as 'hitting imposter syndrome', where when he completed university and took on professional roles, he struggled with concern about whether his worth and success was fabricated due to his Aboriginal identity.

> I just got picked because I killed it in the interview or— but I'm not— I didn't feel like I'm good enough to be there and the honest truth was that I have worked hard and earned that opportunity and, what, I killed it. I killed it when I was over there, but I was battling the entire time with feeling so inadequate. (James)

Young people further questioned their identity in the position of systems of getting educated, for example university, where Anita questioned 'when I was at uni, I can't do this, I'm not smart enough for this. I'm not supposed to be here. I was just this little black girl with all these people at a university. I didn't even know what university was, I thought it was like high school and it was not' (Anita). Anita shares this experience of the expectation to fail due to the stigma of Aboriginality and its impact on success of Aboriginal people.

> Further education may get better but there's always this stigma around— from— I don't know, from the past that Aboriginal people can't further their education There's this whole stigma around, you're not going to go anywhere, you're probably just going to stay in your town, have no job. (Anita)

Anita shares similar experiences of other younger people in school where teachers had low expectations and would make comments such as 'Oh, you're coming to class today?' (Anita). This comment and many other similar experiences demonstrate the detrimental effect of casual racism, stereotypes, and the stigma of expectations to fail due to Aboriginality. When Anita expands on this idea of identity, stigma, and the experience of historical trauma, she feels this is how the passing of transgenerational trauma occurs and continues in community. This was raised as a particular concern by the young peoples' experiences personally or through witnessing such behaviours by educators to their peers. Expectation of failure or lack of success can impact on young peoples' self-worth, leading to imposter syndrome when successful.

Blooming identities

Drawing strength from trauma

Young people recognise the trauma from the loss of family and cultural connections, causing subsequent loss of identity. Recognising this loss, young people still draw strength and pride from their ability to identify. Essie acknowledges this loss of identity:

> Because it has caused a loss of identity in my family and that is what makes me— because identity is so important to me. I have to be who I am, and I have to be proud of who I am… it completely got lost until my mum went digging basically… I knew before— I just knew. I was like, there's something wrong… [I feel] being Indigenous and having that connection I feel like you just know. (Essie).

Drawing further on her ability to understand her emotions and her understanding that before her identity was discovered, she inherently was drawn to Aboriginal culture and identity. This is a complex feeling to articulate and it originates from ingrained ancestral knowledge cultural connections and strength. James described the feeling as being called by his ancestors to a place of deep connection 'My ancestors were the original kings of Yula and this place, this mystical place that I've never been, that it's calling me, it's my country' (James).

This concept of place is further defined by young people as the tethering one has to community and identity. When young people have experienced a disruption of place and spend time in more than one community, their sense of community and place expands into a non-traditional, complex system with Elders and community here, there and everywhere 'It's not like we've always been in one place forever in that traditional understanding of country and community, so it just means my family story is a bit more spread out and it's a bit more complex to understand. But I think, then, I can draw a strength from that… we're here and there and I've got Elders in this community and that community' (Marcia).

Empowering others

This sense of community and identity is not only about the individual experiences of young people, but also about empowering others to feel connected and be part of a collective Aboriginal identity. Despite the importance of identification of specific Aboriginal nations, the emphasis of place is not crucial for acceptance of an Aboriginal identity.

> Yeah. It's just like, identifying as Aboriginal even. It doesn't matter if you come from Worimi country or Wiradjuri or Gamilaraay. It's all— you're all one. You're all in it together. Your brothers and your sisters, and— yeah. (Pearl)

Young people within this study, particularly Pearl and her motivation to become a teacher, talk about the strength-based approach that teachers must use to mould and facilitate young peoples' blooming identities. Part of this process, Pearl advocates, about empowering others to seek out their truth and understand Aboriginal history and colonisation and its impact on identity. 'I think, as a teacher, it's not just about teaching English and numeracy, it's about empowering these students and finding— I don't know— being more educated on the true history and the true impact of intergenerational trauma' (Pearl).

Marcia supports the empowerment of others by recognising that people are angry and hurt but adds how it is important for people with trauma related to their identity to 'speak their truth'. She perceives that as more Aboriginal young people do this, young people, and community, can support each other through truth telling, empowering their collective and individual identities.

Rachel empowers others by seeing a strength in the fact that with a lighter skin tone she can pass as non-Aboriginal because it is important for her to have a voice with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. She particularly drew strength by embracing her culture, calling out racism and supporting the protests in response to the Black Lives Matter movement in Australia in 2020. 'It definitely helped me be more confident to reach out to more Aboriginal people, get involved in like protests and things like that… Especially since I am more— well, obviously I look white. So it's so important to me to have a voice' (Rachel).

Accepting identities

As part of reclaiming and understanding identity, young people speak about sharing stories of hurt from historical and intergenerational trauma and acceptance of hurt, by themselves and others. Rachel and Marcia share common experiences of the unified call to name the hurt they experienced, by embracing it as part of the lived experience of being an Aboriginal person in Australia. Marcia shares 'Yeah, I think people, through the trauma too… which isn't – like it started and that's how it is but I mean at least we can be united in the hurt, and I think we can understand each other a bit better. It makes us a bit more accepting' (Marcia).

Rachel identified that young people are wanting to reclaim their culture, where young people are coming together and reaching out about being proud to be Aboriginal. 'I think people my age definitely want to get that culture back. They see like no, that's bullshit. Why should I be judged on that? That's so ridiculous. I see a lot of young people coming together and reaching out, proud to be Aboriginal or proud to have family that is Aboriginal' (Rachel).

Although Rachel feels she does not need to seek acceptance from other people, she feels that as part of the acceptance of yourself and your identity, is the validation and acceptance of others about your identity. 'Not that it should take other people to say that but I think it being more accepted means that people can accept themselves. People kind of understanding the injustice that's happened finally is letting people stand up and say well, I am Aboriginal. This is just who I am. This is fine' (Rachel).

Discussion

This study sought to understand the impact of colonisation from the perspective of Aboriginal young people. One of the findings exemplified the impact colonisation has had on Aboriginal young peoples' identities, and their connection to understanding what it means to be Aboriginal in contemporary Australia, and one's navigation through a highly politicised 'identity' space for Aboriginal people (Carlson, 2016). These spaces are where young people navigate not only how they identify and what it means to identify in their personal lives, but in spaces like seeking education, their workplace, and their communities (Carlson, 2016). Crucial to these collective stories is how young people articulate their identity, not just in the pain, loss, and disconnection of identity, but further how they see these expressions as way forward and a way to draw strength from trauma. This drawing of strength was articulated by a sense of belonging and a young persons' way to self-identify within this hurt with a community of others, who have expressed the same hurt, loss, and disconnection of collective trauma. This expression of collective people self-identifying within a community has been highlighted as an integral protective factor for young Aboriginal people and their wellbeing (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012). Further this collective experience of trauma (due to colonisation) has been identified as core concept that has strengthened the academic work surrounding historical trauma and this field of inquiry (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Kirmayer, Gone et al., 2014).

Belonging and identity, can be further explored at the cultural interface, like Carlson (2016), who identified within her study that participants navigated the push and pull of being Aboriginal and what it means to be Aboriginal in varying spaces, and how each participant expressed this in varying ways through their life, work, and community. This includes how they dressed, spoke, and acted in various spaces to identify, as living, and breathing Aboriginal (Carlson, 2016). The emphasis on push and pull was identified by the young people in this study, where in certain places such as at work, home with family, with community or in various places, they expressed their identity in varying ways based on the space in which they were situated; that within these various spaces their identities were either strengthened or unsettled. Within the young peoples' stories, there were various expressions of identity, illustrated in Figure 11. The concept for this figure draws on the notion of a waterhole, or a body of water, with multiple expressions being experienced in multiple places and spaces, that are dependent on the interactions they have with people and their impact on young people's self-identity and belonging within these spaces.

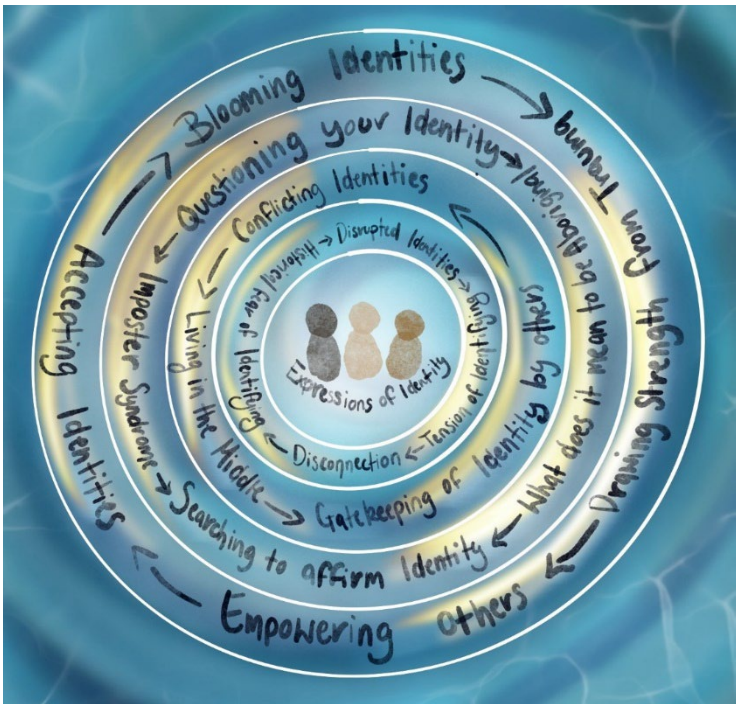
Blooming Identities
Turning from Drawing Strength
Empowering Others
Accepting Identities
Questioning your Identity
What does it mean to be Aboriginal
Identity by others
Searching to affirm Identity
Imposter Syndrome
Conflicting Identities
Living in the Middle
Gatekeeping of Identity
Historical Fear of Identifying
Disrupted Identities
Burden of Identifying
Tension of Identifying
Disconnection
Expressions of Identity

Figure 11. Expression of identity by Aboriginal young people (Image design: R. Smallwood, Digital Rendering: Kisani Upward).

Foucault stated as referenced and summarised by Miño-Puigcercós, Rivera-Vargas et al. (2019) '"who we are" is not an individual matter, but a product of forms of external agencies', highlighting that as people we constantly learn, regulate, interact, and grow; through these adaptive experiences, that ultimately 'we are transformed with and by others' (p.136).

Carlson (2016) in her final remarks, highlights that for disconnected people, there is always a pathway back into community, offering hope to the young people in this study who have expressed their and their peers' disconnection from their identities. Aboriginal young people further expressed that their identity was about relationship to their connections; connections to community, Elders and Country. Smallwood, Usher et al. (2022) in their recent literature review, identified that young Aboriginal people's social and emotional wellbeing was strengthened by connection to Elders, Country, and community. Salmon, Doery et al. (2018) identify this as one's connection to their cultural identity and that knowing one's cultural identity is growing space for the enhancement and strengthening of Aboriginal peoples' social and emotional wellbeing. Culture can be understood as way to identify through one's connection to community and respect for Elders, and accessing of kinship, family, language, art, ceremony, and Country (Salmon, Doery et al., 2018). The variable and multidimensional understanding of culture (Kirmayer, Gone et al., 2014) and how culture offers a way for young people navigate and understand historical trauma, is often expressed in ways they draw strength, resistance and connection to their identities and wellbeing.

Conclusion

To this author's knowledge, this is the first study conducted from an Aboriginal Gamilaroi Standpoint, that aimed to amplify the voices of Aboriginal young people's understandings of historical trauma and how it is understood from the perspective of themselves, their families, and communities. Identifying historical trauma was understood through expressions of identity, and what that means for young people to identify as Aboriginal in a contemporary place we now call Australia. Depending on spaces that young people engaged within, their expression of their Aboriginal identity is varied, fluid and ever-changing, leaving room for growth, hope, culture, and connection.

Chapter summary

This chapter presents a publication in *AlterNative: An International Indigenous Journal for Indigenous Peoples*. Aboriginal young people in this study identified that as part of understanding historical trauma, the impact of colonisation has directly impacted the ways in which they identify socially and culturally today. This paper amplifies the voices of Aboriginal young people in this study who express the variable, fluid, and collective nature of Aboriginal identities as result of colonisation. The next chapter presents the last of the findings chapters as part of this thesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Chapter overview

Chapter 7 presents a published article in *YOUNG: Nordic Journal of Youth Research* (Q1), titled '"We have our own stories to write, and we will write them": Defining resilience with Aboriginal young people'. This paper addresses the research question focused on how Aboriginal young people identify individual and collective resilience to overcome the impact of historical trauma because of colonisation. Within the publication, three stories are presented: 1) Acknowledging Ancestral Strength, 2) Empowering our collective identities and 3) Changing futures for Everyone.

Title of Article:

‘We have our own stories to write, and we will write them’: Defining resilience with Aboriginal young people.

Authors:

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Statement of authors contribution

Conceptualization, RS, DJ, and KU.; methodology, RS, VS; software, RS.; formal analysis, RS, DJ.; writing—original draft preparation, RS; writing—review and editing, RS, DJ, KU, CW and VS., visualization, RS; funding acquisition, KU, DJ, RS. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Title:

‘We have our own stories to write, and we will write them’: Defining resilience with Aboriginal young people.

Abstract

Colonisation is understood as a determinant of health for Indigenous people globally. Understanding colonisation through a lens of historical trauma offers new insights into the field of Aboriginal young peoples’ health and wellbeing. Grounded in the Indigenous research paradigm, this study conducted interviews with 15 Aboriginal young people living on Gamilaroi Country, New South Wales, Australia. Three stories are presented to explain how Aboriginal young people understand their resilience, strength, and resistance as an integral component of historical trauma. Aboriginal young people identified the need to connect and to continue to draw strength from their ancestors, and to be cognisant of the hope and strengths they have as Aboriginal people and describes how this strength can ensure Aboriginal culture is sustained for generations to come.

Key words:

Historical trauma, resilience, Aboriginal young people, Indigenous, First Nations, strength, Storywork, abductive analysis.

Introduction

We as a team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers are focused on amplifying the voices of Aboriginal young people and their experiences of historical trauma and resilience in the field of historical trauma inquiry. Historical trauma inquiry offers valuable insights in the field of health research by taking into consideration contemporary and historical collective traumas experienced by Indigenous people globally (Mohatt et al., 2014). Historical trauma is conceptualised as collective complex trauma inflected on groups of people who share a specific group identity and affiliation (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Within Australia, limited studies have been conducted on the inquiry of historical trauma, even more so where Aboriginal young people are concerned (Smallwood et al., 2021). Aboriginal young peoples’ health and wellbeing is a well-documented concern in Australia (Smallwood et al., 2022; Dodson et al., 2012; Williamson et al., 2016; Williamson et al., 2010),), including the experience of high rates of ongoing transmission of trauma, cycles of poverty, abuse, and racism (Paradies, 2016). Despite limited research pertaining to Aboriginal young peoples' perspectives of historical trauma, significant advancement in research has occurred more recently with Aboriginal young people regarding their social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) and the importance of cultural connections (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021; Smallwood et al., 2023) and young peoples' engagement with cultural strengthening programs (Black et al., 2023).

Throughout this text the words Indigenous and Aboriginal people are used interchangeably depending on the context of the population being addressed. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the First Nations people of the continent we now know as Australia. Respectfully, whilst acknowledging the 500 different distinct Nations and clans' groups, the preferred term when discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is 'Aboriginal people'. When referring to International First Nations populations, 'Indigenous people' will be used. Further this research originated within the Gamilaroi nation, an Aboriginal nation located in the North-Western plains of New South Wales, Australia. The Gamilaroi nation has three distinct language dialects, however the language dialect used throughout this text is Gamilaraay.

Text box 1. – Note on terminology

Aboriginal SEWB in the context of health, is about the recognition of the many facets of connection that influence and interact beyond the absence of ill-health (Black et al., 2023). These include connection to body, mind, emotions, family, kinship, community, spirituality, Country, and culture (Black et al., 2023). Aboriginal young peoples' engagement with health prevention and gaining an education is closely tied to their experiences of racism (Black et al., 2023). Importantly, Aboriginal SEWB literature recognises the importance of understanding colonisation and how it is understood from contemporary and historical experiences (Gee et al., 2014). This includes not just understanding how the individual experiences these connections, but across the collective levels including their families and communities (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Gee et al., 2014). Murrup-Stewart et al (2021) identified that connection to culture is inextricably linked to how Aboriginal young people recover from colonisation and its influences on wellbeing through relationship, connection, and disconnection as an essential understanding. Smallwood et al (2023) further identified how a young persons' wellbeing and resilience is linked to the experience of belonging, showing strength, maintaining positivity, and recognising and navigating risk.

Importantly in this field of inquiry is the recognition of the ongoing resilience within Indigenous communities globally and how 'despite colonial interference, Indigenous knowledge and cultures have endured' (Thomas et al., 2016) p.2). Resilience has been framed and understood in varying ways across the social sciences and health, this includes the example of a person bouncing back or bending without breaking during stress or trauma (Thomas et al., 2016). The value of interrogating resilience from an Indigenous lens provides opportunity to factor in other ways of knowing and how this repositions the individual within their social, political, environment and historical context (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Kirmayer et al., (2011) defined Indigenous resilience as shared commonalties that include an individual's ability to regulate emotion, adaption and change through relationship with living/nonliving beings and the connection to self. Additionally, resilience can be seen through the revisioning of collective histories to valorise collective identity and engagement with language and culture, that has been found to heal individuals and generations collectively (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Lastly, resilience is the found to be linked to the fostering of individual and collective agency that creates opportunity for empowerment and self-determination; both are closely linked to the understanding and recovery from colonisation in the context of health (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Stearne et al., 2022).

Significantly, work within this space, relating to historical trauma and resilience has not only contributed to wider understanding of trauma in the colonial context (Evans-Campbell, 2008), but has offered pathways forward to highlight the importance of decolonising trauma theory (Visser, 2015). Trauma theories are historically founded in western belief systems and methodologies; and are limited by the lack of recognition of colonisation and the process of trauma over generations (Visser, 2015). Advancement in decolonising trauma theories requires an understanding of the legacy of colonial violence and traumas associated through a shift in paradigm (Visser, 2015). This shift involves rethinking of trauma as a collective, spatial, and material experience, which transform previous perspectives of trauma being individual, temporal, and linguistic to an understanding that considers diverse historical and cultural contexts more broadly (Visser, 2015). Paradies (2016) importantly highlighted the benefit of decolonisation and the positive impact on an Indigenous community in Canada, through Indigenous-led health control and governance and its impact on decolonisation, endurance, and recovery within a community. Importantly, in the field of trauma and decolonisation, further inquiry into this space benefits from an openness towards other ways knowing, particularly from the context of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003), in order to transform, heal and decolonise trauma-informed practices (Visser, 2015). Given the significant gap in research associated with historical trauma for Aboriginal young people in Australia, we illuminate the stories of young people in this study to provide meaningful insights to the field of trauma-informed policies and practices in health.

Aim for paper

The purpose of this paper is to amplify the voices of Aboriginal young people who participated in a research study that aimed to understand historical trauma from their perspectives, including how they understand resilience, both collectively and individually.

The intended research question for this paper was:

> How do Aboriginal young people recognise collective or individual resilience to help overcome the impact of historical trauma?

Methodology and methods

Methodology

Positioned in the Indigenous research paradigm, this research study has been informed through Gamilaroi ways of knowing, being and doing; a process of ongoing critical reflection of the first authors' positioning within the community of focus, and the cultural and ethical responsibilities held as part of relational approaches to research (Kovach, 2021; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Wilson, 2008). This relationality has been informed by the notion that *research is ceremony* as explicated by Wilson (2008). Wilson (2008) originally described research as being an act of ceremony that is sacred which honours the fact that research for Aboriginal people is relational and highly dependent on relationships engaged with respect, relevance, responsibility, and reciprocity (Archibald, 2008). Foundational to this premise is the need to ensure the privileging of Aboriginal voices within research and how the act of listening and amplifying voice is guided by the re-telling of stories both from cultural and ethical standpoints (Rigney, 2003). Rigney (2003) thus called for Aboriginal researchers to act within political integrity to ensure protocols of research are guided by the promotion of Aboriginal worldviews, experiences, knowledges, and cultural ways of knowing.

In addition to being guided by the Indigenous research paradigm, the methodology used in this study has been informed by the principles of Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008), aligning with the context of sense-making that heals and transforms communities (Kovach, 2021). Story, from the position of resilience, has a communal and collective dimension, that forms ways to engage with identities collectively and individually, and that values culture for meaning making, including the creative process to develop solutions for new challenges that may arise (Ramirez & Hammack, 2014). Thus, Storywork practices are guided by the notions of placed-based meaning, which Benham (2007) describes as story being reliant on relatedness to place, space, and time throughout the project. To place this story within and on Country, Country informs the axiological and epistemological ways of knowing and informs ongoing accountabilities and responsibilities behind the research intent and purpose (Hughes & Barlo, 2021; Rigney, 1999). Being conducted on the Country and nation of the Gamilaroi Calala people, the research project was gifted a Gamilaraay word, winanga-li. This word means to listen, to hear, to know and to remember (Munro et al., 2019). It is a practice that is culturally embedded in place; a process that honours deep listening and reflection; a constant reminder to ensure the researchers listened, heard, knew, and remembered the stories of the young people who participated in this project (Atkinson, 2002). Winanga-li further offered opportunity for a process of ongoing reflexivity; that is, remaining reflective and accountable to the young people and their stories, spirit, and healing, which is later discussed in the data analysis section (Nicholls, 2009; Rigney, 1999; West et al., 2012).

Human ethics approvals

Ethical approval was sought from both University of Technology Sydney (REF:ETH205373) and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) (REF: 1812/21). Ethical approval did not seek the collection of demographic data such as age or gender. Participants nominated a pseudonym for their data and were also asked during the yarn if they had any gender preferences and if their chosen pseudonym was reflective of the young persons' gender at the time of interview. Participation in the interviews was voluntary. All participants consented to participate by signing a consent form after explanation about the project by the researcher. At the time of consent, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time and were given options regarding follow-up support.

Data collection

Data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic in the period between January 2020 and December 2020. After ethical variation, data collection occurred via zoom and telephone to ensure data collection was not delayed due to uncertain periods of lockdowns. Aboriginal young people chose their preferred location for the interview and prior to consenting to the interview, they had an opportunity to ask questions regarding the project and express any concerns and to discuss these if required.

Employing a yarning method of data collection, key questions were developed with the research team, and appropriately guided by the Cultural Research Advisory Committee members (Carlin et al., 2019). Yarning is a method of data collection commonly employed in research with and by Aboriginal people (Bessarab & Ng'Andu, 2010). Yarning is a form of communication and there are informal and formal elements of the yarn that includes social, research and supportive components (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Hughes & Barlo, 2021). The social component is how the participants and researchers connect and develop rapport before launching into the research collection objectives. The research component is derivative from the objectives of the study and is often guided by key questions or yarning topics related to the field of inquiry, and lastly the supportive component is where the researcher may need to offer emotional support during the yarn if the participant(s) is distressed (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). Yarning more broadly is often referred to by Aboriginal people across Australia as a form storytelling and through this yarning, transfer of knowledge is shared between each other (Barlo et al., 2020). As we have used yarning and Indigenous Storywork in our approach to research with Aboriginal young people, we have presented the research findings in a story format below. During the yarn to explore resilience and historical trauma, one of the questions asked was “Can you tell me how Aboriginal people in this community have overcome the impacts of historical trauma related to colonisation?” After this question was asked, the researcher allowed the participant to respond, listening carefully for any follow up questions to gather more insights on the topic. Yarns were recorded with permission and sent for transcription to an external provider. Over the period of data collection, field notes were collated and used to aid in the process of analysis and often this would be through use of poetics or art-based techniques that later informed the cycles of analysis by the first author. Using a process of member checking, results were presented to community, and they were given the opportunity to reflect, question and interrogate the findings. This process of member checking is a commonly employed approach used with participants and communities as part of Indigenous-led research (Kovach, 2021).

Data analysis

Data analysis was achieved through deep listening guided by the practice of winanga-li, where the first author immersed herself in the audio and written transcripts of the young people’s stories by listening and reading repeatedly. The transcripts were then coded using NVIVO v12. Using a bricolage approach of reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022), the stories were re-engaged using the same initial process of immersion. Coding was achieved through using abductive analysis, that was a process of sense-making through an interpretative process of reflection, through organisation, labelling, challenging, writing up and contemplating ideas through reflection, the axiological needs (cultural and ethical) and how this made sense in the wider field of inquiry (Rinehart, 2021). As the PhD student was inherently informed from her Gamilaroi lived experience, further ongoing critical reflection was used to inform the temporal sense-making of the study. Critical reflection of lived experiences has been informed by West et al. (2012) where Aboriginal researchers living in their communities of research hold ongoing obligations to the research and beyond, including the acknowledgement of the relationship Aboriginal people have to community, Country, and culture. This process of analysis has been displayed in Figure 12. The design of the diagram reflects an ongoing engagement with the core aspects of sense-making informed by the participants' stories, the lived experience of a Gamilaroi woman, a culturally informed method of deep listening (winanga-li and Storywork), and wider engagement with the field of Aboriginal young peoples' health and resilience. The 'lived experience' text is displayed inverted, as it was a reflexive tool, to build sense-making by ongoing critical engagement with the young peoples' voices and stories through their lived experience.

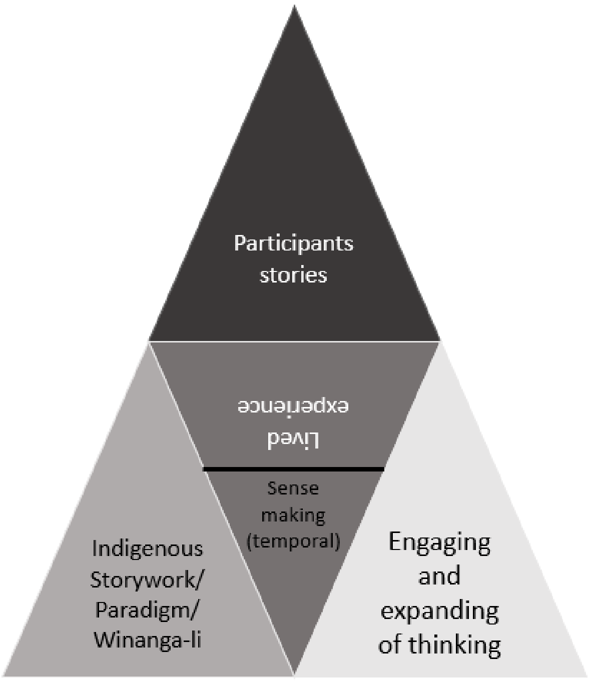
Participants stories
Lived experience
Sense making (temporal)
Indigenous Storywork/ Paradigm/ Winanga-li
Engaging and expanding of thinking

Figure 12. Abductive analysis and data interpretation (winanga-li means to hear, to listen, to know and to remember; originally published in Smallwood, 2023, p. 5)

Aboriginal young people

Out of the 15 Aboriginal young people who participated in the study, the majority were from the rural location in the Gamilaroi Nation and identified as an Aboriginal person from this Nation. The inclusion of participants from outside the Gamilaroi nation occurred due to snowballing sampling which occurred when a young person shared information about the study with another young person.

Participants were aged between 18 and 23 years. As part of participation in the study, the Aboriginal young people were invited to have an ongoing relationship with the study which included ongoing confidential updates on progress and dissemination of results. Participants also consented to having their transcript returned to them to check and provided an opportunity for them to remove, expand or clarify what was said in the yarn.

Findings

Quotes from the Aboriginal young people in this study are included below in the following three stories. Resilience was expressed from the following sub-themes as part of the data analysis outcomes, these include: Blackifying western institutions, sharing our histories, coming from resistance and resilience, obligation to the future, pushing for change, finding our culture, individual and community-led solutions, and Aboriginal young people seeing themselves in the Australian narrative.

Story One: Acknowledging ancestral strength.

Within the story of *Acknowledging ancestral strength*, Aboriginal young people in this study understand and acknowledge they come from a long line of resistance and resilience generationally. Young people in this study hold the stories of their grandparents and ancestors at the centre of their healing. By doing so, they can draw on the strength of their ancestors to heal and move forward towards thriving. For James, he recognised the sacrifices made by his ancestors to ensure that his generation and the future generations were afforded the opportunities that his ancestors originally fought for. James expressed this in the following quote:

> I mean, it's everything that our ancestors went through and it's everything that our great-grandparents went through. It's everything our grandparents went through. It's everything our parents went through. They all had it tough, but each generation it was made a little better. The last generation worked so hard to pay it forward to us and so back in the sixties, it was horrible

> for Aboriginal people and the generation before that. They were all pushed to the fringes of town… they were denied their right as human beings. We were treated like animals. You fast-forward only two generations… like, we're doing it. Every day we're doing it. (James)

Some of the young people in this study further conveyed how they draw on the strength of their ancestors and how this gives them the ability to honor their great feats over unimaginable adversity. Resistance is expressed by acknowledging that some of the political figures in Australia are continuing to silence the traumas of the past and re-telling these stories to the wider population. Marcia articulated:

> I guess. It's like we're still here. May be like recently Scott Morrison was talking about how slavery didn't exist in Australia, and we all know that there were unpaid workers, and looking at their stories and how they got through those times shows strength, I think. They got through that period and kept pushing on. (Marcia)

This show of strength, despite what has been shared widely, profoundly positions the young people in this study and reflects how they are able to draw on ancestral strength as part of acknowledging the past. Mary shared that she wanted to be part of change for her people, and by doing so honouring her great-grandfather and what he started in the fight for human rights at time prior to the 1967 Referendum. Mary added 'I completely agree. We are a big part. My great grandfather fought for our rights and fought for our human rights and to be equal in this world and yet we still aren't, so we're going to continue that fight' (Mary).

As part of sharing this history she expressed the need for these stories to be heard, to be told and to be passed generationally to ensure everyone recognises what Aboriginal people have been through; including what this means as having a collective identity with other Aboriginal people to continue the fight for change. Mary further added:

> We're going to go back and we're going to tell our kids about all the people that we went to uni with, we're going to talk about all the Indigenous kids that were there, we're going to talk about all the things that we made sure we did to make sure we had a better future. We're going to tell our stories and tell our grandparents, our great grandparents about our people. But yeah, we do have our own stories to write, and we will tell them. (Mary)

For Essie to connect to her ancestral strength, she highlighted the importance of storytelling and the ability this practice has with dealing difficult subjects such as trauma. This includes how she believes the importance of this sharing is integral to healing and the prevention of transmitting trauma generationally. Essie added:

> Well, Indigenous people have always been storytellers. We've always told stories through word

> of mouth and I really think that has carried on even if people don't really believe it. Indigenous people have been the best storytellers I've ever listened to. So, they will also bring up these stories. It's like we will never forget what happened and it's a good thing and a bad thing at the same time, I think, because if people forget about it, it's like, well, the trauma doesn't really pass on. But if we remember it, we can fight for what happened to us and how it hurt but it's going to be passed on through generations upon— until it's fixed. (Essie)

Marcia further added that she does not hope for Australia to get better, or hope for things to change because of inactivity, instead, she draws strength from looking back on the achievements of Aboriginal people collectively and individually as her motivation to push for a better future. Marcia added:

> Instead, I look back and I'm like okay, they set up the tent embassy, look at all the achievements we've had. That's where I draw strength from. I think people looking at those around them and leaning on those around them created strength, and we come from a strong breed. (Marcia)

Story Two: Empowering our collective identities.

Within the story of *Empowering our collective identities*, young people shared how they continue to recognise the potential futures of Aboriginal people and the continued strength of their culture. For some young people in this study, they recognise the power of their cultural identities collectively to empower others to have a voice and to speak the truth. For other young people in this study, changing the present is about accessing higher education and employment to break cycles of poverty and welfare dependence. Finally, for some of the young people in this study, it is about accessing culture, through connecting to community and peers.

Truth telling was identified as a pertinent theme for the young people in this study. During data collection, there was a period of distress experienced on the global stage, as result of the tragic murder of George Floyd, the reignition of the Black Lives Matter movement was triggered globally, which motivated young people in this study to share their stories about what truth telling means to them in their communities. Brooke alluded to this time in the following quote:

> A lot more of our people are standing up especially now and having that strength to say I'm Indigenous and I'm here. Like yes, we've had so many of these setbacks and stuff like that but they're really kind of speaking out now and it really shows. (Brooke)

Mary added:

> Especially with everything that's going on over in America. They're sitting there saying, oh, well, we didn't have all this, we don't have police brutality and all this kind of stuff, and it's like, look in our own backyards. Our own Prime Minister won't even recognise that we had a violent

> history. What is that saying about Australia's future? (Mary)

This notion of speaking your truth was particularly important for Marcia when she reflected on the history of her Aboriginal identity and the act of sharing her truth about her disrupted family history and the uncertainty of not knowing her heritage clearly. For many contemporary Aboriginal people, colonisation has caused a substantial disconnection, where many people and families are unable to trace their bloodlines and ancestry. For Marcia, sharing the truth of this trauma is articulated in the following quote and how it impacted her wellbeing:

> But, when you speak your truth, even if it's not the story that everyone accepts, or expects, that's better for your wellbeing.

Marcia expands further to explain about the hope she has for peers and the work she does to empower others to speak their truth and acknowledge their ancestry; 'people will just accept that and be like okay, that's your story and not you…People are just like yeah, that's your story and you still fit within our community' (Marcia).

Like Marcia, James shared his story around what it meant for him to embrace his bloodline and acknowledge the strength of his Aboriginal heritage, 'We are part of the oldest living culture on earth. Like Mungo Man, that's my relative. That's my bloodline. That's my ancestor. You know? That's the oldest living person ever found here on this continent…we're a part of something bigger'. James, in his story, expressed that for him to realise his ancestral strength he needed to go overseas to understand the importance of his connection to a larger collective identity. Further, James identified for himself how this experience meant that he was part of 'something that's bigger than anything on this planet', an important part of his healing.

Contextualising this experience of James going outside of Australia to embrace his heritage is expressed as an ongoing issue for some of the young people in this study. As a result of colonisation, young people in this study recognise the impact of wider Australia having certain beliefs about Aboriginal people, that includes Aboriginal identity being seen in negative ways, such as ingrained beliefs and stereotypes that Aboriginal people are the problem. The stories of the young people in this study resist this idea of being the problem, instead, they present the solutions needed for change.

For Pearl, these stories of colonisation being hidden and silenced, motivated her towards teaching and being part of the educational shift required towards truth telling in wider communities. Pearl, in the following quote exemplified how for her, this means learning in a system with peers that do not recognise the impact of colonisation and how she wants to be part of the shift for her community:

> But I know that I'm in uni with a whole bunch of other teachers that do not see eye-to-eye with me, which is problematic for our education system, where all our students have to grow up. We know for them, for most of their lives— early lives. They're just teaching mathematics and English, and then they go home. It's just like, no, you can do so much more than that. You don't have to keep the cycle going. So, that's kind of how I'm doing my part, and I think maybe some programs in that to teach teachers… So, I think maybe teaching programs as well, and even just programs within schools that… promotes cultural knowledge as well. (Pearl)

For Mary, when she accessed higher education, it opened her mind to what it means to be Aboriginal. Part of this learning process was that she not only became aware of colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal people, but that she realised the importance of getting an education, and how communities are breaking cycles and doing it for themselves, their families, and communities:

> Being here is a completely different aspect. We're learning how to do that. Coming to university, it's most of the reasons why Indigenous people are here, to better their communities and to change them… We're going to make our own - we're going to sit there and educate our kids about how we walked these marches and how we were there, and we protested, and we went to university to better ourselves and better our communities. We did all these things to make sure that all our people had a better future, that we were equal. (Mary)

James also reflected on the importance of Aboriginal people accessing education and opportunities surrounded by culture, where he believes Aboriginal people are breaking down barriers and participating in the workforce, for the betterment of their communities. Highlighting that Aboriginal people are getting educated, doing decolonial work, and reviving culture and language. James added, 'We're living the way— learning the ways of our old people. We're doing it every day. I'm so proud of all our mob for going and doing it.'

For Rachel, she recognises the need for culture to be accessed by Aboriginal young people and for others to accept and understand why culture is important for young people and their healing. Rachel added:

> People my age want to get that culture back. They see like no, that's [explicit]. Why should I be judged on that? That's so ridiculous. I see a lot of young people coming together and reaching out, proud to be Aboriginal or proud to have family that is Aboriginal. (Rachel)

Brooke further highlights how Elders are integral to the young people reclaiming their strength through accessing culture, language, and art. Brooke added:

> [Y]eah, learning language like a lot of Indigenous people now are learning their language and reclaiming that strength. Elders passing on traditional art ways. A lot of people and a lot of Indigenous girls and boys are really getting back into traditional art. I think that's a good show of like unity and strength. (Brooke)

Marcia further added that for her going to university meant she was able to connect and find a community of Aboriginal people. That gave her the opportunity to share and yarn with other Aboriginal people about their histories, identity journeys and belonging. Marcia articulated, 'I can't imagine the support I would have gotten before having community… Even though you draw on ancestral strength… my family really wants to be part of that and really wants to know more about our whole space and to connect the dots'. Marcia highlighted that, no matter how far-reaching her community is, it is not only important for her own healing, but for her family as well. Marcia added:

> I suppose I can provide that strength to the people around me, too, that I've met from all over Australia who have their bits and pieces, and we all sort of lean on each other in different ways… Through the trauma, we've managed to create community around that, too, which isn't— like it started and that's how it is but I mean at least we can be united in the hurt, and I think we can understand each other a bit better. (Marcia)

Story Three: Changing futures for everyone.

Within the story of *Changing futures for everyone*, Aboriginal young people in this study identified two important steps towards reconciliation and healing for their futures. The first step identified by the young people in the study was for the wider Australian community to recognise the hurt, trauma and loss caused by colonisation. The second step is for Aboriginal young people and people more broadly to make a commitment to improve everyone's future, which includes truth telling, embedding of culture, acceptance, and accountability in communities. For Anita 'it's showing everybody that Aboriginal people can succeed, and we are just too deadly; we don't just say it to hear ourselves talk'.

The young people in this study identified that there needs to be a wider conversation with Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people about colonisation and the subsequent contemporary impact of colonisation. Marcia articulated this need for change in the following quote:

> This begins from the I think creating opportunities [for Aboriginal people], but also it would be great if non-Indigenous Australians recognised us. Indigenous Australia in things like the curriculum, and just [fair] representation… I don't want future generations to keep having to

> push and relearn to, you know, to get to the end of school and then be like everything I learned didn't include me and now I have to relearn, and now it's my responsibility to teach my kids, but the kids they sit next to in school aren't going to know. I don't want another generation of that to happen. I want for our young people to see themselves. (Marcia)

Faith expressed how she believed the trauma of colonisation has continued due to some of the wider communities not recognising the true impact of colonisation. Including how it continues to impact Aboriginal people historically, politically, socially, physically, and emotionally. Faith described this in the following quote:

> The biggest thing that is dragging on the trauma is the negligence and the ignorance of the— just the wider— our community that— our national community, our state community. I just think there is ignorance and negligence, and education is the greatest way of being able to overcome it because the more we're talking about it. Yeah, it's hard to talk about it but it's a conversation that we've got to have. It's our history for everyone. (Faith)

As part of this advocating for change, James identified the need for people to hold each other accountable, like drawing on our strengths, and overall, everyone being accountable and self-aware of the changes needed in community. James' quote confirmed this, including the need to celebrate success:

> Well, we must hold each other accountable. We've got to keep doing that. We've got to hold each other accountable for the good stuff and we celebrate that, but also with the bad stuff, we've got to keep it honest with each other and create that self-awareness and— you know? I think everything we've just talked about; we're doing it. Education is such a big part that empowerment and coming back to culture, but, yeah, it's about keeping those goals in our vision and keeping each other accountable. (James)

For Michelle, when asked about resilience and strength of young people, she reflected on the work that her mother does in community for health promotion. Highlighting the importance of her mother working in community as a positive step towards improving health and putting yourself out there despite not seeking formal identification as an Aboriginal person in community. Michelle added:

> She got out there. She'd get involved in the community. She doesn't care that she doesn't have proof of who she is [being an Aboriginal person], she still gets involved and tries to make a better community... She travels around doing work for it. She's trying to encourage positivity and raise awareness of health… I just think it's something that helps in a way. (Michelle)

For Pearl her passion and desire to complete her degree was focused on changing the lives of all the young people she teaches. To ensure they not only receive the standard curriculum, but further how each student has their own identity and they too, are part of the solution towards change:

> Well, I'm in teaching, because I want to help this situation. I think teachers— it's compulsory to go to school, so teachers have a big, big job in shaping these children's lives… it's not just about teaching English and numeracy, it's about empowering these students and finding… being more educated on the true history and the true impact of intergenerational trauma… getting pedagogy… that includes community, includes partnerships, reciprocal relationships, empowering students' identity, no matter what culture or diverse background they come from, because… that kind of starts the change, as well, within our young people. (Pearl)

Essie explained that for community to change and for better futures for everyone, there needs to be ways to have difficult conversations about trauma, loss, and pain, including how this can be done from different, creative methods and standpoints:

> So, talking about ways to fix issues. Because everyone is different. I could be like, oh yeah, I feel like education is the best. The next person would be like, oh I have very harsh feeling about education. I hated it. I never wanted to do it. It's like, okay. Well, what's best for you? People are like, well, I go through more arts ways. I know— dancers and stuff. (Essie)

For James, to help with healing his community, he felt that 'Having safe spaces to yarn… men's circles, women's circles, yarning circles, just community get-togethers, having the good people around you, and I think on a grand scale having that leadership' (James). Pertinently, James raises the importance of young people having Elders and leaders to look towards as role-models, to aide in the creation of having safe spaces to yarn and understand the complexity of re-shifting trauma, breaking cycles and imagining better futures.

Discussion

Aboriginal young people in this study define resilience in the context of historical trauma, as a collective experience. They remember their ancestors and the strength and resistance they needed to confront injustices of the time and how those strengths have carried forward and influenced their futures. Importantly the young people in this study recognise the importance of connection to their culture, personal identities, and their communities as integral components to their resilience. This resilience is expressed as a collective, generational experience of strength, healing, and change.

Using a lens of historical trauma to define resilience, this study identified the broader need for wider recognition of Aboriginal people, and the experience of colonisation that continues to cause trauma today (Mohatt et al., 2014). This is evident from the young peoples' stories, particularly when they witness people in powerful positions denying opportunity for truth-telling and recognition of traumas associated with colonisation. This important finding adds to the wider conversation occurring in Australia today. In 2023, Australia will vote for a referendum to permit an 'Aboriginal voice' to parliament.[1] A body of people, that will be representative of the many diverse nations and clans' groups located across this continent, that will provide advice on matters relating to Aboriginal people to the governing party. This referendum is one of the three recommendations out of the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' (The Uluru Statement, 2023). The other two recommendations call for Truth Telling and Treaty. Importantly, Aboriginal young people in this study understand the importance of truth telling and the arrangement required for Aboriginal people to have control and self-determination over their futures. The young people in this study want to see change, and are not willing to sit back and wait, but instead push for change for a better future for all.

Explicit in the young people's stories in this study, despite present and past-day narratives of colonisation, is their continued show of strength and resilience. This is evidenced by the findings of this paper, where the young people in this study, despite their stories of navigating traumas, articulate their continued strength and the obligations they hold for their futures. They articulate actions that include accessing education, engaging in their communities, creating communities of acceptance, resisting racism, and speaking their own truth about their histories and the truth of colonisation. They have identified how they perceive resilience as a way forward for the Aboriginal people through connecting and reconnecting to culture, language, and communities. Further, they outline the importance of having the freedom to access culture in ways that affirm their own identities, connections, and sense of belongingness; a key commonality expressed as pivotal to the Indigenous resilience literature (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

Culture and language are a continued and well documented source of resilience for Aboriginal people (Salmon et al., 2018; Smallwood et al., 2022). Aboriginal young people in this study want to be able to access culture in a way that is meaningful to them. Colonial practices of intentionally removing children, broken kinship structures, lost connections to community and country, and most importantly, young people removed from their families and culture must be recognised and resolved (Menzies, 2019). As a result of these colonial practices, languages and cultural practices have been lost. Emerging in the space of historical trauma, is the importance of Aboriginal people and communities reconnecting to culture, understanding historical traumatic events, and understanding how understanding these opportunities offers space for healing and restoring Aboriginal peoples' cultural practices, identities, and sense of belonging.

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[1] On 14 October 2023, the outcome of the Voice to Parliament referendum was a devastating no vote for Aboriginal people and communities. After this result we in community had a week of mourning, silence and reconnecting to our strength.

This paper's findings amplify the current need for reflective and accountable policy, practice, and research to consider the impact of colonisation as a historical and contemporary indicator of health and wellbeing. In these spaces of change, we must find ways to listen and hear what Aboriginal young people require to be self-determining individuals, who are part of wider collective group who are seeking such recognition and change. We recommend further engagement with Indigenous-led research to create space to listen and hear what Aboriginal young people envision for their futures.

Conclusion

Engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing showcases critical issues in the fields of resilience and historical trauma inquiry. The young people in this study recognise the importance of acknowledging our past, to ensure we heal our present traumas, whilst recognising the potential for all our futures. Researchers interested in resilience as a field of inquiry need holistic approaches when engaging with Aboriginal young people to amplify their voices and their insights on colonisation as an integral component to health and wellbeing. This paper adds to the important literature emerging around young peoples' health and wellbeing and the importance of connection to culture that includes our past, and our future.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented a publication in the international journal *YOUNG*. The paper makes an original contribution to the space of Aboriginal health and wellbeing research by focusing on historical trauma and resilience in Aboriginal young people. As reported in this paper, Aboriginal young people identified that as part of acknowledging colonisation and its impact on our community, they recognise the importance of drawing strength from their ancestor histories and the importance of generative resistance and resilience as ways to overcome the impact of historical trauma. The next chapter presents the final chapter in this thesis, the Discussion.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Introduction

In the following sections, I will present the research findings and how as part of this research ceremony I have answered the research questions of this project. The finality of writing down the answers to these questions is held in a tension. For the words here will reach no finality in the spaces of knowing and unknowing that I have come to recognise as part of writing my way through this ceremony. Remembering I am obligated to the words and stories I tell, I write to honour the young people, who gave me their stories as a gift (Kovach, 2010). Within these places, across the temporal and spatial fields of knowing, within the occasions for poetics as highlighted throughout, within the spaces of story, I acknowledge that, as I too grow and learn through the process of knowing, this ceremony may end, but the ceremony of knowing will continue in this field of inquiry.

In concluding this ceremony, I present two stories identified as part of understanding historical trauma with Aboriginal young people – 'Honouring and remembering our stories' and 'Unsilencing becoming'. I will then present a section titled 'Continuing the Ceremony' that will present key strengths and limitations of this work and the recommendations for further inquiry in the field of health research, policy, and practice.

Research aims and findings

Grounded in Gamilaroi ways of knowing, being, and doing, this research project aimed to amplify the voices of Aboriginal young people and their perspectives on historical trauma and resilience. The research questions were:

1. What do Aboriginal young people understand by the term historical trauma?
2. How do Aboriginal young people perceive the impact of historical trauma on their lives and the lives of their family or community?
3. How do Aboriginal young people recognise collective or individual resilience to help overcome the impact of historical trauma?

Making sense of historical trauma

In Chapter 5, I presented the young peoples' perspectives on how they make sense of historical trauma and its impact on their lives and the lives of their families. Within the stories the young people identified the loss of culture and cultural practices and how this in many ways has shaped the way they live today. Young people in this study further identified that historical trauma continues today as direct result of continuing colonisation and described how it continues to shape the experiences of Aboriginal people in wider society – for example, the experiences of racism, being stereotyped and the hurt and loss as result of colonisation not being recognised by others.

Expressions of identity

In Chapter 6, I presented the experiences and expressions of the Aboriginal young people in this study in how they recognised historical trauma and consequences of colonisation in shaping the way they identify today as Aboriginal people. The politics of identity in Aboriginal communities is a contested space due to the large number of Aboriginal people disconnected from their heritages as a direct result of colonisation. Young people express in their stories the varied and fluid nature of identity depending on the spaces in which the young people engage. For example, many of the young people experienced the distress associated with not being sure how they identify, or questioned what it means to identify in the present. Additionally, Aboriginal young people draw strength from the fact that they are able identify and move forward by supporting other Aboriginal people in accepting and recognising that their identities has been shaped as result of colonisation and the stories that their families have now as result of them being passed down generationally.

Recognising resistance and resilience

In Chapter 7 I presented the perspectives of Aboriginal young people in this study. who recognise the continuation of our resistance and resilience in our communities despite the continuing impacts of colonisation. Aboriginal young people expressed that they draw strength from their ancestors' stories and how these stories have shown them they are also part of the solution in overcoming the impact of colonisation. Additionally, young people identify that as part of recognising their histories and long battle for equity and justice in our communities, they recognise that they too need to be part of the solutions moving forward, including getting educated, and accessing culture and healing, as well the need for wider Australian society to recognise the hurt of colonisation and the need for truth-telling.

Returning to the research questions of this study, I aimed to understand what the term 'historical trauma' means to Aboriginal young people, how they perceive the impact of this trauma on their lives and the lives of families and communities, and how they recognise collective and individual resilience to help overcome this trauma. Before I share two living stories about where I see this study situated in the literature, I believe it is the right time to answer these questions directly. As stated above, this was no easy task, because the finality of my writing only encapsulates my thinking here, now, and before. In this space, within this thesis, I cannot account for the directions or changes in which the spiral of learning and knowing will take me. Thus, I must acknowledge these tensions, lay room for it to settle (Wulff, 2017), and move through it for the purpose of closing this ceremony of research (Wilson, 2008).

1. What do Aboriginal young people understand by the term historical trauma?

   Aboriginal young people in this study identified the term 'historical trauma' as a way of making sense of the loss they personally and collectively have experienced due to continuing colonisation. This loss is both inexpressible and expressible, tangible and not. The layers of loss are multilayered and generational.

2. How do Aboriginal young people perceive the impact of historical trauma on their lives and the lives of their family or community?

   The impact associated with historical trauma is how the young people make sense of their own stories and experiences of being Aboriginal. These experiences are associated with how they engage with society and navigate through what this identity and way of being means for them in society temporally. Within the young peoples' stories, they draw on experiences from their families and their own lives of being part of a country that continually others Aboriginal people while denying our continued connection to Country, culture, kin, and sovereignty.

3. How do Aboriginal young people perceive the impact of historical trauma on their lives and the lives of their family or community?

   From Aboriginal young peoples' perspectives, collective and individual resilience to overcome historical trauma involves learning from our pasts, growing from our present, and dreaming towards our futures. Aboriginal young people in this study recognise the previous generations who have fought for recognition, justice, and equity. Overcoming historical trauma for the young people in this study is not accomplished by watching or sitting back but by being part of the movements of change, standing up, showing up and speaking up.

I will now discuss how these findings are positioned within the wider field of literature and from this synthesis, I will then propose key recommendations from this study moving forwards.

winanga-li: Understanding Historical Trauma and Resilience

winanga-li (to listen)

winanga-li (to hear)

winanga-li (to know)

winanga-li (to remember)

winanga-li (to hold space)

winanga-li (to honour the heart)

The following sections will present two stories; firstly, *honouring and remembering our stories*, and secondly, *unsilencing our becoming*, remembering always that *we are the stories we tell*. These stories will present three narratives from the past, present, and future. I remain accountable to the generations of ancestors, before and after my time here, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, for they informed my position and continuing relationship to Country and the living and non-living entities (Martin, 2008). To the birds, sky, rock, tree, children, and spirits. To our Elders and knowledge holders. To my mother and father; and our magpie. For the act of storytelling is my pedagogy, my praxis and heart; an act that connects us to our lived experiences, our spiritual traditions, and our collective histories, so that we are the stories we tell (Allen et al., 2014).

Our story, of love and heart at the centre.

Honouring and remembering our stories

Honouring and remembering encapsulates the stories shared by the young people in this study about their continued recognition of previous generations and the sacrifices, fights and celebrations made to ensure the futurity of our ways of knowing, being and doing as First Peoples of this Country (Smallwood et al, 2023). Honouring and remembering is not static pleasantry that calls us to sit around waiting for change and flawless hope; instead, it is in the spaces of movement and action that define our futures. It is the calling of our ancestors to remember them, and to honour them by ensuring our futures. To tell our stories, to restore our languages and to return to our songs.

Pop and I would drive around yarning about all sorts of things.

Often, the country, the weather, the right time to plant tomatoes, and the cure for hay fever (BTW it’s a spoonful of local sourced honey).

A country man from way back, that would wake his children up at the tender age of 7 or 8 to help

> round the cattle up over gushing flooding waters to ensure the cows were safe.
>
> A man that could water divine with his mother's coat hanger, and ensured his animals were never thirsty or starved in drought.
>
> A man that wouldn't hesitate to capture a hawk to ensure it no longer preyed on his many thousands of birds, or to pick up brown snakes and deal with them appropriately.
>
> A man of generational experience in bee keeping; that could literally sing about the birds and the bees.
>
> In many ways, what I knew about pop, there was so much more I didn't.
>
> A man of few words, that would only humor my questions about our family and the history of our heritage on this Country. Not much ever came out, a few words here and there.
>
> I would always leave the conversation yearning for more.
>
> It wasn't till my grandfather went to sky-camp this year (2023) that I had learnt more things about him than I had ever known. Stories within hundreds of photos, of my grandfather, my great-parents, and my great-great-grandparents. People who I imagined that I would never lay my eyes on. I believed that our history was a myth, that the story would never be told.

Colonisation has attempted to silence our voices and our stories (Haebich, 2001, 2011). Many scholars have documented the purposeful implementation of harsh policy and practice that contributed to the devastating removal of thousands of Aboriginal children from Country, culture, and Kin, known as the Stolen Generations (Barta, 2008; Haebich, 2011). Adding to the harm caused by policy and practice was the silence and denial by the wider Australian public about these harms. As quoted by Haebich (2001), Stanner stated in his 1969 Boyer lecture that '[w]hat may well have begun as a simple matter of forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale' (p. 71). A major contributor to this apparent forgetfulness is whitewashing our histories to make the Stolen Generations 'little more than a "melancholy footnote" in Australia's history' (Stanner, 1991). As highlighted in Chapter 2, young people recognise the dissonance of the narratives spoken about us in the schooling systems, where we didn't exist (Smallwood et al, 2022). These stories of nonexistence are further presented in Chapter 5, where the young people in this study draw on their own experiences of not learning their true histories in school and our absence in the narratives of the forming of Australia as we know it today. Rudolph (2021) has demonstrated in her recent study that Aboriginal children in the schooling system today can experience the classroom as a violent space that often excludes them in both subtle and powerful ways. Further it is identified that when children and young people 'speak out' or 'stand out' in the schooling system outside of the cultural norms, these young people often experience compounding effects of being disproportionally targeted (Rudolph, 2021, p.437).

A billy of tea was on the boil, kids stayed sleeping,
hearing the rooster crow since 4.30am.
no wink and awake in time, even though I am yawning.
Every morning is the same, off to school we go
Not sure what they say,
Follow on, listen hard,
speak only when told,
Snap, snap, snap a strap across my back.
Not too sure why,
School all day,
with sometimes shoes, sometimes not.
just one pair, between, us three.
Funny looks, and 'no shoes today.

Poetic Transcription 9, 'Just another school day for Dad' (R. Smallwood, 2023)

Highlighted in Chapter 5, young people in this study recognise the hurt of our history remaining untold, the pain of the ignorance and denial of our history, particularly in the school environment. Many of the Aboriginal young people in this study, when asked about historical trauma and the impact it has on their lives and that of their families, spoke of the negative experiences of learning histories of Aboriginal peoples in a glossed-over, whitewashed version that depicts Aboriginal people and cultures through the static stereotypes of being hunter-gathers and promotes the narrative that the 'real' Aboriginal people have ceased to exist. Rudolph (2021) additionally identifies that while the schooling systems and policies promote that every child belongs and is safe in school environment, Aboriginal children continue to experience the paradox of tensions associated with a continuing racism and oppressions associated within the settler-colonial state and the education systems that enact such agendas. Rudolph (2021) further states that 'students excluded from school are more likely to be arrested and imprisoned' (p. 436), further drawing on racial implications for young people and how they navigate through contemporary experiences of colonisation.

As identified in the literature review, the hearing of our voices remains a contested space for Aboriginal young people (Smallwood et al., 2022). Stories were shared about how others never heard their story or wanted to even listen to hear (Smallwood et al., 2022). Often these occasions of not being heard were in the very systems that have assumed control over and imposed harsh policies on Aboriginal people since the forming of the colony, such as the child protection and justice systems (Black et al., 2023; Rudolph, 2021). The relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the colony remains a contested space, particularly when communities are calling out to be heard by governments, but their voices fall on deaf ears (Atkinson, 2002; Referendum Council, 2017).

Importantly, as identified in this study, the harm of denying the atrocities of the Stolen Generations and other assimilative practices since colonialism, particularly in the school environment, voids the opportunity for young people to speak their truth and draw strength from their ancestors' stories of overcoming such unimaginable adversity (Smallwood, 2023b). Further, as highlighted by the young people in Chapter 6, identity remains an important consideration in the field of historical trauma inquiry; as highlighted by Kirmayer et al. (2011), identity formation generates collective resilience, resistance and healing both socially and culturally.

As identified in Chapter 2, health researchers add to the discourse of problematising Aboriginal people and their communities by amplifying deficits – what others have highlighted as damage-centred research or deficit discourse (Fogarty et al., 2018; Tuck, 2009). The challenge in helping, or attempting to help, when framing research from this damaged position, as highlighted by Tuck (2009), is the 'need to consider the long-term repercussions of thinking of ourselves as broken' (p. 409). Within the space of historical trauma, often justification of the inquiry is from this deficit discourse reference point (Fast & Collin-Vézina, 2019; Gone et al., 2019). As highlighted by Kirmayer et al. (2014), historical trauma inquiry emerged in the field of health and wellbeing research in order to explain continuing health and wellbeing inequities experienced in Indigenous communities globally. As identified in Chapter 5, the Aboriginal young people in this study make sense of historical trauma by recognising health and wellbeing issues in their communities and by linking the experiences in their community directly to historical legacies of colonisation and subsequent socio-political oppressions (Kirmayer et al., 2014). In challenging the deficit discourse, historical trauma inquiry is typified by documenting inequities; however, a promising line of inquiry in this space is the recognition of Indigenous peoples' continued resistance and resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2011). While the heaviness of the loss associated with historical trauma is presented in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 6, Aboriginal young people in this study identified the lasting strength that has been carried within our communities generationally in Chapter 7.

Wilbur and Gone (2023) suggest that as resilience is to trauma, so 'survivance' is to historical trauma. 'Survivance' is a term that was originally coined by Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor in 1994 (Wilbur & Gone, 2023). Combining the two terms, resistance and survival, survivance is crafted and enacted through stories of cultural expressions and modern identities of being Aboriginal. Differing from the narratives of resilience, as highlighted by Wilbur and Gone (2023), survivance challenges the inaccurate static, history-laden stereotypes of Aboriginal people by demonstrating their continued active presence in society. Within this study, young people recognise the active presence of many Aboriginal people in our histories that have inspired them to tell their stories, to draw from their ancestors' stories of being removed and the returning to these stories with purpose to ensure our children remember and honour them.

Furthermore, in Chapter 7 the young people continue to define who we are and who we are aspiring to be beyond the narrative of being colonised and traumatised. Importantly, historical trauma is best conceptualised as a form of public narrative that generates the shift from the identification of causal pathways of trauma, such as parental trauma transmission, towards the narratives identified in this study as stories of strength and resistance (Kirmayer et al., 2014; Mohatt et al., 2014). Young people in this study also draw on the voices and actions of activists and political leaders who have taken up the shields and spears crafted by ancestors to ensure our communities voices are heard and listened to. Leaving Aboriginal young people not only with the pain and loss associated with colonisation, but with the ability to draw strength from their ancestors' stories and their families' stories, like those commonly told as a result of the Stolen Generations, creates room for young people to unpack what this means for them and how they wish to identify moving forward (Smallwood, 2023). While the tension of settler-colonial societies will not be solved here merely by understanding historical trauma, the young people have amplified in this study that, like the generations before them, we all carry the gift and burden of our stories.

Unsilencing our becoming

One night as a child, mum and my little sister were sleeping, and the sky was opening to the heavens.

> Thunder was rolling in and the house was shaking in sync with my heartbeat. Frightened, I walked through our dark house that always made me feel like I was being watched by the walls as they whispered. I ran quickly to my father and explained to him my fear of the storm and the noises and light it was creating. Dad, who was already outside, sat me on the BBQ, under the patio, covered in vines and bushes, it was always a good place to sit and view the sky. Hesitant to be out of the elements, shaken, I remember asking him why he wasn't afraid, why didn't he fear the lightning and a potential strike. He told me not to be afraid, and the storms would always be something that I could handle. He assured me to always be strong, have no fear... we'd be ok... the sky was only showing her beauty.

Historical trauma continues to impact our communities and shape the way Aboriginal young people identify today (Smallwood, 2023), including how history has informed their futures and what this means for them personally and collectively (Smallwood et al., 2023b). Unsilencing becoming is the story of our strength in the storm that we face daily. *We'd be ok.* Amplified in Chapter 6 and the subsequent poetic transcription 'This is Fine' (see Appendix 1), young people in this study recognise they are within the storm of colonisation as an everlasting presence, where they express their understanding of historical trauma from the stories of past, present and futures. As highlighted in the previous section, young people recognise the historical absence of our stories in the colony and how this has contributed to the denial of our loss, pain and turmoil created within our communities for generations. Vizenor et al. (2013) state that:

> Victimry is still a powerful literature theme and cultural and political sentiment; it is thought to motive good citizens and politicians to action because they get a good audience in, they're doing good, liberal things to help Indians as victims. (Vizenor et al., 2013, p.113)

They go on to state:

> Victimry leaves Native young people with nothing to imagine… Native young people have been hard pressed to find a referent for themselves, not one referent outside of victimry. Survivance is the new reference of resistance and an active sense of presence. (Vizenor et al., 2013, p.113)

Importantly, survivance is not a theory or defined model of knowing; instead, it is a metaphor and viewpoint for make meaning in the multiple layered contexts that is the life and blood of cultures being able to be sustained for thousands of years; stories of generational strength, a tree that survived being cut down (see Intermission). Collectively, the young people in this study amplify the need for our communities to look beyond their stories of trauma and return to the Country, dance, song and the revival of languages. Stories of getting educated and engaging with decolonisation (Smallwood et al., 2023b). Stories of continuing imagination and hope that help regenerate Aboriginal young people going forward.

In Chapter 2, young people spoke out to be heard and listened to (Smallwood et al., 2022). The first story in this publication draws on the voices of Aboriginal young people who participated in the Imagination Declaration (Shay et al., 2019). This statement echoes the power in our temporal contexts that calls to our souls and hearts to ensure we listen and hear their voices. Young people proposed:

> To the Prime Minister & Education Ministers across Australia. In 1967, we asked to be counted. In 2017, we asked for a voice and treaty. Today, we ask you to imagine what's possible. The future of this country lies in all of our hands. (Shay et al., 2019)

As highlighted in Chapter 7, young people are already imagining and actioning their futures; the generative hope that has been instilled in them from their ancestors is carried within their stories of their futures (Smallwood et al., 2023b). Within these stories, emphasis is placed on culture and Country by the young people in this study. Country and culture have long been recognised by our communities as integral to our health and wellbeing (Black et al., 2023). Dominant Australian institutions, however, have only recently caught up to this idea that culture is central to our health and wellbeing, and as a result it is now widely recognised as a cultural determinant of health (Black et al., 2023; Verbunt et al., 2021).

Cultural determinants of health include family and community connection, Country and place, Cultural identity, and self-determination (Verbunt et al., 2021). In Chapter 6, young people identified the importance of identity and the collective nature that identity is formed and understood across varying spaces and contexts. In Chapter 5, young people recognised the impact of historical trauma and how it has shaped their health and the health of their communities, including the absence of cultural practices and knowledge. In Chapter 7, young people recognised the lasting importance we have to our place and Country, the importance of language and the finding of acceptance and belonging in communities. In many ways, by understanding historical trauma, the stories presented capture the layers of how health of Aboriginal young people is determined by access to, and presence of culture and the diversities of culture socially and historically.

Black et al.'s (2023) recent study identifies the importance of cultural strengthening programs for Aboriginal young people and the positive outcomes of these programs that ensure and support young people to feel safe to be heard and listened to. Further, by having a program that has flexibility, the young person can be self-determined in how the program works for them in their lives and contexts moving forward (Black et al., 2023). Emphasised throughout is the importance of young people having strong relationships, connections to community and cultural practices as part of their everyday lives (Black et al., 2023; Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021). Additionally, the authors identify that having cultural strengthening programs is important for young people in that they enable young people to explore different perspectives of social and emotional wellbeing that are often not accounted for in western models and practices (Black et al., 2023).

Black et al. (2023) highlight the importance of truth-telling in young peoples' lives and how they navigate and heal from the impacts of cultural loss, intergenerational trauma, and racism. Healing is a lifelong journey that requires formal and informal support for young people to grow and learn throughout their life experiences, particularly during times of rapid change and growth (Black et al., 2023). Findlay (2023) further emphasises the importance of healing being re-framed outside of dominant perspectives, highlighting that when healing is framed in the context of Aboriginal ontologies and epistemologies, the focus is placed on the person's growth and transformation through connection to and support from the community around them. Acknowledging that relationality within the context of Aboriginal people is closely linked to Country, places in Country can be a source for both healing and trauma (Atkinson, 2002). Fernandez et al. (2021), in studying the impact of historical trauma in a First Nations community in North America, additionally note that healing is tethered to place. This was identified by participants engaging with historically significant sites of trauma and resistance, and the outcomes associated with this activity not only triggering the embodiment of stress associated with personal stories of historical trauma, but also how the embodiment of resistance was experienced as a result (Fernandez et al., 2021).

While in Chapter 5 the Aboriginal young people in this study recognised the impact of cultural loss and disconnection, in Chapter 6 they drew on the traumas of colonisation to speak their truth and draw strength from their identities as contemporary Aboriginal young people. Recognising that identity is a contested space, programs such as that described by Black et al. (2023) would benefit in helping, healing and strengthening Aboriginal young people in who they are collectively and individually. Importantly, overcoming the impact of historical trauma as identified by Kirmayer et al. (2011) is accomplished through the generation of collective identities and the valuing of culture as part of resisting oppression and assimilation. Further, as identified in Chapter 7, young people in this study recognise the importance of culture and the activities that are important to their health and wellbeing like sharing stories of resistance and strength generationally and access and learning of language, art, storytelling, and dance. They also recognised that they have an active role to play in their communities, particularly in ensuring they are present and are heard. As identified by Vizenor et al. (2013), this active presence and narrative formation is known as survivance, which, as highlighted by Wilbur and Gone (2023), is crucial to overcoming the impact of historical trauma. Lastly, as highlighted in Chapter 7, the young people recognise that despite truth-telling not occurring in the colony at large, individually and collectively the young people have their own stories to tell about their becoming.

> My son recently came home from school and asked me 'what animal is a burrgan? It is an Aboriginal name.' I responded that I did know, and he quickly responded, 'it is cat in Aboriginal language'. I responded with, 'It is a Gamilaroi word, you are learning Gamilaraay language. You are Gamilaroi". He looked at me, a little confused. I could have left it at that but sat him down and told him where we lived was on the Gamilaroi lands and that our people have been here for thousands of years. So when you are told you are going to learn Aboriginal language, you make sure you know in your heart, you are Gamilaroi, and you are learning our old peoples' language.
>
> Small moments within the everyday, I am attempting to bring in ways that my children can be sure they know who they are and where they are from. Why? Well, my story was different; despite living on the Country of my ancestors all my life, I only found out that I was Gamilaroi as a young adult. Despite knowing that I was Aboriginal, the place and Country that was calling me had no name, no reference.
>
> Moving through the ceremony of research, I have reference now to the places within the Country that are representative of the stories I know of love and hope. Stories that I can share throughout my life with my children and theirs. Places that hold memories of my time with Uncle Nev and Pop, driving across the lands of our people, visiting meeting places, coroboree grounds and trees that have survived not out of spite or claim, but love and hope.
>
> I have stories of my grandfather, who planted a kurrajong tree that was a meeting place for Gamilaroi people who had travelled from the Walhallow mission to wait there and be permitted to enter the colonial town of Quirindi. A story of the place where my grandfather was raised, a place known to him as the place of the meeting rivers.
>
> I have stories of my ancestors as very young people, riding home from the camps of the Stolen Generations, returning home, to Country and to place.
>
> Remembering and honoring these stories, is my becoming, it my return to the words of the Gamilaroi and our mother, guni ma, who calls us home to our stories and our place. For we are, the Stories we tell.

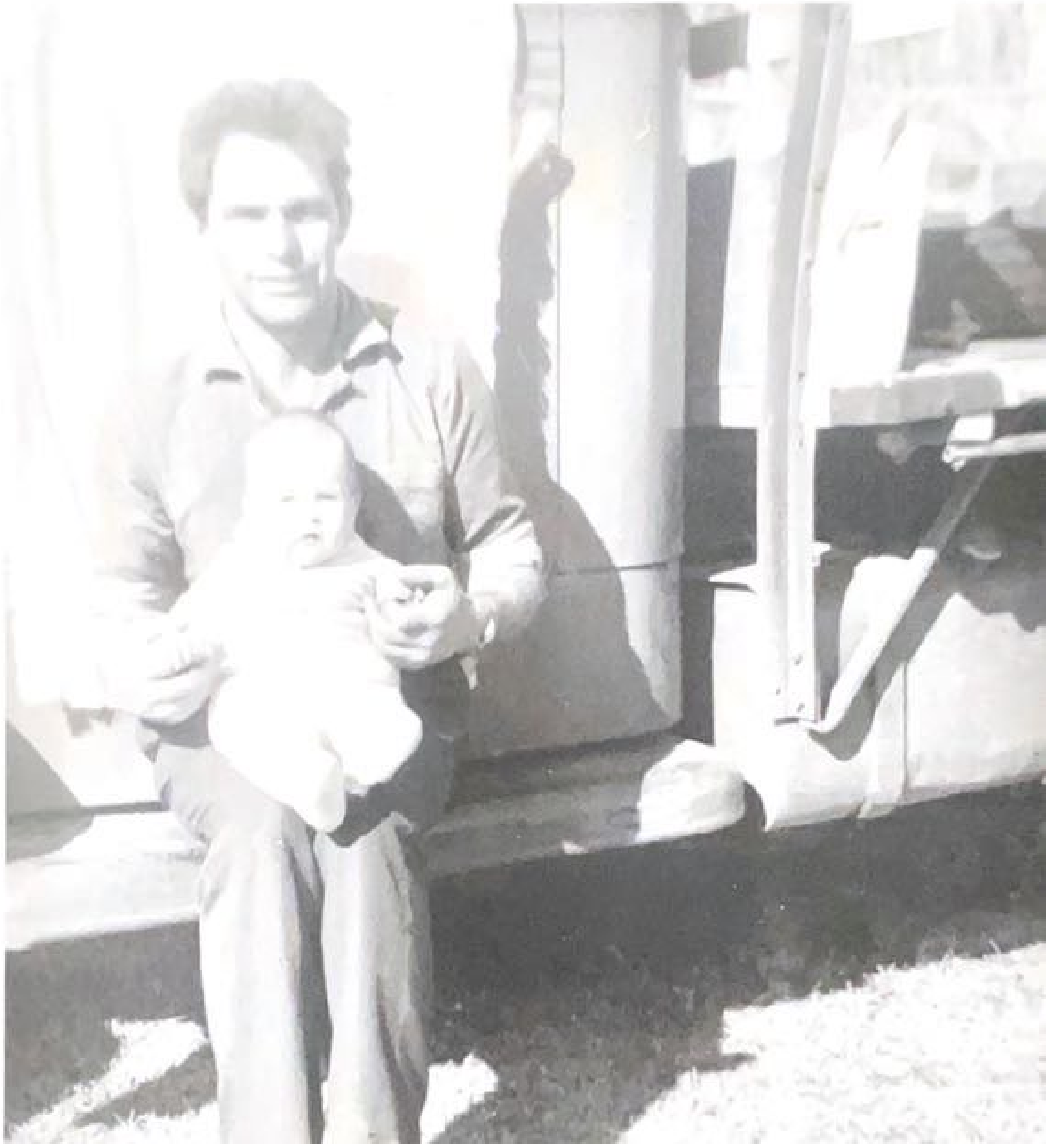

Figure 13: Pop “Biggie” Keith Smallwood, holding Dad, Philip Smallwood.

Continuing the ceremony

By positioning this section as a ‘Continuing the Ceremony’, this section holds a tension in that while this study sought to answer the intended research questions, the ceremony of understanding historical trauma and resilience in our communities with Aboriginal young people will continue beyond this thesis. As highlighted previously, this section represents the recommendations, strengths, and limitations for this work alike a traditional thesis structure.

Looking back to look forward

The first strength of this study is the use of the Aboriginal research paradigm and of Gamilaroi ways of knowing, being and doing. While not a prescriptive approach to research methodologies and methods, the study considered the unique ways in which all relationships with living and non-living entities were considered in the method of meaning-making to ensure both ethical and cultural responsibility, relevance and respect was considered as part of the research approach. Additionally, this approach also considered other ways of making sense in the field of inquiry, drawing on creative methods such as poetics and art-based mediums to privilege other ways of knowing, being, and doing and how the knowledge gained from this study can be translated in ways outside the academic traditions in the field of health research. Another strength of this study was the emphasis on listening and hearing the young peoples’ voices and stories throughout the analysis, write up and dissemination stages. The importance of listening to young people was highlighted in the literature review and was maintained throughout the entirety of the study. Importantly, this process of listening was further strengthened by using a locally relevant concept and practice of deep listening called winanga-li, which has also given space in the methodology to consider other formats of storytelling like poetics and art-based mediums.

One of the limitations of this study is that the method of data collection was influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which required all yarns to be conducted using zoom. I have often wondered if this was a limitation or a strength, acknowledging that the yarning interviews could have been quite different face to face. Prior to the lockdown periods recruitment and data collection were planned around community engagement initiatives within the local community. Opportunities like community engagement – for example, at networking events or community yarn ups – would have provided the opportunity to recruit more local Aboriginal young people from the community. As a result of the change to online data collection online, recruitment strategies were expanded to be promoted online, which meant that many of the participants were no longer living on Gamilaroi Country or, while connected in some way to the community, had never lived on Gamilaroi Country. Further, the Aboriginal young people in this study were mostly educated at a tertiary level or were working towards tertiary education; thus, the results of this study perhaps only represent a small proportion of the population of Aboriginal young people.

Continuing the story with young people

As identified in this study, historical trauma and resilience is a valuable field of inquiry to understand young peoples' perspectives in the field of health research. Further research into this space, led by and with young people, would create further opportunity to identify spaces of survivance in our communities and to foster and build stories of resilience, resistance, belonging, hope, and self-determination. Additionally, further inquiry in the space of healing from colonisation should be led and done with Aboriginal young people. Importantly, this work could potentially inform policy and practice in providing services for young people, particularly in the growing areas of social and emotional wellbeing and the cultural determinants of health. Further, research in the space of Aboriginal young peoples' health and wellbeing would benefit from employing Aboriginal-designed techniques to ensure the privileging of voice and lived experience at the forefront of inquiry. Importantly this study has identified the need for health professionals to consider the long-term impacts of colonisation, not just in the historical context but also how it continues to impact young people and their families.

Knowledge translation

Knowledge generated by this research project has been shared with community throughout the ceremony, both formally and informally. One of the key areas of feedback was around ensuring the research outcomes were accessible to the community, so that they can engage with the project's findings and the young peoples' stories holistically. Importantly, once the initial community feedback is complete, the next phase of knowledge translation will be led by the community to create potentially other formats of sharing this work – for example, creative workshops and yarning circles.

> During the course of my study working in the field of Aboriginal health research, more often than not I would hear stories from community about the transactional nature in how health researchers would operate in our community. What I mean by transactional is that researchers would come to community seeking knowledge about a certain area of health that they were wishing to investigate in community; there are too many to name, but the community would be promised initially that the

> project would be grounded with community and that opportunities and outcomes of the research were promised to be beneficial for the community. Often this was during the time that recruitment for the study was heightened, and communities would participate under the presumption that the research would benefit to their lives and their community. Often, however, once the project team completed data collection, the community would never hear from the researchers again. Observing these transactions, I was conscious of not falling into this trap, but also that I may also have contributed to the problem.... Taking this head on, I became aware of the growing space of research that Aboriginal health researchers are advocating for in the field of knowledge translation, focused on ensuring research benefits, outcomes and related initiatives are directly informed and guided by the community. In the context of this ceremony of research, once I complete the formal process of my doctorate study, I have made initial plans to disseminate the research outcomes as a result. This will start with a community event that will be held on Country, likely located on Little Wave Rock – where this story began (see Figure 1, Prologue). At this event, opportunity will be created to inform the next steps towards translating this ceremony's findings guided by community and the young people themselves. I have some initial ideas about how this may look, including different art-based methods that could potentially be utilised by community to share the stories of this ceremony widely for example creating a film, to capture stories from Uncle and Elders in our community about our continued survivance in the context of the wider Gamilaroi community around us.

Conclusions

Historical trauma inquiry is a valuable space within the research into health and wellbeing among Indigenous populations globally who share similar British colonial histories (Paradies, 2016). Despite the field being burdened with its literal or metaphorical implications, this study aimed to understand the perspectives of Aboriginal young people and their collective experiences of historical trauma and its impact on their lives, and the lives of their families and communities. Positioned using strength-based approaches, this study further aimed to illuminate stories of strength and resilience. Identified within this study, Aboriginal young people recognise the continuing nature of colonisation and the experiences of historical trauma both historically and contemporary. These experiences are expressed within and outside of the colonial structures that continue to oppress Aboriginal people and their lived experiences of cultural loss, trauma, and racism. Importantly, stories from their past shape their futures, and by the young people recognising the collective and generative strength of our ancestors that has sustained Aboriginal cultures for thousands of years, stories of survivance continue to propel

Aboriginal people forward into the future. Healing needs to continue to occur in community to be embedded in the contexts of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing so that growth and transformation can be nurtured and supported throughout. Acknowledging that historical trauma stories walk a fine line between documenting trauma, versus documenting strength as highlighted by the stories through this thesis, returning to stories of healing our traumas is the path forward for our communities.

EPILOGUE

I keep having a yarn with this version of myself who started this story long ago.

I wonder about the yarn that the two of us would have, and insights I would
bring to the young woman that I am sure, I would no longer recognise today.

I would hold her hand and tell her to tread lightly and take her time, “find time
to be and space for silence”.

I then would give her hug and tell her to let the movement of emotion move through her, to flow with the current and not let it consume her.

“Feel it all around you, let it be” I would whisper.

That once she was through the storm, I would hug her again and tell her.

“Tread lightly, to find space for silence”.

That when grief comes knocking “find hope” I would say, reminding her to look for love and forgiveness for herself and others.

To not be afraid and that grief would become her teacher…

“Tread lightly and find space for silence”.

Poetic transcription 10, ‘Space for Silence’ (R. Smallwood, 2023)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Smallwood, R. (2023). Historical trauma and resilience: Finding poetics to amplify Aboriginal young peoples' voices. In. H. van Rooyen & K. Pithouse-Morgan (Eds.), *Poetic Inquiry for the Human and Social Sciences: Voices from the South and North.*

Title

Historical trauma and resilience: Finding poetics to amplify Aboriginal young peoples' voices

Abstract

This story begins with the occasion for a poetic method (Sullivan, 2009), to represent the voices of young people, who identify as Aboriginal contemporarily in Australia, living in a colonial society that continues to oppress and silence their voices. The young people of this story, experience and embody the strength, trauma, and love of their Bla(c)k bodies and the bodies of their ancestors. Holding of hope, thus is this intent for this occasion, drawing on a powerful ancient living practices, to share and hold you the reader, in this ceremony of research (Wilson, 2008). A dance between you and I, of timeless sense-making, within knowledge that is engendered to decolonise and speak to the tensions and complexities of living Bla(c)k in a place we now call Australia. The arrival of this poetic occasion was through the deep listening of the voices of Aboriginal young people, and how I could culturally and ethically re-represent their voices, whilst remaining aligned with the emancipatory goal of this ceremony. Subsequently the voiced-out, had become the voiced in, presenting a story of loving and living black beyond the colonial-imposed experiences, using poetics to express young people's stories in a poem called "This is fine".

The poem

This is fine

Easier
To stop identifying
Black
Treated like animals
Affects
Identity crisis
Shamed
Wasn’t community   connection to land
Unsettled
Harder to move past
Connected
Strong ties to community
Divided
More connection   if she was alive
Not accepted
Self-validation
No-proof
It’s a lot of work   to find the cultural line
Traumatised
Lack of identity   wrong to be who you are
Identify
Start again   find cultural connection
Belonging
Their parents told them   not to
Excluded

Aboriginal student removed from education
Claiming
You're supposed to be white
Look white
Clearly, not Aboriginal
Accepted
Not accepted by family
Caucasian
You're supposed to be Caucasian
Hear
Racial comments and stuff
White life
Black life
Molded
To be white
On Country
Learning their culture
Suppressed
Bought up on lies not strength
Missioned
We are different
Defined
By your postcode oh and the colour of your skin
Aboriginal
You need to be proud of yourselves
Go

Get educated

Sick

Of explaining

Conform

Knowing your cultural connections

Good enough

Battling inadequacy

Can’t

I was just a little black girl at uni

Stigmatised

Well, they’d say “you’re probably just stay, have no job”

Lost

Identity is important to me

Ancestors

Kings of Yula a mystical place

Callin’ me

My Country

Spread out

Complex to understand

Together

We are all one

Empowered

Know the impact colonisation historical trauma

Confident

Having a voice

United

More accepting

Culture

Proud to be Aboriginal

I am Aboriginal This is fine

R Smallwood (2022)

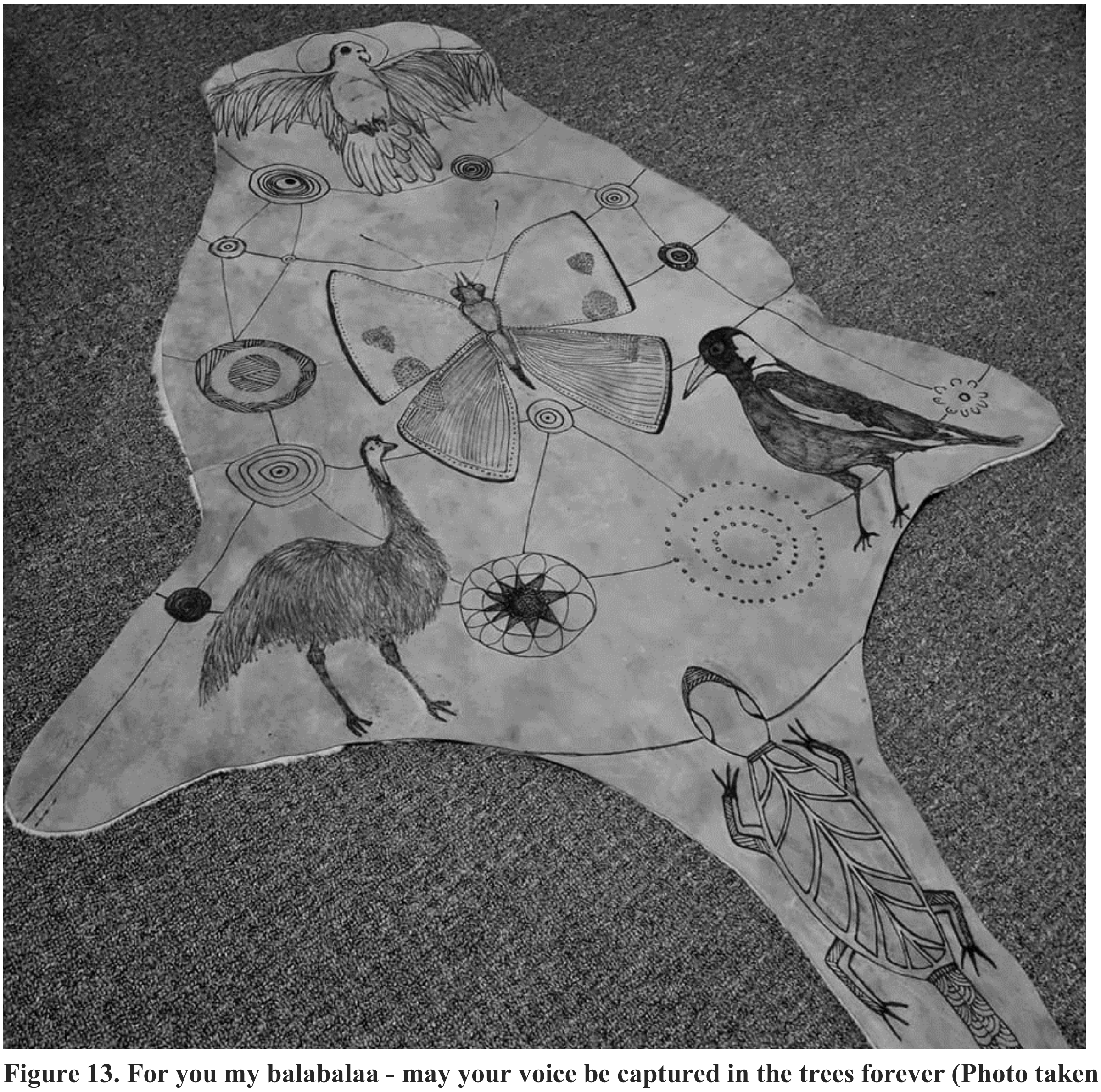
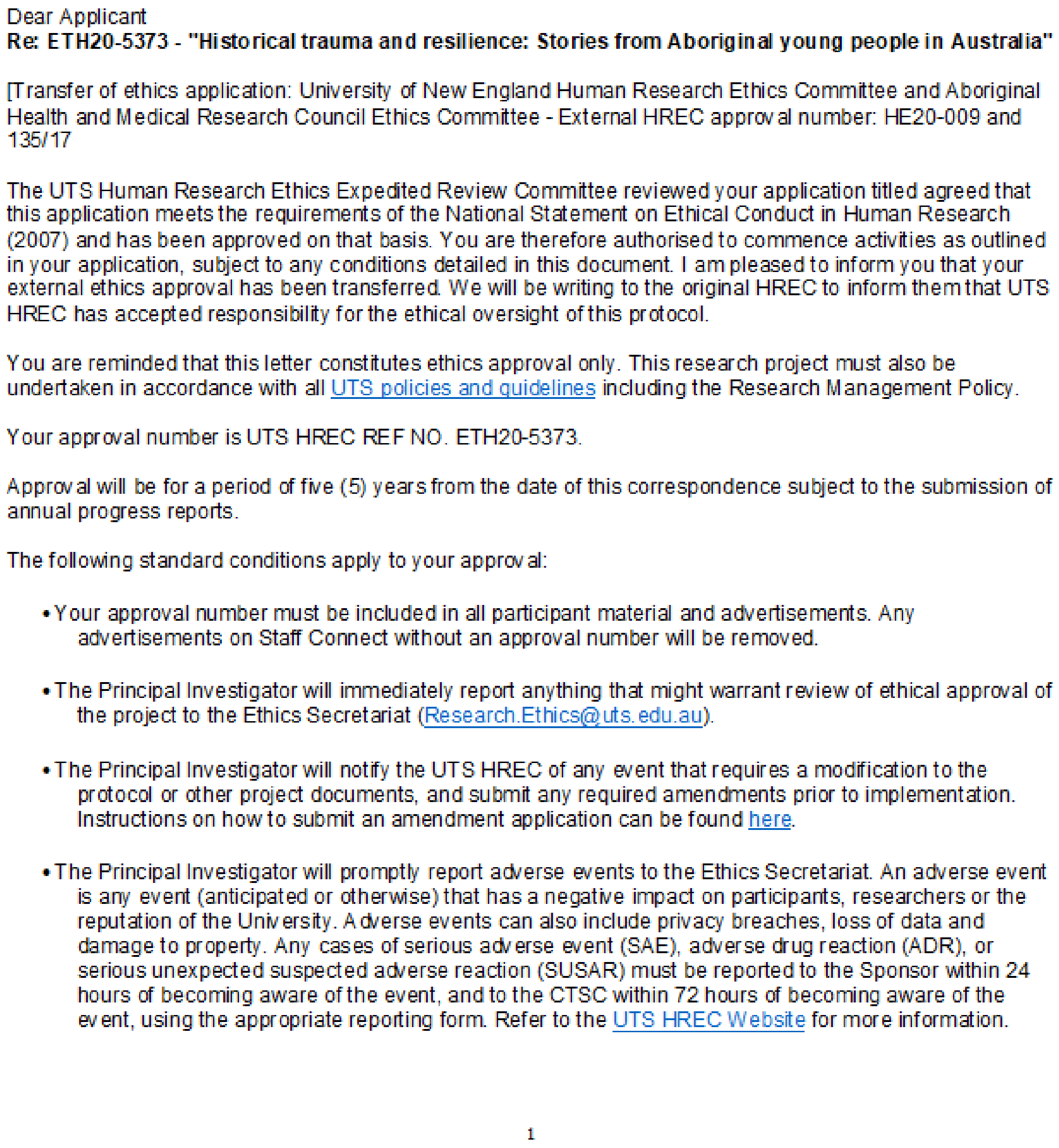


Figure 13. For you my balabalaa - may your voice be captured in the trees forever (Photo taken in 2021, of Kangaroo Skin cloak, designed and burned by Author for ceremonial practices relating to mourning).

Appendix 2



Dear Applicant
Re: ETH20-5373 - "Historical trauma and resilience: Stories from Aboriginal young people in Australia"

[Transfer of ethics application: University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Ethics Committee - External HREC approval number: HE20-009 and 135/17

The UTS Human Research Ethics Expedited Review Committee reviewed your application titled agreed that this application meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorised to commence activities as outlined in your application, subject to any conditions detailed in this document. I am pleased to inform you that your external ethics approval has been transferred. We will be writing to the original HREC to inform them that UTS HREC has accepted responsibility for the ethical oversight of this protocol.

You are reminded that this letter constitutes ethics approval only. This research project must also be undertaken in accordance with all UTS policies and guidelines including the Research Management Policy.

Your approval number is UTS HREC REF NO. ETH20-5373.

Approval will be for a period of five (5) years from the date of this correspondence subject to the submission of annual progress reports.

The following standard conditions apply to your approval:

- Your approval number must be included in all participant material and advertisements. Any advertisements on Staff Connect without an approval number will be removed.
- The Principal Investigator will immediately report anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project to the Ethics Secretariat (Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au).
- The Principal Investigator will notify the UTS HREC of any event that requires a modification to the protocol or other project documents, and submit any required amendments prior to implementation. Instructions on how to submit an amendment application can be found here.
- The Principal Investigator will promptly report adverse events to the Ethics Secretariat. An adverse event is any event (anticipated or otherwise) that has a negative impact on participants, researchers or the reputation of the University. Adverse events can also include privacy breaches, loss of data and damage to property. Any cases of serious adverse event (SAE), adverse drug reaction (ADR), or serious unexpected suspected adverse reaction (SUSAR) must be reported to the Sponsor within 24 hours of becoming aware of the event, and to the CTSC within 72 hours of becoming aware of the event, using the appropriate reporting form. Refer to the UTS HREC Website for more information.

Appendix 3

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Historical trauma and resilience: Stories from Aboriginal young people in Australia

UTS HREC ETH20-5373

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is Reakeeta Smallwood, I am a proud Gamilaroi woman and I am an PhD student at UTS. My supervisor is Dr. Tamara Power, Professor Debra Jackson, Professor Kim Usher and Dr. Cindy Woods.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

The research aims to explore the impact colonisation and how it has affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in relation to their health and everyday life as being healthy and happy. Some people have called this Historical Trauma. As part of our project, we want to hear your story on this topic as a way to offer solutions to our community and the wider communities.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and you are aged between 18-25years.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to meet with me via Video or teleconference yarn with you at a time of your choice. We expect the yarn to not take too long, but it depends on how much you would like to share with us on this important topic. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of the interview to ensure that I recall the information you provide in the right way. Following the interview, a copy will be prepared from the audio file and a copy provided to you if you wish to read it.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

Yes, there are some risks/inconvenience. It is possible this research will raise personal or upsetting issues; if it does you can let me know and I can arrange support for you. We have arranged an Accredited Mental Health Nurse to be available to phone you or you to phone them when needed. I will also call you within 24 hours after our yarn and 1 week after our yarn if you wish to consent. At any time during the interview, we can stop the interview and there will be no issues whatsoever. You can also choose not to answer a particular question. If you wish to contact any confidential services, commonly Lifeline is the best as it is 100% confidential and can be contacted on 13 11 14, or Beyond Blue who can be contacted on 1300 22 4636.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

If you decide not to participate, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney. If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Reakeeta via Reakeeta.l.smallwood@student.uts.edu.au

However, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study results if these have already had your identifying details removed.

If you decide to leave the research project, we will not collect additional personal information from you, although personal information already collected will be retained to ensure that the results of the research project can be measured properly and to comply with law. You should be aware that data collected up to the time you withdraw will form part of the research project results. If you do not want them to do this, you must tell them before you join the research project.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will keep all hardcopy notes and recordings of the interview in a locked cabinet in my office. Any electronic data will be kept on UTS's OneDrive that will be accessed only via password. Only the research team will have access to the data.

All personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No one will be able to identify you in any of the documents we put together for this study. All names will be replaced by a cover-up name; this will ensure you identity is safe. If you agree, I would like to quote some of your responses. This will also be done in a way to ensure that you are not identifiable. At any time, you have the right to withdraw.

We plan to publish the results in a main document of findings, called a thesis and in addition we will aim to publish in a number of academic journals and potentially a book. As part of this we will further be looking for ways in which we produce the findings through plain text means via multiple formats including social media. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisor can help you with, please feel free to contact on *Reakeeta.l.smallwood@student.uts.edu.au or my primary supervisor Dr. Tamara Power on tamara.power@uts.edu.au*

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

NOTE:

This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee UTS HREC guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au and quote the UTS HREC ETH20-5373. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

In addition, we have also sort and obtained approval in line with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council for NSW. You are also encouraged to contact Sonny Green if concerned, who is the Senior HREC Officer for Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council for NSW, when contacting please contact SGreen@ahmrc.org.au and (02) 9212 477

CONSENT FORM

Historical trauma and resilience: Stories from Aboriginal young people in Australia

AND UTS HREC ETH20-5373

I ____________________ *[participant's name]* agree to participate in the research project *[Historical trauma and resilience: Stories from Aboriginal young people in Australia and UTS HREC ETH20-5373* being conducted by *Reakeeta Smallwood, Tamworth NSW, Reakeeta.l.smallwood@student.uts.edu.au*. I understand that funding for this research has been provided by the University of Technology Sydney's Research committee and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be:

☐ Audio recorded and transcribed verbatim

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that:

☐ Does not identify me in any way

☐ May be used for future research purposes

I am aware that I can contact *Reakeeta Smallwood* if I have any concerns about the research.

____ ____/____/____

Name and Signature [participant] Date

____ ____/____/____

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate] Date

Appendix 4

Interview Questions

These interviews will be conducted using a **yarning** conversational approach. Aboriginal people use yarning in the telling and sharing of stories and information (Geia, Hayes & Usher, 2013). **Conversational yarning** takes place before the research yarn and is informal and unstructured. It may be guided by the topic that both people choose to discuss. The **research yarn** takes place using a more structured approach where the sole purpose is to gather information through participants' stories related to the research topic (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). A recent article by Carlin, Atkinson and Marley (2019), outline steps to be taken when using a yarning approach (see Table 1 below) and we have outlined our process under the first four steps (a good article to read before interviewing).

Table 1: Yarning as methodology. Steps used in 'Having a quiet word': yarning with Aboriginal women in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia about mental health and mental health screening in the perinatal period.

Step Description

1 Introduction and brokerage of the researcher in the participant's space

2 Deconstructing the research agenda

3 Establishing informed consent

4 The research topic yarn

5 Reviewing the yarn and re-confirming permission for future use of data

6 Reflecting, coding and analysis

7 Presentation of results to participants, key Aboriginal stakeholders and the Pilbara Aboriginal Health Planning Forum for review, feedback and revision

8 Publication of results and dissemination back to key stakeholders and participants

(Carlin, Atkinson & Marley, 2019, p. 4256).

Step 1:

Start the interview with a **conversational yarn**: for example, ask the young person to tell you a bit about themselves, what they like to do, where they go to school, hobbies they have etc. Alternatively, offer a pencil and piece of paper and ask them to draw their family tree and name people and connections. Can also give them a language map and ask them where their mob is from as an interview starter.

Step 2:

Inform them of the project. Show them the **participant information sheet** again. Ask if they have any questions. If not, invite them to sign the **consent form**.

Step 3:

Once you feel the young person is comfortable, tell them you are about to start the **research yarn** and ask them for permission to turn the recorder on and inform them that you may also be taking some notes (may have someone else take notes if there is an extra person available and the participant agrees). Also remind them they can stop the interview at any time or ask to take a break if they want to.

Step 4:

"Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed today. You filled in the survey for our team in the first part of our study and we are grateful for your input as that will assist us to better understand the issues experienced by young people in this community. We are really keen to learn more about social and emotional well-being and resilience of young people."

Questions:

Social and emotional wellbeing *is a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe the social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural wellbeing of a person. It recognises that connection to land, culture, spirituality, family, and community are important to people and can all impact on their wellbeing.*

1. What do you think social and emotional wellbeing means to young people in this community?

2. What helps them to maintain their wellbeing?

Probe: Do you have family and community support? If so, can you tell us about these people and how they help you?

3. What things are especially important for you to maintain your wellbeing?

Probe: Do you attend any local sport groups or other activities? If so, how do these help you?

4. What would you identify as risks to young people’s wellbeing, especially in this community?

Probe: What type of things could be provided here that would benefit young people?

Young Indigenous people face many issues that can be linked to what is known as ***historical trauma****, what people mean by that is trauma that is passed on through generations as a result of colonisation or settlement of this country by non-indigenous people.*

5. Have you heard about this before?

6. How do you think historical trauma affect Indigenous young people today?

7. Can you tell me how historical trauma has affected people in your family and community?

Not all Aboriginal people succumb to trauma; in fact, we know Aboriginal people are ***very strong*** *and have overcome many obstacles put in their path.*

8. Can you tell us how Aboriginal people in this community have overcome the problems that can arise as a result of intergenerational trauma?

9. What things do you think help Aboriginal people stay strong?

10. What things do you think help Aboriginal **young** people stay strong?

11. What things can we do to help young Aboriginal people become stronger?

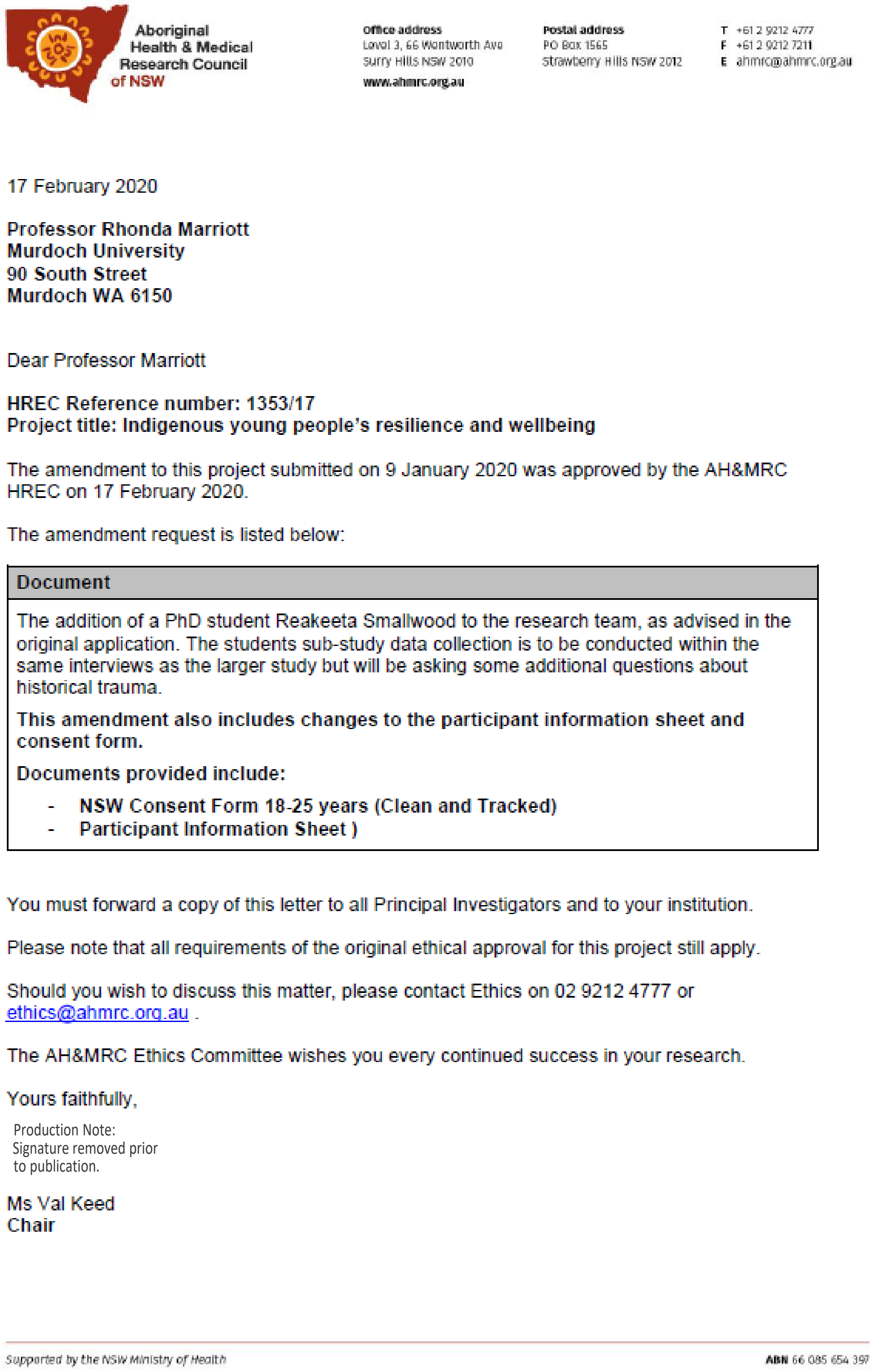
References

Bessarab, D. & Ng'andu, B. (2010). Yarning About Yarning as a Legitimate Method in Indigenous Research. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies,* 3(1), 37-50.

Carlin, E., Atkinson, D. & Marley, J.V. (2019). 'Having a Quiet Word': Yarning with Aboriginal Women in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia about Mental Health and Mental Health Screening during the Perinatal Period. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health,*16: 4253.https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16214253

Geia, L., Hayes, B. & Usher, K. (2013). Yarning/Aboriginal storytelling: towards an understanding of an Indigenist perspective and its implications for practice. Contemporary Nurse, 46(1), 13-17.

Appendix 5



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17 February 2020

Professor Rhonda Marriott
Murdoch University
90 South Street
Murdoch WA 6150

Dear Professor Marriott

HREC Reference number: 1353/17
Project title: Indigenous young people's resilience and wellbeing

The amendment to this project submitted on 9 January 2020 was approved by the AH&MRC HREC on 17 February 2020.

The amendment request is listed below:

Document
The addition of a PhD student Reakeeta Smallwood to the research team, as advised in the original application. The students sub-study data collection is to be conducted within the same interviews as the larger study but will be asking some additional questions about historical trauma. **This amendment also includes changes to the participant information sheet and consent form.** **Documents provided include:** - **NSW Consent Form 18-25 years (Clean and Tracked)** - **Participant Information Sheet)**

You must forward a copy of this letter to all Principal Investigators and to your institution.

Please note that all requirements of the original ethical approval for this project still apply.

Should you wish to discuss this matter, please contact Ethics on 02 9212 4777 or ethics@ahmrc.org.au .

The AH&MRC Ethics Committee wishes you every continued success in your research.

Yours faithfully,

Production Note:
Signature removed prior
to publication.

Ms Val Keed
Chair

Supported by the NSW Ministry of Health **ABN** 66 085 654 397

Appendix 6

Distress and safety Protocol with Zoom, teleconference or videoconference:

The following protocol will be put in place should a participant become distressed and require either additional or on-going assistance. A range of services will be offered depending on the circumstances. The aim is to mitigate and manage distress that can potentially arise during the research activity via tele/video conference collection of the data.

Prior to the commencement of any interview, information regarding the counselling available should it be required will be provided to all prospective and actual study participants. The following pocket guide will be provided to the participant via email or text message. Please see Appendix 1. This will be discussed when discussing the participant information sheet with them via phone/zoom.

The researcher will provide sufficient information regarding the risks and benefits of the research so that individuals may freely choose to accept or decline participation. This information will be made available to the participant prior to the interview commencing. An additional notification of this information will also be given to those participants should they become distressed during the actual study.

Strategies to assist those distressed during an interview.

As the interview will be via video/teleconference, if the participant becomes uncomfortable or distressed while discussing any topic during the interview, the following actions will be taken by the interviewer:

1. The researcher will continually check in with the participant throughout the interview and if participant becomes distressed (either observed or explicitly) the researcher will acknowledge the distress and reassure the participant and remind them that it is ok to stop participating at any time. The researcher will ask the participant if they would like to take a break.
2. If/when the participant is ok to continue, the researcher will continue with the interview and monitor distress throughout the interview.
3. If the participant becomes too distressed to continue the interview, it will be suggested to the participant that the interview be terminated, and the tape recording be turned off.

4. If the participant wishes this to happen, the interview will be ceased. The researcher will stay on the video conference/phone call until they are comfortable the participant is ok.
5. The participant will be offered the contact details to the on-call independent and accredited mental health nurse.
6. The researcher will seek consent to contact the participant the following day to check on their wellbeing, and again within 7 days after the interview to check on the participant's wellbeing.
7. If distress is still a concern at any stage it will be recommended to the participant that they follow up with their local GP.

Distress and safety Protocol: Researcher (Masters student)

The following protocol will be put in place should a researcher become distressed or be at-risk during field work and require emergency, additional or on-going assistance. A range of services will be offered depending on her circumstances.

Strategies to assist interviewer/researcher experiencing distress during or after an interview.

1. The researcher will have regular meetings with their supervisors
2. The researcher will seek support from and debrief with the research team and consider ceasing interviews temporarily if experiencing distress.

3. The researcher will be referred to a counselling professional to discuss their concerns or a referral made to their Employee Assistance Program if necessary.

Conclusion

It is the researcher's duty of care to ensure that there is a balanced consideration of the benefits against the risks. The researcher will ensure these strategies are put into place prior to commencing the interviews or discussions.

Below is the step by step guided protocol adapted from Draucker C B, Martsolf D S and Poole C (2009) Developing Distress Protocols for research on Sensitive Topics. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 23 (5) pp 343-35

Appendix 1

A photo will be taken of this and distributed to the participant prior to interview.

Support for you after our yarn

1. If you agree, I will call you 24 hours after our yarn to check on your wellbeing, and I will call you again 1 week after.
2. If you feel distressed, we encourage you to call Dr. Lesley Douglas who is a mental health nurse, for support: contact number 04XX XXX XXX, she will be available during business hours Monday to Friday.
3. If you wish to contact a confidential service, please call:
    a. Lifeline 13 11 14
    b. Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
4. You can also contact your local AMS for support: Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation 026773 1498 or Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service 026760 2500

Appendix 7

VERBAL CONSENT SCRIPT

Interview no:

Date:

Time:

Interviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today about Indigenous youth and their health and wellbeing. We are hoping to understand how colonisation has impacted the health and wellbeing of Indigenous adolescents. While we have made the questions more general in nature, the questions may bring up some *sensitive issues or thoughts, so if you are feeling distressed or need to take a break we can stop at any time.* The interview will take approximately *45 -60 minutes.* If you feel that you would rather not go on with the interview that is fine too.

[Waiting for participant to confirm they are happy to continue, otherwise thank them for their time.]

Thank you. Now I just need to confirm some information about you, and I'm going to start *the tape recorder* recording. This will help us to accurately record your story, but all this information will remain completely confidential. Is that OK?

First, I need to ask you some questions to confirm that you consent to participating. Remember, even after you've answered these questions, you can withdraw your consent at any time during the interview. However, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study results if these have already had your identifying details removed.

The consent questions are:

Question	Yes	No

Have you read the information contained in the participant information sheet or had it read to you?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and are you satisfied with the answers you have received?		
Do you understand that there may be risks, for example it may bring up distressing feelings and you may not want to continue responding to the questions or the interview?		
Do you understand that the research will produce reports, academic work, articles, audio publications and a book *potentially?*		
Do you freely agree to participate in this activity, with the understanding that you may withdraw at any time?		
Do you agree to having this interview audio recorded and transcribed?		
Do you agree that research data gathered for the study may be quoted and published using a cover-up name?		
Do you agree for me to contact you 24hrs after and 1 week after the interview to check in with you?		

(If answered NO to any of these – clarify and/or discontinue interview)

If you have any concerns about the research, you can contact my, Reakeeta on 0408 229 386

This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee UTS HREC guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au and quote the UTS HREC ETH20-5373. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

In addition, we have also sort and obtained approval in line with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council for NSW. You are also encouraged to contact Sonny Green if concerned, who is the Senior HREC Officer for Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council for NSW, when contacting please contact SGreen@ahmrc.org.au and (02) 9212 477

If the participant declines to provide verbal consent: