Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?

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

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Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Signed:  

Stuart Barlo

Date:  02/03/2016  
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Abstract

Over the last 10 years there has been a cry from the Indigenous leaders within Australia. One of those Indigenous leaders is Tom Calma, the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner, who consistently ended each of his addresses with: “Australia needs to restore the human dignity to the Aboriginal people” (Calma, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012). In keeping with this outcry, this research examines the impact of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men, and the importance of Aboriginal culture to the restoration and maintenance of that dignity.

At the time of colonisation, Aboriginal men were regularly involved in all aspects of community life through their roles and responsibilities that were part of the cultural norms. Since the colonisation process began in Australia in 1788, these roles and responsibilities have been devalued, deconstructed and in many cases deemed irrelevant.

The policies of the current and recent governments create further impetus for the need for this research as they demonstrate blatant disregard for the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal men. An example was the Commonwealth Government’s 2007 enactment of the Northern Territory Emergency Response policy. This policy had an immediate impact on the dignity of the Aboriginal men of the Northern Territory.

A study of the literature revealed four concepts of dignity – merit, moral stature, identity and human right – and that each of these concepts have a set of locus of control that involve either external or internal influences. These factors influence the restoration of dignity among Aboriginal men. An understanding of these concepts was important in analysing the yarning sessions with Aboriginal participants that were conducted as part of this research project. The methodology and research method utilised in this project are based on a method of imparting knowledge referred to by Australian Aboriginal Elders as ‘yarning’. This method incorporates a yarning space that is protected by seven principles and six protocols and this thesis explains how those 13 items protect the participants and their stories. Each participant in the study comes with his family history, life stories and experiences that combine together to form his narratives. From within the yarning space an environment is created that allows
the opportunity for the flow of healing, connections, strength, truth, understanding, knowledge, wisdom and relationships.

A similar style of knowledge transference is widely used among the First Nation groups in Canada and is known as ‘talking circles’. To provide the research with a comparative aspect, a number of First Nations men were asked to participate in this study. These data were used in formulating the conclusions.

The results of this project emphasised the importance of the Elders’ belief that the restoration of dignity for Aboriginal men is strongly linked to culture and its foundational principles. Further research is required to identify possible programs and processes to restore Aboriginal men’s dignity that include these principles.

The development of an enhanced methodology created methods that are culturally competent, with core values of respect and honour and the aim of providing a culturally safe environment. As a method of presenting this thesis in a culturally appropriate manner, 17 original art works have been included throughout the document. These will be published and presented to each of the participants as a gift.
**Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge the Bundjalung nation on whose land I have written this thesis and conducted part of the research. I acknowledge the Elders both past and present who have maintained the strengths of the Aboriginal culture in this great land. I would also like to acknowledge the guidance from the unseen world, that kept me on track and passionate about the restoration of dignity to Aboriginal men.

There are many people that I would like to acknowledge and to whom I extend gratitude for the support they have offered me during my PhD candidature. First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank the participants in this study, the Elders who shared their life stories with me so openly. I feel privileged to have met these men and listened to their stories.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and dedication of my supervisors, Professor Norm Sheehan, Professor Bill Boyd and Dr Alessandro Pelizzon. Their knowledge and wisdom have been inspirational and I thank them for their patience, kindness, understanding, and enthusiasm.

I would like to thank a group I refer to as my ‘Brains Trust’. Kayleen Wardell, Maureen Bezanson, Glenda Scibilia helped with researching sources. Sharon Wheeler and Jeff Smith tirelessly sourced the rare and unique books and documents that form part of the knowledge base for this project.

I acknowledge the support of my fellow PhD candidates who have shared this journey with me and have offered peer support and encouragement. Many thanks must go to Robert Lingard and Jeff Hodgins. I also extend my sincere appreciation to my colleagues in Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples at Southern Cross University, who have provided endless enthusiasm and support for this thesis.

I acknowledge the infinite love, support, and encouragement I have received from my wife, Rhonda.
Finally, to my friends who put up with cancelled appointments because there was always something else that needed to be written. You have provided me with the inspiration and motivation to see this project to its completion.
Dedication

To all the Aboriginal men who suffered the indignity of the unfounded political declarations made against them

and

To those who despite the racism and hardship throughout their lives know who they are and carry themselves with pride and dignity.
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Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?
Foreword

The researcher, Stuart Barlo, is an Australian Aboriginal man from the Yuin nation of the far south coast of New South Wales. Stuart graduated from Western Sydney University with a Diploma of Social Welfare and over the last thirty years has worked alongside Indigenous communities in all states of Australia. In 2012, he completed a Bachelor of Indigenous Studies (Hons) focusing on men’s issues and has been involved in teaching Indigenous studies at Southern Cross University. His experience in both social work and education has assisted in shaping this research.

Part of the impetus for this research project came about when Stuart was working in the Northern Territory in 2007. This was when the federal government introduced a policy that effectively declared that every Aboriginal man living in the Northern Territory was a paedophile and involved in domestic violence. This policy had an immediate impact on the dignity of those Aboriginal men, including Stuart. Stuart’s passion to see all men taking responsibility in society (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) has led him to hope to see men embrace their identity and their position in their community, and to be allowed to fulfil their destiny.

As part of the research, a number of Elders shared non-public cultural information to emphasise their statements. They requested that this information be not made public, and it has not been included. However, it has influenced the understanding of the concept of dignity from an Aboriginal perspective and therefore the outcomes of this research. Due to the impacts of colonisation on the lives of these men by reducing them to numbers or people of no consequence, the participants have requested that their names be associated with their comments. To comply with this request, each of the participants has been identified with their title and name as is the custom within Australian Aboriginal culture. During the course of this research, one of the participants passed away. Cultural restrictions associated with sorry business direct that his stories have not been used but they too have had an impact on the understanding of the concept of dignity by the researcher.

Embedded throughout this thesis is a series of original artworks that have two primary functions. Firstly, the art provides a culturally sensitive avenue to use to present this thesis.
and to communicate the research results and findings to the knowledge custodians who provided the information. Secondly, various forms of art including painting, dance and song have long been part of Indigenous knowledge systems. Indigenous art is strongly linked to two interlinked knowledge systems: inside knowledge systems and clan or country knowledge systems.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Australia needs to restore the human dignity to the Aboriginal people”


Over the last 10 years there has been a call coming from the Indigenous leadership within Australia. One of those leaders is Tom Calma, the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner who consistently ended each of his addresses with: “Australia needs to restore the human dignity to the Aboriginal people”, regardless of the topic (Calma, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012). The international community is making a similar call though the United Nations with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). In keeping with this call, this research examines the impact of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men and the importance of Aboriginal culture to the restoration and maintenance of dignity.

1.1 The big picture

At the time of colonisation, Australian Aboriginal men were regularly involved in all aspects of community life. Aboriginal men had roles and responsibilities that enabled them to have an impact in every aspect of Aboriginal society. The following list of roles and responsibilities demonstrates the totality of the involvement of Aboriginal men at the time of colonisation:

- Family provision (through hunting)
- Manufacturing (in the production of hunting equipment, canoes and shelters)
- Family involvement (care of and interaction with the family unit)
- Support and protection of the family unit
- Crime and punishment (responsibilities within the wider nation group)
- Education (including initiations, training of younger men into their roles and responsibilities within the nation group, hunting and living skills)

In contrast to these traditional times and due to the impact of colonisation on Australian Aboriginal societies, the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal men have been devalued, deconstructed and in many cases, deemed irrelevant (McCauley, 2008). This has been done is through consistent negative stereotypes. These began over 300 years ago with William Dampier’s demeaning journal comments that the Aboriginal men of the north-west coast are “lazy, slothful and unwilling to work” (Frances Peters-Little, Curthoys, & Docker, 2010). This sentiment has been echoed right through to the current day where the media still depicts Aboriginal men as lazy, drunkards and a group that is prone to commit acts of family violence (Nowra, 2007; Trudgen, 2000).

One of the difficulties for Aboriginal men is that two pictures come to mind when most non-Aboriginal people discuss Aboriginal people in general but men in particular, The first mental picture is that of the noble savage – an Aboriginal man standing on one leg leaning on his spear looking out over his country. The second picture is a group of drunken men loitering around a street or park (Trudgen, 2000).

Further motivation for this study is the Northern Territory Emergency Response policy implemented in 2007 by the Australian Federal Government. This policy was in response to the Little Children Are Sacred report (Wild & Anderson, 2007) which indicated that domestic violence, child sexual assault and sexually transmitted diseases were rampant in the Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory. The response contained a number of measures that, on the surface indicated they had the best intentions of protecting the Aboriginal children of the Northern Territory. These measures included welfare quarantining, where every Aboriginal person receiving welfare payments in the Northern Territory would no longer receive them automatically, but would need to take their welfare card to the nearest government office to be topped up manually (Anaya, 2010). For most people living in remote areas within the Northern Territory this meant a 1,000 kilometre round trip to Katherine, Darwin or other major regional towns. In addition to this, the only employment available to the Aboriginal men of the Northern Territory was with-drawn when the government removed its support of the Community Development Employment Programs (Altman, 2003, 2007). In addition to the withdrawing or withholding of various programs, this policy declared that every Aboriginal man living in the Northern Territory was a paedophile and involved in domestic violence. This policy had an instantaneous impact on those Aboriginal men.
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(McCauley, 2008), who reported an immediate disenfranchisement of them and their position within the communities in which they lived. This impact was not only felt physically but also emotionally.

At the 2008 Aboriginal male health summit held in Alice Springs, 400 men gathered to discuss the impacts of the Commonwealth Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response policies and how they might be able to move forward ("Apology at the Aboriginal male health summit 2008," 2008). Discussions at this conference revealed that the men felt their dignity had been removed during the implementation of the government policy measures. Des Rodgers, an Aboriginal man from Roper River, Northern Territory, stated that this policy has at its core the intent to remove men from their community (as cited in McCauley, 2008, p.1). Rodgers continued that Aboriginal men are being effectively banned from participating in their communities by the removal of employment opportunities such as the dismantling of the Community Development Employment Program. He states that through the Emergency Response policy it is declared that all Aboriginal men living in the Northern Territory are paedophiles (Altman, 2007).

For many years, there has been a cry amongst Indigenous peoples from around the world to be treated with dignity. To be treated with dignity and respect is becoming a catch cry in Australia especially among Indigenous Aboriginal leaders.

1.2 Why is dignity seen to be so important?

The literature indicates that there could be three distinct types of dignity besides the commonly accepted Menschenwürde (that dignity is an inherent right to all humankind). These are the dignity of merit, the dignity of moral stature and the dignity of identity (Horton, 2004; Macklin, 2003, 2004; Nordenfelt, 2004). They all play a role in our common Western discourse, in particular in the discourse on ethics.

Dignity of merit is when a person who has a rank or holds an office that entails a set of rights has a special dignity (Dillon, 1995; Nordenfelt, 2004). Dignity of moral stature is dignity that is very much dependent upon the thoughts and deeds of the subject. This is sometimes referred to as a dignified character, a personality disposed to respect the moral law (Beyleveld & Brownsword, 2001, p. 138; Nordenfelt, 2004). Dignity of identity is the most difficult to
define as it is this type of dignity that is least discussed in the literature. It is also the dignity that is most easily removed by external sources (Nordenfelt, 2004). It is the dignity that we attach to ourselves as integrated and autonomous persons, persons with a history and persons with a future with all our relationships to other human beings.

Dignity can be arranged into two groups with different control mechanisms. The first mechanism is an internal control giving the individual a sense of personal dignity. This results in he / she feeling dignified. The second mechanism is influenced by external controls. This control is reflected in the way others treat the individual or bestow dignity upon him / her. Because there are two different control mechanisms that can impact an individual’s dignity, two processes will be required to restore an individual’s dignity. If a person has had their dignity stolen or removed, it will need to be restored to them. Alternatively, if an individual has lost their dignity, the process is more about empowering him / her to regain a sense of dignity.

1.3 The research

This research project has looked at the concept of dignity among Aboriginal men. It links to Aboriginal cultural norms and its association to roles and responsibilities while utilising Indigenous research methodologies as described by Martin (2008a), Sheehan (2011), Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and Wilson (2008). Yarning methods as described by Bessarab (2012), Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010), and Dean (2010) are also used. Both have influenced the design and structure of this project. The combination of these methodologies allows for the creation of methods that are culturally competent, have respect and honour at their core, and provides a culturally safe environment. Interviews with men were conducted to obtain their thoughts on the topic and allow them to tell their personal stories and life experiences. Upon completion, each interview was filtered through a process known as thematic analysis as put forward by Minichiello, Aroni, and Hays (2008); Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1990); and Y. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009b), to determine themes and context for each of the statements made.

Therefore, the methods of analysis that have been applied are a textural analysis of existing text and non-text materials as set out by McKee (2003), and the adaption of an interview style referred to as yarning (Sheehan, 2011; Wilson, 2001). While appearing semi-structured, this
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1.4 Methodology and research method

In Australia, our Aboriginal Elders utilise the method of imparting knowledge called ‘yarning’. Following is a brief outline of what is involved to make the yarning process work. A more detailed examination of the process will follow in Chapter 4.

In our modern culture, men and women are able to interact with one another in many ways; they can sing, dance or play together with little difficulty. Their ability to talk together about subjects that matter deeply to them however, seems invariably to lead to dispute (Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991). Indigenous people have utilised yarning as a workable method to share, explore and learn since the dreaming and will continue to do so (Dean, 2010). Yarning reflects a process of sharing knowledge that is reliant upon relationships, expected outcomes, responsibility and accountability between the participants (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010). The talking and listening process of yarning is also valued by many other Indigenous nations (Power, 2004). Moreover, yarning can take on many different forms and structures, allowing it to be as diverse as the many Aboriginal nations that utilise it within Australia (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Dean, 2010).

The yarning space is a protected space. It is protected by seven principles and six protocols. These 13 items come together to protect the participants and their stories as well as to enhance the yarning space. The principles utilised in a yarning space are reciprocity, respect, responsibility, dignity, equality, integrity and self-determination. The protocols associated with each yarning space are that the space is gender specific, it is inclusive, there is a gift within each one, each person has an opportunity to speak, the participants are in control of the yarning space, and there is freedom within the space. This protection allows the participants to bring their history, their ideas and any information that they wish to impart. Each
participant comes with their family history and their narratives, life stories and experiences. Due to the protection and safety within the space, from it can flow healing, connections, strength, truth, understanding, knowledge, wisdom and relationships.

There is a similar style of knowledge transfer used among the First Nation groups in Canada known as ‘talking circles’. First Nations men speak about talking circles and their concept of dignity using the method outlined above. The history of colonisation that has impacted the lives of the First Nations people of Canada somewhat parallels the experience of the Australian Aborigines. This similarity provides a comparative aspect to the research from which to draw the conclusions in the thesis.

Indigenous research should reflect the authority and foundations of Indigenous knowledge systems and yarning as a methodology can provide this. Yarning is much more than just a conversation. This thesis proposes that yarning is a formal strategy of negotiation and information sharing able to be utilised to form partnerships with Aboriginal participants in order to develop culturally safe and just research.
Chapter 2: Dignity

Image 1: The concept of Dignity
2.1 Context

Australian Aboriginal peoples are acknowledged as having one of the world’s oldest continuing cultures (Smallwood, 2011, p. 71). The history of Australia’s Aboriginal people is commonly accepted by historians to go back some 40,000 years (Mercer, 1998) but the accuracy of this statistic is sometimes debated by the Aboriginal peoples themselves. For instance, Uncle Bill Neidjie powerfully stated, “Europeans say 40,000 years. I don’t know how many years we been here; we always been here” (Neidjie, 2002, p. 24). Aboriginal people themselves know that they are the country’s original inhabitants and their connection to the land is strong and continuing.

Aboriginal people in Australia are diverse with more than 700 nations / language groups (Roberts, 1994). Estimates indicate that prior to European ‘settlement’ between 300,000 to perhaps 2 million Aboriginal people lived across the island continent of Australia, including Tasmania (Mercer, 1998). While each group was different, they were guided by a complex cultural lore that dictated all aspects of life and their relationship with ‘country’ – their traditional lands (R. Berndt, 1946; R. Berndt & Berndt, 1941a, 1941b, 1945a, 1945b; R. M. Berndt, 1970; Elkin, 1994; Henry Reynolds, 1989, 1996, 1999, 2005; H. Reynolds, 2006; Roth, 1902/1985, 1984/1897, 1985a, 1985b; Spencer & Gillen, 1899; Stanner, 1979; Thomson, 1983; Trudgen, 2000).

Relationships to country are complex and interrelated. Rose (1996) described country in this way:

Country is multi-dimensional it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreaming; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water, and air. There is sea country and land country; in some areas people talk about sky country. Country has origins and a future; it exists both in and through time. The term here refers to areas of land and / or sea including the subsurface and sky above, in so far as Aboriginal people identify all these components as being part of their particular country (p. 8).

The term ‘country’ is often used by Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe family origins and associations with particular parts of Australia. Descriptions of country, particularly traditional associations, will differ from individual to individual, depending on the associations passed down through the family and community. Uncle Larry
Kelly (personal communication, June 10, 2012) and Uncle Ossie Cruse (personal communication, December 10, 2011) explain that the relationships Aboriginal people have with the environment involve an understanding of the time, place and cultural relationships found within a particular area, as well as the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of that area. These are all relationships to country. Therefore, Australia’s Aboriginal peoples come from a particular country and have customary responsibilities to manage and look after their country (Altman, 2003, p. 67); there is no separation between lands and people (J. Atkinson, 2002). Aboriginal Australians lived in small family groups, with each family group having a defined territory, systematically moving across that defined area following seasonal changes (Altman, 2003, p. 69; Purdie, Dudgeon, & Walker, 2010, p. 1).

At the time of the landing of Lieutenant James Cook in 1770 at Botany Bay and his claiming of Australia as part of the British Empire, Aboriginal people were forced onto a new trajectory, often with tragic consequences. Fanon (1963) states that “colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state” (p. 61). Colonisation began in earnest in 1788 with the landing of Governor Arthur Phillip and his ‘First Fleeters’ (Elder, 1998). From this point forward, the country’s original inhabitants were subjected to colonial and racist policies which resulted in bitter warfare, murder, massacre and disconnection in relationships (Elder, 1998; Kidd, 1997; H. Reynolds, 2006), leading to an almost complete annihilation of certain nations among Australia’s Aboriginal people. It is not uncommon among many Aboriginal writers to use the word ‘genocide’ as a description of Australia’s treatment of Aboriginal people (Boland, 2007; Langton, 1981; Henry Reynolds, 1989, 1996, 1999, 2005; Reynolds, 2006). A host of assimilationist regimes, policies and practices, such as the White Australia Policy, have also led to the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their land and cultures (Sanderson, 2007). It is against this historical background that Aboriginal men have found themselves displaced and isolated (Trudgen, 2000).

Prior to the commencement of the colonisation processes, Aboriginal men had places of honour and distinction within their communities and societies. With the demise of the position of men within Aboriginal communities, we see a rise in antisocial behaviours in the communities in the last half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century (ABS,
Domestic violence is reported in the media as ‘commonplace’ in most remote Aboriginal communities (C. Atkinson, 2008; V. J. Atkinson, 2001). It is Aboriginal men who are being brought before the judicial system for these offences. In some of these cases, it is reported that the men have used in their defence that harming women and children is part of their culture and therefore they should not be prosecuted for this behaviour (Boland, 2007; Jones, 2006; Nowra, 2007). Authors of these reports suggest that this defence is incompatible with a highly evolved and regulated society such as Australian Aboriginal culture (Boland, 2007; Elder, 1998; Kidd, 1997; Nowra, 2007; H. Reynolds, 2006; Roth, 1984/1897; Thomson, 1983).

Furthermore, statistics indicate that Aboriginal men have a suicide rate up to a 40% higher than non-Aboriginal men and that this figure has been increasing over past 30 years (ABS, 2008a). Another area that contributes to the evidence of the demise of men’s positions of honour within communities is that of the prison system (ABS, 2008b). Aboriginal people in general, but Aboriginal males in particular, are over represented within this system and the numbers are continuing to grow (Ogilvie & Zyl, 2001). This growth, especially in the young male age group 15 to 25 years, is at the point that incarceration is being seen as a rite of passage or a form of contemporary initiation among this age group (Ogilvie & Zyl, 2001).

While completing the literature review, this researcher noted inconsistencies in the way Aboriginal men have been reported or represented both in academic circles and in the wider media. The media in its current reporting style uses stereotypes as fact and refers to isolated incidents as commonplace (Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Rapley, 1999). The media also presents stories and information which focus on the women’s point of view and / or look to the next generation of males to ‘fix the problem’ that has been created by the current generation (Nowra, 2007).

While working in the Northern Territory in 2007, this researcher was present in a remote Indigenous community when the federal government announced its Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation as a response to the Little Children Are Sacred Report (2007). This legislation effectively branded every Aboriginal man living in the Northern Territory as a child abuser and as involved in domestic violence. This had an immediate and devastating impact on all Aboriginal men living in their communities. Men became alienated.
and afraid to interact with children. Afraid to perform cultural responsibilities within the community and, in some cases, this caused the men to abandon their families and leave the communities (Altman, 2007).

The literature review only uncovered one research paper discussing the impact that the Australian Government’s Northern Territory Intervention has had on Aboriginal men. The emotive title, “The Banishing of Men” (McCauley, 2008, p. 89) and the article itself, are indicative of the current attitude of policies towards Aboriginal men today. Much of today’s academic literature focuses on women and their roles in Aboriginal society. Furthermore, the literature also focuses on how to move Aboriginal men into a role prescribed by the dominant worldview, without considering how this worldview has or will impact Aboriginal men’s sense of identity (Franks, 2000; Ledogar & Fleming, 2008; McCoy, 2008; Nowra, 2007; Tsey, Patterson, Whiteside, Baird, & Baird, 2002).

In 2008, Aboriginal men from across the country gathered in Alice Springs to discuss their plight (Department of Social Services, 2009). Over 20 recommendations emerged from this gathering. They were given to the Federal government with the aim of improving the life, roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal men (Department of Social Services, 2009, p. 2). As a further indication of the attitude towards Aboriginal men and their plight, Jenny Macklin the then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs under the Rudd government, refused to accept the recommendations from the men themselves. The recommendations had to be submitted through a committee made up entirely of women both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. They had the responsibility and the authority to decide whether or not the men’s proposals were passed to the Minister for further consideration. This demonstrated that in the eyes of the Minister, Aboriginal men were unable to determine what they needed to bring about change for themselves for their families and for their communities (Department of Social Services, 2009, p. 20).

It is not only in the Northern Territory that Aboriginal men have had their dignity impacted by racism and government decisions. The Weekend Australian dated 22 August 2015 has an article describing the devastating impact racism has had on the Aboriginal men of Walgett. Morton quotes Dennis, an Aboriginal man, who said, “It was the men who lost everything after European invasion, or contact, whatever you want to call it” (Morton, 2015).
Uncle Ossie Cruse (personal communication, July 20, 2013), a senior Aboriginal Elder from the far south coast of New South Wales, believes that dignity is attached to all areas of a man’s life and when one area is impacted it impacts all areas of his life. His dignity is impacted greatly by racist attitudes and behaviours.

2.2 Dignity from the beginning

The concept of human dignity has been discussed in the literature for approximately 2000 years. In 137 AD, Roman Emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius was the first to mention the concept of dignity in the sense of character. While writing in his “Meditation” he states:

> From Maximus I learned self-government, and not to be led aside by anything; and cheerfulness in all circumstances, as well as in illness; and a just admixture in the moral character of sweetness and dignity, and to do what was set before me without complaining.

(Marcus Aurelius, 2005) 136 AD / 2005, p. 6, a G. Long translation of original work 137 AD).

Rosen (2012) suggests that the concept remained relatively ignored until approximately the mid 1500s. Rosen (2012) and Witte (2004, p. 1) believe that the modern understanding of human dignity can be attributed to Martin Luther through his writing of his tract “Freedom of a Christian” (Luther, 1520). It had a shaping influence on modern theories of human dignity, as well as liberty, and equality. The concept of human dignity had spread into religious circles and then, in the 1800s the concept was attached to both the living and the dead in medical circles. In more recent times, the concept has been enshrined in acts of parliament in a number of countries and within the human rights movement (Bayertz, 1996; Bostrom, 2005, 2009; Chochinov, 2006; Rosen, 2012).

It is important to note that over the last 50 years there has been a plethora of articles, books and reports focusing on or relating to dignity. Witte (2004) asserts that there have been approximately 1,200 books and 11,000 articles published about dignity in English alone since 1970 (p. 122). This thesis draws upon close reading and analysis of approximately 150 articles, books, theses and reports (see bibliography for full list). This study encompasses examples of theoretical and empirical work from most of the disciplines that study dignity and includes many of the pieces recognised as highly influential to contemporary scholarship (Kielkopf, 1971; Kolnai, 1995; C. Kovach, 1995; Luther, 1520; Miller & Keys, 2001). At this
point, it is important to acknowledge that the discussion of dignity in the literature also includes the dignity of non-human entities.

**Table 1:** Key articles relating to dignity other than human dignity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bio Ethic</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Environment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Birnbacher; Bostrom; Foster; L. Kass; L. R. Kass; Kraynak &amp; Tinder; Schulman</td>
<td>Abiven, 1991; Chochinov, 2006; Chochinov et al., 2002; Dresser, 2002; Hack et al., 2004; Hall, Longhurst, &amp; Higginson, 2009; Jackson &amp; Youngner, 1979; Quill, 1991; Turner et al., 1995</td>
<td>Roden, 1980; Stacey, 2005; Wolpert, 1980</td>
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### 2.3 Human dignity

The literature is divided on the significance of the concept of human dignity. On one side of the divide is Macklin (2003) and Statman (2000) who argue that the concept of human dignity is useless as it is merely a restating of the principles of respect (p. 213). Edgar (2004) states that human dignity is no more than an empty slogan (p. 1419). These statements are easy to understand when the complexity and depth of this concept is not taken into account. At a superficial level, the statements by Macklin and Edgar may appear correct, that dignity can be understood as simply a reworking of the principles of respect. However, when a more thorough examination of the concept of human dignity is undertaken, it becomes evident that human dignity is far more complicated and impacts every aspect of life and death (Bayertz, 1996; Chochinov, 2003; Dillon, 1995; Edgar, 2004; Feldman, 1999, 2000; George, 1998; Gewirth, 1992; Haddock, 1996; Häyry, 2004).

For Martin Luther (1520), the essence of human dignity lay in the juxtaposition of human depravity and human sanctity (p. 8). He saw human dignity as something of a divine fulcrum that keeps our depravity and sanctity in balance. The essence of human freedom is our right
and duty to serve God, neighbours, and one’s self, and to do so with the ominous assurance of
divine judgment. Human freedom is the divine calling that keeps our individuality and
community in balance (Marmot, 2004; Rosen, 2012; Skinner, 1972; Witte, 2004). Witte
(2004) states that: “a sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more
and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man” (p. 4). Witte (2004) went on to
argue “the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying
and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of
duty” (p. 2).

In his preface to *Dignitatis Humanae* (Dignity of the Human Person, 1965), Pope Paul VI
comments on human dignity and this is seen as foreshadowing a momentous swing in the
pendulum of world opinion (Marmot, 2004; Meyer, 1989; Paust, 1984; Rosen, 2012; Skinner,
1972; Statman, 2000). Only two decades before, the world had stared in horror at Hitler’s
death camps and Stalin’s gulags; where all sense of humanity and dignity had been brutally
sacrificed. In response, the world had seized anew on the ancient concept of human dignity,
claiming this as the “ur-principle” of a new world order.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 opened its preamble with the classic
words: “recognition in the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all
members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world”
(General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/295, 1948). By the mid-1960s, the Catholic Church
and the state alike had translated this general principle of human dignity into specific human
rights precepts as reflected in Pope Paul VI’s preface.

Some of literature describes human dignity as a concept (Häyry, 2004; Jacelon, Connelly,
Brown, Proulx, & Vo, 2004; Macklin, 2003, 2004; Rosen, 2012; Schachter, 1983). It has also
been described as a right (H. Baker, 1961; Buchanan, 2001; Edgar, 2004; General Assembly
Jacobson, 2007; Kant, 1963; Marmot, 2004; McCrudden, 2008). The concept of human
dignity has also been described as “‘complex, ambiguous and multivalent’” (Moody, 1998, p.
14).
Table 2: Key articles relating to human dignity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Stature</th>
<th>Personal Dignity</th>
<th>Human Dignity</th>
<th>Bestowed Dignity</th>
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<td>Ashcroft, 2005;</td>
<td>Kant, 1963;</td>
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<td>H. Baker, 1961;</td>
<td>Kiesling, 2005;</td>
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<td>Beautrais &amp; Fergusson, 2006;</td>
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<td>Häyry, 2004;</td>
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<td>Buchanan, 2001;</td>
<td>McCrudden, 2008;</td>
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<td>Fine, 1991;</td>
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<td>Kant, 1963;</td>
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<td>Macklin, 2003;</td>
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<td>Marmot; McCoy, 2008;</td>
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<td>Spector, 1988;</td>
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<td>Statman, 2000;</td>
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Many authors have noted the vagueness of the concept (Becker, 2001; Feldman, 1999, 2000; Horton, 2004; Jacelon et al., 2004; Schachter, 1983; Widäng & Fridlund, 2003) and the “inner tension and contradiction” (Bayertz, 1996, p. 87) revealed when the concept of dignity is placed under analysis. Indeed, dignity has been described as both an objective singularity and as subjective (Feldman, 1999, 2000; Jacelon et al., 2004; Nordenfelt, 2004; Schachter, 1983; Seltser & Miller, 1993); as public and as private (Arnason, 1998; Meyer, 1989); as individual and as a collective (Andorno, 2005; Dillon, 1995; Gaylin, 1984; Nordenfelt, 2004; Paust, 1984); as internal and intrinsic and as external and extrinsic (Häyry, 2004; Jacelon et al., 2004; Miller & Keys, 2001; Söderberg, Gilje, & Norberg, 1997); as hierarchical and as democratic (Dillon, 1995; Häyry, 2004; Kielpkopf, 1971); and as unconditional and static as well as contingent and dynamic (Gewirth, 1992; C. Kovach, 1995); as inherent, bestowed, or achieved (Dales, 1977; George, 1998; Kolnai, 1995; Q. Zhang, 2000); and as descriptive and prescriptive (Kolnai, 1995; Moller, 1990; Pullman, 1999).
Regardless of this complexity, it is apparent that the concept of dignity encapsulates a variety of notions that give people an understanding of who they are, how they fit in the world, and how they respond to others. There is also a conceptual confusion that extends to the language of dignity. For example, designations like basic dignity, human dignity, social dignity, and personal dignity abound in the literature (Chochinov, 2003; Dillon, 1995; Jacelon et al., 2004; Kielkopf, 1971; Kolnai, 1995; Nordenfelt, 2004; Pullman, 1999; Szawarski, 1986). As stated earlier, there is an extensive amount of literature on the concept of dignity, however there appears to be little consensus about the definition and use of these terms. The literature indicates that the concept of human dignity influences the common Western discourse in relation to respect of oneself and respect of others. This is particularly evident in the discourse associated with ethics (H. Baker, 1961; Berger & Luckmann, 1992; Dillon, 1995; Feldman, 1999, 2000; Gewirth, 1992; Kant, 1963).

Qualities adding to the vastness of the concept of dignity include composure, calmness, restraint, reserve, and emotions or passions subdued and securely controlled without being negated or dissolved, distinctness, delimitation, and distance. The concept of something that conveys the idea of being intangible, invulnerable, inaccessible to destructive or corruptive or subversive interference. Finally, the literature on dignity also suggests the features of self-contained serenity, of a certain inward and toned-down but yet translucent and perceptible power of self-assertion (Bayertz, 1996; Becker, 2001; Bostrom, 2009; Dales, 1977; Dillon, 1995; Jacelon et al., 2004; Kant, 1963, 2002; Kielkopf, 1971; C. Kovach, 1995; Marmot, 2004; McCrudden, 2008; Meyer, 1989; Miller & Keys, 2001; Moody, 1998; Nordenfelt, 2004; Paust, 1984; Rosen, 2012; Schachter, 1983; Schiller, 1793; Skinner, 1972; Statman, 2000; Szawarski, 1986; Widäng & Fridlund, 2003; Q. Zhang, 2000).

While defining the concept of dignity from the literature is difficult, understanding the characteristics of human dignity will enable a clearer understanding of how it applies to Australian Indigenous men. The literature further indicates that the concept of human dignity can be divided into four conceptual characteristics: dignity as a right, dignity of merit, dignity of moral stature and dignity of identity (Edgar, 2004; Horton, 2004; Macklin, 2004; Nordenfelt, 2004).
2.3.1 Dignity characteristics

Dignity is a right: This concept of dignity comes from the German word Menschenwürde that means dignity is an inherent right of all humankind. It is assumed in this permutation that all men are equal. It is significant that Menschenwürde cannot be taken from a human being as long as he or she is alive. It is this type of dignity that the Roman philosopher Cicero (106–43 BC), referred to when he attributed dignity to all men ((Bostrom, 2009), p. 174). It is also this concept of dignity that Tom Calma captured when he called for restoration of dignity for Indigenous people at the end of several of his speeches (Calma, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012). This concept of dignity is also highlighted by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and again in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.

Dignity of merit: This concept is linked to a person who has a rank or holds an office that entails a set of rights. Examples of this are a priest, the mayor of the city, or the leader of the country, where dignity is accredited to them simply because of the position they hold within society. This concept of dignity can be removed from a person when that person no longer holds the position (Beyleveld & Brownsword, 2001; Bostrom, 2009; Buchanan, 2001; Nordenfelt, 2004).

Dignity of moral stature: This concept of dignity is dependent upon the thoughts and deeds of the person. This is sometimes referred to as a dignified character (Beyleveld & Brownsword, 2001, p. 138) or as a personality disposed to respect the moral law (Nordenfelt, 2004). The dignity of moral stature is dimensional in that it can vary from an extremely high position to an extremely low one. The dignity of moral stature is also heavily reliant upon perceptions of others. The dignity of moral stature is dependent upon the deeds of the person and simply being a moral person does not attribute any rights or privileges in or of itself. The dignity of moral stature is tied significantly to the notion of respect. Nordenfelt (2004) believes that there are specifically three notions of respect that link to the dignity of moral stature (p. 74). Firstly, the moral agent he or she is prone to pay respect to others (p. 75). Secondly, there is a special respect that the moral agent deserves, but a respect that is not tied to any of his or her rights (p. 75). The third moral agent is self-respect (p. 76).

Dignity of identity: This concept is the most difficult to define as it is the least discussed in the literature. It is also the dignity most easily removed by external sources (Bostrom, 2009, p.
This dignity is that which a person attaches to himself or herself as an integrated, autonomous person, a person with a history and a person with a future taking into account all their relationships to other human beings (Nordenfelt, 2004, p. 75). This is the type of dignity that has been impacted by colonisation through dispossession, humiliation and cultural genocide. (Statman, 2000) has reflected on this phenomenon in an insightful way and states:

There is some kind of paradox here. How can humiliation rob me of my dignity? How can I lose my dignity when I am attacked by people whose moral views I despise? The humiliation is (normally) not a case of formal demotion. The perpetrators cannot (normally) do anything about my formal or informal merits. Nor can they by their immoral acts ipso facto rob me of my moral stature. This can only happen if they succeed in provoking me to react in an immoral way. So if there is a case of dignity here it is neither the dignity of merit nor the dignity of moral stature. It must be a dignity attached to the person’s integrity and identity as a human being (p. 525).

The loss of dignity does not just entail feelings of worthlessness or of humiliation. Intrusion in the private sphere is a violation of the person’s integrity. Hurting a person is not only a violation of integrity, it also entails a change in the person’s identity. The person becomes a person with trauma and he or she has in a salient sense a new physical identity. The person’s autonomy can be tampered with when the person is prevented from doing what he or she wants to or is entitled to do. Finally, insulting, hurting or hindering somebody entails excluding this person from one’s community. Thus, the facts that ground the dignity of identity are the subject’s integrity and autonomy, including his or her social relations (H. Baker, 1961; Bostrom, 2009; Nordenfelt, 2004; Skinner, 1972; Statman, 2000).

These facts are typically associated with a sense of integrity and autonomy. Tampering with a person’s integrity and autonomy is typically associated with a feeling of humiliation or loss of self-respect on his or her part. But, as argued above, this feeling of humiliation is not a necessary element, in the concept of the dignity of identity. Thus far only the case where a person’s self-respect has diminished or been lost as a result of another person’s disrespectful acts, has been discussed. But the identity version of dignity is also relevant in the cases when we say that illness, impairment, disability and old age can rob one of one’s dignity.

According to the literature, the four concepts of dignity while appearing to be independent, have at least three elements in common. The first element of “dignity” refers to a special
dimension of value. In the case of Menschenwürde, there is only one position on that spectrum. However, people can have different positions on the spectrum and can be seen as more or less dignified for the three other kinds of dignity (Bostrom, 2009; Chochinov, 2003; Chochinov et al., 2011; Gallagher, 2004; Nordenfelt, 2004). The second element of dignity of a person is whether the person is worthy of respect from others and from the person him/herself (Bostrom, 2009; Nordenfelt, 2004; Schachter, 1983; Statman, 2000). The third element of dignity is grounded, normally in a set of properties belonging to the person (Beyleveld & Brownsword, 2001; Bostrom, 2009; Nordenfelt, 2004).

2.4 The dignity spectrum

The literature does not specifically discuss the concept of a scale or a spectrum for dignity. However, there are indications that, in some of the permutations of the concept of dignity, that there are variants and influences that indicate that a person can be more or less dignified at any given moment (Nordenfelt, 2004; Rosen, 2012; Statman, 2000; Szawarski, 1986). The characteristic moral stature is influenced by self-respect, thoughts, deeds, personal beliefs and self-perception. All of these influences are determined by how a person sees himself, and therefore dignity will vary from time to time. Thus, the dignity of moral stature is dependent on time and events in life.

The characteristic referred to as merit is determined by a person’s rank in society or social standing, or by recognition for distinction or excellence, and this can vary in degree based on perceptions of others. The characteristic referred to as identity is influenced by the individual’s integrity, autonomy and belief system, and is also influenced by other people’s actions perceptions and behaviours. This characteristic of dignity is governed by both external and internal influences, and the level of dignity can vary depending on the interaction of these influences.

The only characteristic of dignity that does not seem to vary is that of the dignity of right, that the individual is to be treated with dignity. The literature indicates that this characteristic is static and everybody has the same level of dignity and it cannot be varied. Regardless of a person’s position or behaviour, their dignity cannot be given or taken away.
Dignity, with its four characteristics, can be arranged into two groups and each group is influenced by a different control mechanism. The term used for these control mechanisms is locus of control, which also falls in to two groups (Anderson, 1977; Findley & Cooper, 1983; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002). The first is internal control that refers to the belief that states re-enforcements are contingent upon the individual’s own behaviour, capacities or attributes. The second group is external control referring to re-enforcements that are not under the individual’s personal control but rather are under the control of powerful others, luck, chance, fate, etc. (Anderson, 1977), p. 447). The first group’s control mechanism is of internal perceptions giving the individual a sense of personal dignity that results in the person feeling dignified. Dignity of identity and dignity of moral stature fall into this group. The second group’s control mechanism is influenced by external forces and is reflected in the way others treat the individual or bestow dignity upon him / her. The dignity of rights and the dignity of merit fall into this group.

As there are two differentiating control mechanisms that can impact an individual’s dignity, two processes that are required to enable the restoration of an individual’s dignity. Firstly, if a person has had their dignity stolen or removed from him / her (external control), it needs to be restored to them from outside sources. Secondly, if any individual has lost their dignity or as in some cases chosen to put it aside (internal control), the restoration process is more about empowering him / her to regain a sense of dignity.
Image 2: Factors that influence male dignity

Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?
2.5 The importance of dignity

Dignity is far more than simply respect. It embodies and is reflected by behaviour and attitude towards self and others. The arguments by Macklin (2003, p. 419) presenting dignity as a useless concept or simply a reworking of the principles of respect, has merit if only considering the way one person is treated by another. However, this argument fails to take into account the way dignity is reflected by the person who is being treated with dignity.

Former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma, made a call for the restoration of the dignity of Aboriginal Australians by ending each of his addresses with the statement, “Australia needs to restore the human dignity to the Aboriginal people” (Calma, 2006, 2008b, 2009, 2012). The international community is making similar calls though the United Nations via the General Assembly A/RES/61/295 (2007) and General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/295 (1948). Following the end of the World War II, the General Assembly of the United Nations thought it necessary to include the concept of human dignity in a binding declaration on the rights of its human populations. The preamble and the 1st article of the General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/295 (1948) states that, “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. With the inclusion of the concept of dignity in this statement, there has been an elevation of dignity by the international community into the area of human rights. Dignity as a right was reinforced in 2007 in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, where the concept of dignity was resolutely embedded in articles 15 and 43 (General Assembly A/RES/61/295, 2007).

2.5.1 Dignity and Aboriginal men

The importance of dignity in an Aboriginal man’s life cannot be overstated. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, a man’s sense of his own dignity activates inner strength and confidence that is evident to the community around him. When a man’s inner strength and confidence is not activated, he cannot live to his potential. Secondly, for Aboriginal men, dignity is reinforced by the way he is treated by others. Uncle Larry Kelly makes this point when he said ‘They have to live by that structure, gives them self-respect and dignity in the social structure of the tribal groups” (personal communication, June 10, 2012). As discussed above, the dignity of identity is linked very strongly to Aboriginal men and their perception of
dignity. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007) very clearly states

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality (Article 22).

The process of colonisation has significantly damaged the journey to manhood for Aboriginal men. This has damaged the dignity of Aboriginal men from a cultural perspective, particularly the dignity that comes through the knowledge of who you are and where you fit into society and culture. When this journey to manhood is interrupted in this fashion, Kanyirninpa cannot be fulfilled. “Kanyirninpa is a concept that encapsulates both cultural authority and nurturing. It provides an insight into the ways in which Aboriginal men can be ‘held’ and strengthened through their journey to adulthood” (McCoy, 2008, p. 93).

2.5.1 Conclusion

One of the major indicators for the importance of the concept of dignity is the sheer volume of literature written on the subject in the last 35 years. There have been approximately 14,000 documents written in English alone on and describing the concepts of dignity. The concept of dignity in the literature touches every aspect of human life and is seen to be a part of the non-human life experience as well.

Kant (1963) describes the importance of dignity by stating “everything either has a price or a dignity”. He goes on to explain that whatever has a price can be replaced by something of equal value or an equivalent. But dignity, according to Kant, is raised above all prices and therefore has no equivalent, so “it simply is dignity” (p. 602). In this statement, Kant (2002) argues that dignity can neither be bought nor sold, therefore, dignity is value without measure. In discussing the concept of human dignity further, Doyal and Gough (1991) suggested that the concept of human dignity should not be looked upon as something that is to be desired or something that should be sought, but rather should be seen as a human need or a right, and should therefore be demanded (p. 162).
2.6 The impact of colonisation on the dignity of Indigenous Australians

To understand Tom Calma’s call, we need to examine how the dignity of the Australian Indigenous peoples has been impacted by the onslaught of colonisation. It is important to understand that colonisation is not only a historic concept, something that happened in the past, instead colonisation continues today in Australia. This is evident through government policies such as the Northern Territory Emergency Response (The Intervention) (Altman, 2007), as well as the forced removal from traditional lands currently underway in Western Australia in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions (Cooke & Wahlquist, 2015; O'Connor, 2015).

For the Australian Indigenous people, a foundation of colonisation is the forced exclusion of people from their land and the removal of rights that allow an individual to make his or her own choices regarding their life. The two examples presented above demonstrate those two concepts being utilised in Australia today.

At the time of the landing of Lieutenant James Cook in 1770 in Botany Bay and the claiming of Australia as part of the British Empire, Aboriginal people were forced on a new trajectory, often with tragic consequences (Barlo, 2012, p. 15). Fanon (1963) said that “colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state” (p. 61). The violence associated with the colonisation of Australia began in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet of prisoners destined to make Australia their new home. This violence began with the forced removal from the land of the Australian Aboriginal people so that the settlement in Sydney Cove could begin.

Prior to the arrival of the First Fleet, Aboriginal men were involved in all aspects of life, and their lives were governed by ritual and ceremony, which was linked to the land. Around 21 per cent of an Aboriginal man’s time was taken up with manufacturing various items for living or hunting. A further 66 per cent of an Aboriginal man’s time was spent with others of his clan in working activities or socialising with other men or their families as part of their normal daily routine. In total, 75 per cent of a man’s time was spent engaging with his own family (provision, involvement and support) (Barlo, 2012). Barlo (2012) asserts that that these activities can fall into three areas: family life, informal social life and the more formal aspects of community life. These activities can be concurrent, for example, men could be manufacturing a tool and at the same time socialising with other men in the group. Another example of this is when a man was building a shelter and at the same time was interacting...
with his family (Barlo, 2012, pp. 33-34). As demonstrated, prior to colonisation Aboriginal men had a full and productive life within the community and had responsibility for the country, allowing them to know who they were, where they belonged and what their responsibilities were. According to the literature, this sense of belonging would have reinforced their concept of human dignity. Therefore, it follows that when this sense of belonging is removed, human dignity is also displaced.

2.7 Conclusion

The literature does not provide a consistent definition of the concept of dignity. However, it does describe what dignity is and the characteristics of dignity. The focus of this study has been on the concept of personal dignity. In describing the concept of personal dignity, the literature has outlined nine characteristics that impact a person’s sense of dignity. These characteristics include belief systems, self-respect, integrity, personal perception, autonomy, thoughts, actions, culture and character. As discussed in this chapter, these characteristics are part of the makeup of an individual’s personal dignity and can be impacted by influences outside of a person’s control. For example, the actions of others, life in general, the process of colonisation, racism, other forms of humiliation and dominance.

The literature indicates that when a person is recognised to hold dignity he / she seems to possess the characteristics of self-control, self-confidence, self-awareness, a strong character a strong sense of belonging, self-respect and respect for others and their belief systems.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Image 3: The yarning place
3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast three of the major research methodologies used in qualitative research among Indigenous Australian peoples, with the aim of selecting one or a combination of the methodologies discussed. An overview of each of the three methodologies is provided highlighting the positive and negative components of each when applied to the research question: Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed? After comparing and contrasting the three research methodologies, it was discovered that there was a need to develop a more complete Indigenous research methodology. The final section of this chapter explains how a pre-existing and latent Indigenous method has been revitalised to formulate the basis for a complete Indigenous research methodology.

To understand the significant differences between research methodology, methods and coding used in research, each term is defined. Methodology is a way of thinking about and studying social reality, while methods are a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analysing the data being studied (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1372). The final part of this process, coding, comprises the analytic processes through which data is filtered, conceptualised, and integrated to form theory (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1376).

3.2 Qualitative research

Patton (1982) and Punch (2013) believe that researchers interested in discovering answers relating to Indigenous phenomena more often than not utilise methodologies that stem from a qualitative research base. Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) argue that qualitative research methods have three main objectives. These are to gain understanding of underlying reasons and motivations, to provide insight into the setting of problems, generating ideas and or hypothesis for later research, and to uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinions.

To fulfil these objectives, a relatively small number of samples of non-representative cases or respondents are selected from a predetermined group (Punch, 2013). Whittemore et al. (2001) suggest that data is usually collected through non-structured or semi-structured techniques that could include interviews, group discussions and / or case studies. Kohn and Dipboye (1998) state that “it is possible that semi-structured interviews that allow some applicant voice may be preferable to highly structured interviews”. The analysis of qualitative research is
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usually non-statistical (Myers & Avison, 1997; Patton, 1982; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Whittemore et al., 2001) and the outcome of qualitative research is exploratory and / or investigative (Myers & Avison, 1997; Patton, 1982; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Whittemore et al., 2001). Furthermore, the literature indicates that findings of qualitative research studies are not considered to be conclusive and cannot be used to make generalisations about the population of interest (Myers & Avison, 1997). Qualitative research does, however, allow the researcher to develop an initial understanding and a sound base for further decision-making (Myers & Avison, 1997; Patton, 1982; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Whittemore et al., 2001).

Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with practice and process rather than outcomes (Chenail, 1997; Cobrin & Strauss, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1982). That is, they focus on the process that is occurring instead of the outcome of that process. Preference is given to the participants’ perceptions, experiences, and the way they make sense of their lives (Cobrin & Strauss, 2007; Patton, 1982; Punch, 2013). Qualitative methods can be used to explore essential areas about which little is known, or about which much is known, to gain a variety of understandings (Patton, 1982; Stern, 1980). The literature indicates that qualitative research methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more direct research methods (Patton, 1982; Stern, 1980).

Qualitative research methods generally have three major components. First, there is the data that can be sourced from new information obtained from activities such as interviews, observations or from existing information contained in documents, records, and films (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Whittemore et al., 2001). Starks and Trinidad (2007) further stress qualitative research frequently relies on interviewing as the primary strategy for data collection (p. 1375).

The second component consists of the procedures that researchers can use to interpret and organise the data. These procedures usually consist of conceptualising and reducing data, elaborating categories in terms of their properties and dimensions, and relating data through a series of prepositional statements (Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of conceptualising, reducing, elaborating and relating data is often referred to as coding and, can
also be incorporated into the analytic process. This includes non-statistical sampling (Chenail, 1997; Myers & Avison, 1997; Punch, 2013; Sandelowski, 1993).

The third component is the presentation of the results most commonly in the form of reports either written or verbal (Myers & Avison, 1997; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Whittemore et al., 2001). The data may be presented in articles in scientific journals and conference presentations and papers, and books (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1377). In addition to the more traditional method of results presentation, Halverson (2013) suggest that the presentation of the results through various forms of art.

Putt (2013) argues that qualitative research methodologies are the most frequently utilised methodologies for researching Indigenous Australian peoples. From within this group of methodologies there are three that are most frequently utilised (Putt, 2013). These are participatory action research, narrative research and grounded theory or a version known as Generic Inductive Qualitative Model (GIQM).

### 3.3 Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) is promoted by Struthers and Peden-McAlpine (2005) as a series of cycles and stages which include a systematic approach to engaging with people who are in a process of investigating their own realities. The aim is to understand their circumstances and work together to transform those realities (Punch, 2013; Watts & Carlson, 2002). PAR is a method used to collect data that relies on the process of establishing reference groups to both oversee the research and to assist to develop formal questionnaires, taping of interviews etc. (Sokolowski, 2000). In this regard, participatory refers to the involvement of representatives of the community who become the principal agents for change (V. J. Atkinson, 2001). Cargo and Mercer (2008) suggest that “key strengths of PAR is the integration of researcher’s theoretical and methodological expertise with non-academic participants’ real world knowledge and experiences into a mutually reinforcing partnership” (p. 327).

In regards to partnerships formed with marginalised and vulnerable populations, the researcher must ensure that concepts of cultural humility and cultural safety are integrated so that academic and non-academic partners are able to establish and maintain mutual respect.
and trust. This strength is very clearly demonstrated in the following example of how PAR has been utilised with Indigenous communities.


**Context:** Reflexivity is crucial for non-Aboriginal researchers working with Aboriginal people. This article describes a process of reflexive practice undertaken by a white clinician/researcher while working with Aboriginal people. The clinician/researcher elicited Aboriginal people’s experience of being haemodialysis recipients in rural Australia and their perceptions of their disease and treatment. The aim of this article is to report the methods used during this qualitative project to guide the researcher in conducting culturally appropriate health research with Aboriginal people. The goal of this work was to improve health services, informed and guided by the Aboriginal recipients themselves. The article describes the theory and methods used to develop reflexive skills. It also reports how the clinician/researcher managed her closeness to the topic and participants (some being patients under her care) and the processes used to ensure her subjectivity did not interfere with the quality of her research.

**Issues:** Three layers of reflexive practice are described: examining self within the research, examining interpersonal relationships with participants, and examining health systems. The alignment of the three ‘lenses’ used to describe the study is exposed. Complex insider/outsider roles are explored through multiple layers of reflexive practice. Regular journal writing was the primary tool used to undertake this reflexive practice. An Aboriginal advisory group and co-investigators collaborated and assisted the clinician/researcher to scrutinise and understand her positioning within the study. Researcher positioning, power and unequal relationships are discussed. Issues such as victim blaming and the disconnect between clinicians’ views about treatment compliance and Aboriginal peoples’ prioritisation of family obligations for before treatment are presented.

**Lessons learned:** Aboriginal patients must negotiate a health services system where racism and victim blaming are institutionalised, but the effect of these on the research relationship can be mitigated through reflexive practice. Using a framework for relational accountability that incorporates respect, responsibility and reciprocity can enable non-Aboriginal clinicians and/or researchers to work effectively with Aboriginal patients. These results may assist clinicians and policy makers develop strategies for improving quality of care.
3.4 Narrative research

Narrative research methodology is the most common methodology used when making enquiries into the lives of Indigenous Australian peoples. Narrative research stems from the premise that people live and/or understand their lives in storied forms, connecting events in the manner of a plot that has beginning, middle, and end points (Sarbin, 1986). These stories are played out in the context of other stories that may include societies, cultures, families, or other intersecting plot lines in a person’s life. It is these stories that narrative research seeks to capture and analyse, bringing understanding to a particular event or phenomena that has been played out in a person’s life. As Sarbin (1986) has explained,

“When we are concerned with understanding and communicating about action, we organize our observations according to narrative plots. Whether the target of our interest is random movement or geometric figures, the adventures of a particular person, the history of a social group or the evolution of humankind, our understanding appears to be dependent upon our ability to construct a narrative and to tell a story” (p. 53).

Narrative research is an interpretive process consisting of the joint subjectivities of researcher and participants being filtered through a conceptual framework that is applied to the textual material (either oral or written) by the researcher. Josselson (2011) states that the

“aim of the researcher is to explore and conceptualize human experience as it is represented in textual form. Grounded in hermeneutics, phenomenology, ethnography, and literary analysis, narrative research eschews methodological orthodoxy in favour of doing what is necessary to capture the lived experience of people in terms of their own meaning making and to theorize about it in insightful ways” (p. 225).

Narrative researchers place the collection of narrative accounts at the centre stage of their interviews, because it is believed that testimony is a powerful form of expression and “refers to a declaration of personal experience and is a political act performed without repentance” (Park-Fuller, 2000). Narratives are an artistic declaration of personal experience. The researcher will ask for these declarations and encourage them wherever possible (Park-Fuller, 2000, p. 22; Sarbin, 1986, p. 101).

The stories that people tell about their lives are social constructions. In constructing a narrative account they make use of everyday language. The social nature of language conditions the character of the narrative accounts. “It is together that [people] remember; and
it is within the social medium of language that [people] articulate [their] most individual memories in the mode of narrative” (Ricoeur, 1997 as cited in Murray & Smith, 2003, p. 98).

The use of narrative research provides a unique opportunity for the researcher to provide part of the narrative as he transfers from being an observer to being the narrator. When conducting narrative research there are three main groups or types of participants that provide the form and bring meaning to a person’s lived story. The first is the storyteller who is the person sharing their story. The second type of participant is the narrator / interpreter. This is the person conducting the research and who relays the story to the wider audience. The final participant group is the audience who are the recipients of the final narration (Josselson, 2011, p. 225; Lea Gaydos, 2005, p. 256).

The following is an example that demonstrates how narrative research methodology was used as a decolonising process. While there are many examples of narrative research being used to understand Aboriginal Australians and their issues, the following is one example of narrative research and its impact on human rights among Indigenous Australians.

### 3.5 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a common methodology used when looking at a social context and social phenomena among different people groups (C. Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Glaser, 2002; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Goulding, 2005). The theory originates from sociology, specifically from symbolic interactionism. This theory posits that meaning is negotiated and understood through interactions with others during social processes (Blumer, 1986; Dey, 1999; Jeon, 2004; Punch, 2013). These social processes have structures, implied or explicit codes of conduct and procedures that circumscribe how interactions unfold and shape the meaning that comes from them. The goal of grounded theory is to develop an explanatory theory of basic social processes, studied in the environments in which they take place (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Strauss and Corbin (1994) explain that grounded theory examines the “six Cs” of social processes to understand the patterns and relationships among these elements (causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariance, and conditions). Within this approach, knowledge of social realities is achieved through careful observation of behaviour and speech practices (C. Baker et al., 1992; Glaser, 2002; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Stern, 1980).
What do Corbin and Strauss (Cobrin & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) mean when they use the term “grounded theory”? They state that the theory is derived from the data, which is systematically gathered and analysed throughout the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and the subsequent theory stand in close relationship to one another (Cobrin & Strauss, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Hood, 2010; Jeon, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1994) recommend that the researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind, thus, allowing the theory to emerge from the data. They (Cobrin & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) postulate that theory is more likely to resemble ‘reality’ compared to theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (that is, how one thinks things ought to work) (Annells, 1996; C. Baker et al., 1992; Goulding, 2005). Sandelowski (2010) states that grounded theories, “because they are most often drawn from the data, are likely to offer insight, develop understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action”. In addition, Sandelowski (2010) believes although grounding concepts in data is the main feature of this method, the creativity of the researchers is also an essential ingredient. Starks and Trinidad (2007) propose that a grounded theorist would benefit from possessing the following characteristics:

1. the ability to step back and critically analyse situations
2. ability to recognise the tendency toward bias
3. the ability to think abstractly
4. ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticism
5. a sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents
6. a sense of absorption and devotion to the work process (p. 7).

According to (Hood, 2010), grounded theory on the surface appears to be the most popular research methodology in the area of social sciences (p. 151). Hood (2010) does however, point out that as many as 70% of research studies that claim to use grounded theory are actually using the “Generic Inductive Qualitative Model” (GIQM) (p. 155). He asserts that very few researchers understand the processes originally set out by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. On the surface, GIQM appears to be very similar to grounded theory, however there are major differences in the inductive approaches and the understanding between theoretical saturation and substantive saturation Hood (2010). These differences can become evident in the way in which interviews are formulated and conducted (p. 163). The following is an example of how grounded theory has been used.
Table 3: A graphical representation of the three methodologies adapted from Starks, H. & Trinidad, S. B. (2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Grounded theory</th>
<th>PAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Linguistics / semantics</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Critical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and meaning is produced through interaction with multiple discourses</td>
<td>Theory is discovered by examining concepts grounded in the data</td>
<td>Focus is on collective research, production, diffusion of new knowledge through accessible communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Understand how people use language to create and enact identities and activities</td>
<td>Develop an explanatory theory of basic social processes</td>
<td>To understand practice and solve immediate problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology (formulating a research question)</td>
<td>What discourses are used and how do they shape identities, activities and relationships?</td>
<td>How does the basic social process of (X) happen in the context of the (Y) environment?</td>
<td>Defined in the situation based on values clarification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Those situated in one or more of the discourses of interest</td>
<td>Those who have experienced the phenomenon under different conditions</td>
<td>Shared between a group of equal participants, but the emphasis is upon individual power for action. Power in emancipatory action research resides wholly within the group, not with the facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection, observation</td>
<td>Observed participants in conversation in their natural environment</td>
<td>Observed participants with a basic social process taking place</td>
<td>Observed participants with a basic social process taking place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview strategy</td>
<td>Both engage in dialogue and interviewer probes for textual meaning</td>
<td>Participant describes experience and interviewer probes for detail, clarity</td>
<td>Systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic methods</td>
<td>De-contextualisation &amp; re-contextualisation process of coding, sorting and identifying themes and relationships and drawing conclusions</td>
<td>Examine how an understanding is produced through a close look at the words, taking an interest in how the story is told and what identities, activities, relationships and shared meaning are created through language</td>
<td>Open, axial and selective coding examines concepts across their properties and dimensions and develops an explanatory framework that integrates the concepts into a code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of analysts’ views</td>
<td>Examines at own place in the discourse</td>
<td>Brackets view</td>
<td>Brackets view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The three methodologies are reviewed in Table 3. Their history and philosophy, sampling techniques, how data is collected, the strategies employed and the methods of analysis right through to its final product are summarised. The researcher compared and contrasted the three qualitative research methodologies currently being used to conduct research among Indigenous Australians and found them unsuitable. It was decided that these methodologies provided insufficient assurances that all knowledge gained from the research process would be utilised in accordance with the cultural understanding of knowledge, with respect to its impact on the world or its participants and the researcher. What these impacts are and how they manifest themselves will be outlined in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: The Methodology

**Image 4: Academic analytical process**
The agency associated with Indigenous knowledge requires that the knowledge is handled with respect and significance. Therefore, the researcher has deemed it necessary for an Indigenous research methodology to be utilised for this research project.

The methodology developed for this project is named Yarning methodology, and will be unpacked in detail later in this chapter. Dean (2010) highlighted the possibility of yarning being developed into a methodology in its own right, however did not demonstrate this methodology in its fullness. This yarning methodology has been developed independently through discussions with Elders both in Australia and overseas, and through searching the literature before reading Dean.

### 4.1 Indigenous methodologies

Worldwide Indigenous\(^1\) approaches to research are diverse and complex. Therefore, they can be difficult to define when examined through colonial structures. Evans, Miller, Hutchinson, and Dingwall (2014) argued that

> One of the small ironies of Indigenous methodologies is that the struggle to be defined and understood as Indigenous through specifically Indigenous knowledge production is sometimes most clearly heard by other (i.e. non-Indigenous) scholars as an oppositional rather than self-constituting process. (p. 140).

The reason for this can be found in the Wilson (2001) assertion that “Indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology and our methodology, are fundamentally different” (pp. 176-177). These differences present as oppositional when viewed from a colonial perspective. Wilson (2001) further describes how Indigenous research needs to reflect Indigenous contexts and worldviews, that is, Indigenous research studies must be developed from within an Indigenous paradigm rather than come from an Indigenous perspective.

One major difference between the dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that the dominant paradigms are built on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual commodity. To explain this, a researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, therefore knowledge is something that is gained and thus, knowledge may be owned by an individual. From an Indigenous perspective, knowledge is relational and has independent agency,

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\(^1\) originating in and characteristic of a particular region or country; native
therefore cannot be owned by an individual. Ryan (2006) argues in regards to Indigenous knowledge that “ontology and epistemology have insisted that divisions between objectivity and subjectivity, or public and private knowledge, or scientific and emotional knowledge, are socially constructed…… and Indigenous Knowledge cannot be divorced from ontology (being) and personal experience” (p. 16). Sheehan (2011) refers to this ontological balance as “the intelligence of the whole” (pp. 74-77).

Rigney (1997) outlines an Indigenist research approach where the context of cultural safety should be based on rights, respect and responsibility. In the same study, Indigenous research is further defined as being informed by three fundamental and integral principles. These include resilience, political integrity and privileging Indigenous voices in a collective activity by Indigenous people with Indigenous people in research where the goals are clearly defined to assist the struggle for self-determination.

For the purposes of this study, there are two significant components of an Indigenous paradigm. In the following section, brief descriptions of these components highlight both the relational nature of an Indigenous worldview and the relational nature and agency of Indigenous knowledge.

4.2 Worldviews

Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlap (1992) describe the concept of a worldview as a mental lens that is entrenched in the way we perceive the world. The literature describes worldviews as cognitive (Hart, 2010; Simpson, 2000a), perceptual (Olsen et al., 1992) and as an effective map that people continuously use to make sense of the social landscape (Hart, 2010; Olsen et al., 1992; Simpson, 2000a). Hart (2010) states that worldviews are developed throughout a person’s life, through his / her socialisation and social interaction. Worldviews are encompassing and pervasive in adherence and influence (Hart, 2010). A worldview in light of this is usually unconsciously and uncritically taken for granted as the way things are (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). While they rarely alter in any significant way, worldviews can change slowly over time (Martin, 2003, 2008a; Sheehan, 2011). A worldview can hold discrepancies and inconsistencies within its beliefs and values. Hence, worldviews often contain incongruences. Olsen et al. (1992) have also suggested that there is a dominant
worldview that is held by most members of in a society. Alternative worldviews do exist, but they are not usually held by a majority of a society (Fredericks, 2009).

Hart (2010) asserts that there are a number of limitations in the discussion of worldviews in particular that most discussions are centred on the cognitive processes as the defining factors of a worldview. Kuokkanen (2007) argues that while the cognitive processes are important, they tend to ignore other dynamics of being in the world. These dynamics include “feelings and intuition on one hand and discourses, discursive structures, and practices on the other”. There are many diverse and complex understandings of worldviews. From an Indigenous perspective, world-views are considered to be relational. A relational worldview is defined by (Graham, 1999) as one that has the emphasis on spirits and spirituality. Hart (2010) asserts that within this Indigenous worldview a sense of communityism and respectful individualism is present. Communityism is the sense of community tied together by familial relations and the families’ commitment to it (Hart, 2010; H. N. Weaver, 2001; J. Weaver, 2007).

Gross (2003) explains that respectful individualism is a way of being where an individual enjoys great freedom in self-expression. This is because the society recognises that individuals take into consideration and act on the needs of the community as opposed to acting on self-interest alone. This relational worldview is carried forward in discussions on Indigenous peoples’ knowledge.

Sue and Sue states

“all things exist according to the principle of survival; the act of survival pulses with the natural energy and cycles of the earth; this energy is part of some grand design; all things have a role to perform to ensure balance and harmony and the overall well-being of life; all things are an extension of the grand design, and, as such, contain the same essence as the source from which it flows (Gitchi-Munitou); and this essence is understood as ‘spirit,’ which links all things to each other and to Creation.” (as cited in Hart 2010, p. 259).

Simpson (2000a) in her discussion on Indigenous worldviews proposed seven principles:

1. Knowledge is holistic, cyclic and dependent on relationships and connections to living and nonliving beings.
2. There are many truths and these truths are dependent on individual experiences.
3. Everything is alive.
4. All things are equal.

Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?
5. The land is sacred.
6. Relationships between people and the spiritual world are important.
7. Human beings are the least important things in the world.

These seven principles of Indigenous worldviews demonstrate a strong focus on people and entities coming together to help and support one another in relationship.

4.3 Indigenous knowledge

Maurial (1999) defined Indigenous knowledge as “the peoples’ cognitive and wise legacy as a result of their interaction with nature in a common territory” (p. 69). De La Torre (2004) defined Indigenous knowledge as the established knowledge of Indigenous nations, their worldviews, and the customs and traditions that direct them. This latter definition demonstrates the close connection between Indigenous knowledge and worldviews, a connection that is further evident when looking at the characteristics of Indigenous knowledge. These characteristics are described by Castellano (2000) as personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or symbolic language. Maurial (1999) and Hart (2010) adds to this by identifying three characteristics of Indigenous knowledge: local, holistic, and oral.

An Australian Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational (Maurial, 1999) and has agency (Adams, Wilson, Heavy Head, & Gordon, 2015) and is shared with all of creation (De La Torre, 2004). This is not limited to interpersonal relationships, nor to relationships with the research participants, but it encompasses a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. Kwaymullina (2005) explains this concept as follows:

“Imagine a pattern. This pattern is stable, but not fixed. Think of it in as many dimensions as you like – but it has more than three. This pattern has many threads of many colours, and every thread is connected to, and has a relationship with, all of the others. The individual threads are every shape of life.” (p. 7).

Sheehan (2011) refers to this concept as respectful design, from an Indigenous knowledge perspective, all things are linked, and from this linkage very strong patterns emerge that hold
all areas of life and unfold in both the seen and the unseen. Martin (2003, 2008b) understands this patterning as “an Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being”.

It is within these patterns that Indigenous knowledge builds relationships with the world around it, and therefore knowledge becomes contextual. Because of the concept of relational knowledge, the Indigenous understanding of knowledge is that it is also alive or has independent agency. To explain this from an ontological perspective, Indigenous people understand that knowledge exists in the place between the knowledge custodian and the knowledge recipient. It is within this place that knowledge has a level of self-determination. This is demonstrated though its ability to direct the impartation of knowledge by indicating the direction the impartation will take and the style in which it is given. It is also within this place that the researcher must build a relationship with the knowledge and fulfil all obligations that come from caretaking of the knowledge.

The important implication of this ontological position is that a relationship carries responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. As a result, the researcher will ask different questions. Rather than asking about validity or reliability, the researchers will begin to ask questions of themselves, such as ‘How am I fulfilling my role in this relationship?’ and ‘What are my obligations in this relationship?’ Therefore, axiology or morals, need to be an integral part of the research design to provide guidance, so that while gaining knowledge the researcher is ensuring that they are not simply engaging in some form of abstract pursuit. In response to this, a researcher will pursue Indigenous knowledge in order to fulfil the research relationship and responsibility. This is an Indigenous methodology, looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all the relations in the process, and this does includes the knowledge itself (Wilson, 2001). Therefore, from an Indigenous perspective, Indigenous knowledge has agency, is contextual and remains attached to the country from where the knowledge originates and has relationship. Yarning as a research methodology originates from an Indigenous paradigm that takes into account the relationships required with the knowledge, the context in which that knowledge is found, and the participants who are the knowledge caretakers.
4.4 The methodology chosen and why

Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses. Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and Indigenous practices” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, p. 143).

Selecting research methods cannot viewed simply as a technological choice; rather, methods were proposed to be based on philosophical, ideological, ethical, and political assumptions” (Moccia, 1988, p. 3). Yarning methodology was selected and developed for this project. The yarning methodology was developed from an ancestral Aboriginal method of communication that has been, and still is, practised by the Elders when they need to pass down traditional Indigenous knowledge. The term ‘yarning’ is the common name for this style of communication. A yarning time has at its core principles and protocols that afford protection to the participants and to the knowledge. It is these principles and protocols that have translated into the methodology for this research.

As stated in the thesis yarning as a methodology is based on principles and protocols. These principles and protocols are relationship based these relationships do not only include the physical environment but also the metaphysical and it is these relationships that enabled the research to position himself. Therefore yarning takes into account connection to ancestors, country, the community and the spiritual at the same time. Yarning with its connections makes room for the singularity and the multitude therefore a yarn can consist of 1 person or 10 people. (Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991).

4.5 The reasoning behind the methodology

There are nine reasons why yarning as a methodology is proposed rather than utilising one of the more traditional methodologies discussed earlier.

1. It is a familiar practice of imparting Indigenous knowledge.
2. Allows for culturally safe selection of a place to conduct the yarning session thus encouraging quality information to aid in the research.
3. Participants remain the custodians of the knowledge.
4. Provides freedom and self-determination, allowing for positive relationships that encourage the releasing of information for the research.
5. There is a reduced risk of obtaining incorrect or misleading information.

6. Participants are consulted throughout the process about their information and their involvement within the research process.

7. Participants and the community have a sense of ownership within the process.

8. Participants and the community are the first to hear the results in a way that they understand.

9. A relationship is developed between the researcher and the participant that is maintained throughout the entire process. This encourages a mutual understanding that leads to quality research.

4.6 Background

A pilot project was established to test the validity and usefulness of yarning as a method of data collection. Researching this process the researcher discovered the significant principles and protocols associated with yarning from an Indigenous perspective. These principles and protocols are most visible when an Elder or knowledge custodian seeks to transfer custodianship to someone else. The same principles and protocols associated with yarning are also demonstrated in the talking stones, or memory stones of the Canadian First Nations peoples, the Chippewa of Georgina Island, the James Bay Cree, and the Blackfoot of Blood Reserve. The following section explains how these principles and protocols will lay the foundation for yarning as an Indigenous research methodology that provides a culturally safe process allowing for a strong Indigenous voice to be heard on the issues being discussed.

This is a pictorial representation of the yarning space. It highlights the principles and protocols based in respectful interactions and equal relationships that protect the yarning space, and demonstrates the flow of communication into and from that space. The diagram is a visual representation of the literature on yarning and conversations held with Australian Indigenous Elders and Elders from First Nations peoples of Canada and the USA.

Artwork by Stuart Barlo titled “yarning Space”.
Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?
Image 5: Yarning as a methodology: This artwork is a graphical representation of yarning showing all its links through to end of the process.
4.7 Yarning as a methodology

It is important to note that within an Australian Indigenous context, yarning has many layers (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Dean, 2010). Prior to colonisation, each layer had its own word giving an indication of the purpose of the yarning. At some point over the last two hundred years, it is unclear when, all references to modes of communication were distilled down to one word “yarning”. This methodology is based on style of communication conducted by Elders when passing on Australian Indigenous knowledge to the next generation.

Yarning methodology is framed by a body of principles, protocols and practices. These are used by Indigenous Elders to establish Indigenous knowledge about the world as valid and trustworthy in an academic environment, and to have some aspects of traditional Indigenous knowledge made known to the wider communities. This methodology systemically advances the teaching, research, and practices of Indigenous knowledge through rigorous inquiry that allows interaction that empowers participants through a culturally safe and ethical research method.

A deep ontological foundation supports yarning as a methodology. This foundation was passed directly from the ancestors to the present day Indigenous people. Imparting information through stories among the world’s Indigenous populations has been practised for tens of thousands of years ((Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Elder Barbara Big-Canoe-McDoneld, 2014; Uncle Larry Kelly, personal communication, September 15, 2014). Whether it is within the Canadian Cree or Blackfeet nations’ talking stones or the Australian Aboriginal yarning, there are ancestral protocols that dictate how one must behave. These protocols flow from the ancestors and are passed down to individuals through the discussions that take place over a lifetime (Elder Barbara Big-Canoe-McDoneld, 2014; Uncle Larry Kelly, personal communication, June 21, 2013).

Before understanding yarning as a research methodology, it is necessary to understand its history and the original purpose of the word yarning. The word yarn itself has origins in an old English word gearn which means “spun fibre” with roots from the proto-Germanic and the Dutch word garen which means “yarn” (Harper, 2014).
The first evidence in Western literature of the term yarning being used as a method of telling stories was in 1812. From here the phrase “to spin a yarn” is linked to the notion of telling stories while engaged in work that required them to gather together such as yarn twisting, net making or sail repair (Harper, 2014). Historically, the term yarning was exclusively a nautical term, only understood by sailors in the Royal Navy. Officers and the ship’s crew in the old Navy were stern disciplinarians who believed if sailors were allowed to congregate and tell stories, no work would be done. However, there was one job that required congregating on a weekly basis, and that was to unravel the strands of old line and repair the sails. On this day, the sailors could talk to their hearts’ content and the period came to be known as the time for “spinning yarns”. Later, anyone telling a tale was said to be “spinning a yarn”, a cherished naval tradition. That weekly gathering of sailors was also an opportunity for senior seamen to teach the less experienced seamen the finer art of sail making and repairs (Harper, 2014). Thus, the association with learning was incorporated into the meaning of the term, whereas today, “spinning a yarn” refers to any exaggerated story.

In different cultures, there are different rules, language and protocols for conducting conversations. In Western Australia, the Nyoongah people use the term “yarning” when they want to talk with someone (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010). Across Australia, Aboriginal people constantly refer to and use yarning in the telling and sharing of stories and information. When an Aboriginal Elder says, “let’s have a yarn”, what they are saying is, let’s sit have a talk and a listen. This talk / conversation / yarn can entail the sharing and exchange of information between two or more people socially or in a formal setting. Most cultures that have orality at their foundation and use similar communication techniques. For example, the First Nations peoples in Canada use the terms talking circles or talking sticks and stones (Elder Barbara Big-Canoe-McDoneld, 2014; M. Kovach, 2005, 2009) to describe a similar technique. As well as verbal communication, conversations can also include song, dance, drawings or whatever the yarning person considers necessary to convey the information (M. Kovach, 2009, p 92; Lavallée, 2009, p. 22; Munn, 1962). It is unclear when or why Aboriginal Australians started using the term yarning but it has effectively spread throughout the continent and is used in a variety of settings.

This research method will be referred to as yarning (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Dean, 2010; Martin, 2003, 2008b). The term “yarning” signifies a style of storytelling
employed by Aboriginal Elders when the intension is to impart information to the listeners (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Martin, 2003, 2008b; Sandelowski, 1991). This type of communication is based on relationship and respect in an environment where each participant is provided with a culturally safe space that enables the flow of information. This method is similar in its approach to the interview method known as in-depth interview techniques or unstructured / semi-structured interviews (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998; Minichiello et al., 2008; Minichiello et al., 1990).

Before identifying yarning as the research tool, a pilot project tested yarning as an interview method. During this process it was discovered that yarning, the method, had implicit principles and protocols at its core. While in-depth interview techniques have similar values, they were unable to support the cultural safety associated with yarning.

During the pilot project, each participant was given a stimulus statement (for example, “Aboriginal men have lost their dignity”) and asked to make comment. This method provides the opportunity for the participant to share as much or as little information about the topic as they want. As the yarning process unfolded throughout the pilot project, it was revealed that yarning was far more than just a method of collecting data and could be developed into a methodology in its own right. Yarning as a methodology has significant differences to narrative research or any other research methodology that relies on stories as its principal source of data, thus allowing yarning to be viewed as a complete Indigenous methodology.

Supporting yarning as a methodology is a foundation of eight principles, comprising four main principles and four sub-principles that provide the structural support for this methodology. The four main principles are respect, reciprocity, relationship and responsibility, and the four sub-principles are dignity, equality, integrity and self-determination.

**Respect:** From an Australian Aboriginal perspective, respect is a fundamental part of community life that is demonstrated through the treatment of Elders, the dreaming, and their country. For a researcher, this respect is far more than simply respecting the person you are talking with, it is also respecting the knowledge or the information that is being provided. The researcher’s respect is demonstrated through the way the information is utilised. There is a
saying in Indigenous communities that states “please don’t mistake my kindness for weakness” this is a warning to people who are seeking information from communities not to take advantage of them. This warning provides an opportunity for researchers to come to grips with the relationship and respect required for conducting research among Indigenous communities.

**Reciprocity:** Reciprocity is a process that models responsibility, it is an honouring process that demonstrates the importance of the relationship. Reciprocity is often mistaken for simply being a reciprocal arrangement, where reciprocation is only part of reciprocity. Reciprocity is more than giving a like-for-like. It is the embodiment of the Aboriginal model of caring and sharing.

**Relationship:** Developing a meaningful relationship enables the researcher to understand the authority and the right that the participant may or may not have to speak on a particular topic. Relationships are one of the most fundamental needs a human being will experience on a daily basis. Relationships are often good, but can also be bad, determined by the way we engage with our fellow humans. Often, researchers do not realise that any form of research creates a relationship. It is because of these relationships that researchers soon become part of the narrative of the participant involved in the research process. Oftentimes this narrative amongst Indigenous Australians is negative, simply because the relationship has become damaged though misuse of the information or due to the researcher not maintaining their part of the relationship. Indigenous Australian culture is a culture that is built on connectedness (Uncle Larry Kelly, personal communication, June 10, 2012; Uncle Ossie Cruse, personal communication, July 20, 2013). Hence, it is the researcher’s responsibility to not only develop and maintain connections with the participant, but it is equally important to develop respectful relationships with the knowledge provided. Quite often in the past, Indigenous Australian people have been taken advantage of by researchers and this has violated a very important part of Indigenous cultures, the understanding of relationship and connectedness.

**Responsibility:** Once the participant has provided information to a research process, the researcher is responsibility placed on to handle the data respectfully, and to keep the participant informed each step of the way. The researcher also has a responsibility to maintain relationships well after the research has concluded. The information provided is a gift and
with all gifts it needs to be treated with respect and honour, and the person who is gifting the information continues to be the caretaker the information. Therefore, the researcher has a responsibility to not misuse the information provided.

**Dignity:** Every person who enters the yarning space is treated with the upmost honour or respect.

**Equality:** From an Indigenous perspective, regardless of age or gender, each person has the same rights and responsibilities within that space.

**Integrity:** The yarning space is strengthened by each person being honest and fair.

**Self-determination:** Within the yarning space the participant has the freedom to make their own choices whether to participate or not and how much information to provide.

### 4.8 Territories revealed

As an Indigenous research methodology, Yarning can be seen as a verity of territories that each contain identifiable camps that fit into the landscape.

**Table 4: The territories revealed**

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<tr>
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<th>The yarning place</th>
<th>The raw data</th>
<th>The data</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>A. ancestors</td>
<td>A. narratives</td>
<td>A. specific Information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. protocols</td>
<td>B. data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. principles</td>
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<td>C. the yarn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D. connections</td>
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<td>D. repository information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. yarning place</td>
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<td>E. stimulus for further yarns</td>
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<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>The processing and coding</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Final reports &amp; recommendations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. coding and processing</td>
<td>A. reports to the wider community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. recommendations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. participant checking</td>
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<td>D. feedback to participating community</td>
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<td>E. final reports</td>
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The yarning methodology has eighteen significant components identified as camps. This approach was used to emphasise that the yarning methodology is grounded in Indigenous principles and practices. Discussions will demonstrate that this methodology is profoundly connected to cultural safety, has embedded cultural sensitivity in every aspect, and has cultural significance. Each of the eighteen components are divided into five significant territories that house camps within the borders of each territory.

4.9 Territory 1: The yarning space

4.9.1 Camp 1A: Ancestors
This camp is the oldest and most influential of those in the yarning space as it is from this camp that all structures, processes, protocols and principles flow.

Aboriginal people recognise Ancestor spirits as the creator beings from the dreamtime or dreaming. It is these beings who are credited with the laying out of the rivers, mountains and valleys, and who have laid out the laws and protocols that give foundation to Aboriginal society. Ancestors are believed to be present in everyday life and are acknowledged as being part of the yarning space.

**Lore / laws:** The laws as given by the ancestors are source of the principles and protocols that govern the yarning space. They extend from the relationships between country and man, and between man and man, to the responsibilities that go with these relationships to create a harmoniously functioning community.

**Adaptability:** Adaptability is the ability of an entity or organism to alter itself and its responses to changed circumstances or environments. Adaptability demonstrates the ability to learn from experience, and improves the fitness of the learner as a competitor (BusinessDictionary.com, 2015).

Adaptability is a strength that has been demonstrated by the Indigenous culture for thousands of years, despite the progression of changes seen through the changing environment, the rising sea levels and in more recent times the impact of colonisation. For example, Elder Paul, from the Ouje-Bougoumou Cree Nation said, “We once hunted on foot and with bow and arrows, we still hunt today using trucks and guns” (Elder Paul, personal communication, September
Colonisation has impacted the way people relate to the ancestors: Colonisation causes social and cultural devastation. This devastation reveals itself in racial violence that leads to deep breakdown within individual and group functioning that lingers today and will continue to linger for generations (Sheehan, 2012, p. 88). In Australia prior to the incursion of Lt James Cook and those who followed him it is estimated that Aboriginal Australians have been on this continent for 70,000 years or over 2,500 generations (Donaldson, 1996) and had effectively occupied all areas of the continent now known as Australia. In their cosmology, the Dreamtime (or Dreaming), they joined ‘time, spirit and supernatural event’ (N. Williams, 1986, p. 234) and through it they directed and coordinated the use of their efficient, original and ‘bewilderingly diverse’ technologies (Flood, 1999, pp. 79,131,150–134). It is believed that the Aboriginal population of Australia at the time of colonisation numbered between three hundred thousand and two million people (Mercer, 1998). They spoke approximately two hundred different languages. They were divided into 16 major regional groups and these were divided into 900 named social groups each with a distinctive way of life, forms of social organisation and customs, and unique material cultures with individual art styles (Donaldson, 1996).

Aboriginal Australia was linked across the continent by a multitude of trade routes, Dreaming paths, hubs of ceremonial exchange and sacred centres. Through these hubs flowed sacred and
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profane knowledge, as well as goods. For instance, Arabana, Diyari and Tirora traders travelled up to 500 kilometres from Lake Eyre to the Flinders Ranges to obtain red ochre for their religious ceremonies; shells from the Gulf of Carpentaria reached southern Australia; and tobacco, stone axes and blades regularly travelled hundreds of kilometres (Flood, 1999, 2006; C. Fox, 1991; Frances Peters-Little et al., 2010; Mulvaney, 1959). Communication and trade were not restricted to the continent. The impact of colonisation on the life of Aboriginal Australia was to break most of these links in such a way that they cannot be re-established (Flood, 1999).

Regular visitors from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea brought to northern Australia their senses of time, and a variety of myths, religious rites, art designs and technologies (Flood, 1999; N. Williams, 1986; N. M. Williams & Baines, 1993). The coastal peoples in Arnhem Land incorporated visits from Sulawesi into their seasonal cycle, perhaps as long as 1,000 years ago, certainly before the Portuguese and Dutch intrusions, and Cook’s (Donaldson, 1996). They obtained cloth, knives, glass, pipes for smoking tobacco and pottery, new maritime technology and skills and rituals from fishermen who came annually to harvest trepang (beche-de-mer) with the assistance of their hosts (Back, 1995; Broome, 2002; N. Williams, 1986; N. M. Williams & Baines, 1993). As evidenced, Lt Cook was not the first visitor to these shores but he did not come to trade, he came to possess. The taking possession of the land and its people forced the Aboriginal people to adapt every aspect of their lives both in the spiritual and physical.

Colonisation is used at this point is to highlight the unprecedented need for the Aboriginal culture to adapt to rapidly changing environments both in the social and natural worlds. Its influence on the histories of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians make it critical to place it within the first camp.

4.9.2 Camp 1B: Protocols

Protocols are a collection of set forms of etiquette to be observed by the participant. Six main protocols keep the participants safe while they are engaging in the research project. Observance of the following protocol ensures there is equality along with shared responsibility.
1. **Gift** – Each participant brings a gift of knowledge and self and is accepted as such and valued.

2. **Participant controls the yarn** – From a cultural perspective, the participant determines the length of the yarn and once the participant has begun, he determines the direction. As part of the participant’s control, he / she can determine how the yarn will proceed, e.g. talk, dance or drawing.

3. **Freedom** – The participant shares only what they feel they need to share.

4. **Space** – The place for the yarning needs to be culturally suitable.

5. **Inclusive** – You receive the gift of knowledge by listening intently (part of reciprocity).

6. **Gender specific** – each yarn is determined by those who are present and only those of like gender or age group can be present (depending on the topic).

When the six protocols are maintained within the space, the following four attitudes develop and flow through the participants giving a sense of community.

**Equality**: the state of being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunities.

**Responsibility**: the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something.

**Integrity**: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.

**Protection**: the action of protecting someone or something, or the state of being protected.

**4.9.3 Camp 1C: Principles**

The following set of principles is not simply a set of guidelines. These principles are strictly adhered to as they provide protection and aid in the creation of a dialogue that will generate knowledge and understanding in a culturally safe environment.

**Reciprocity**: is often mistaken for a reciprocal arrangement whereas reciprocation is only part of reciprocity. Reciprocity is more than giving a like-for-like. It is an honouring process that demonstrates the importance of the relationship, while maintaining a power balance within the space.
Respect: this respect is far more than simply respecting the person talking but it is also about respecting the knowledge or the information that has been provided. This type of respect is demonstrated through the way the information is utilised.

Responsibility: once the participant has provided information to a research process, there is a responsibility on the researcher’s part to handle the data respectfully and to keep the participant informed each step of the way during the research process. Furthermore, the researcher is responsible for maintaining relationships well after the research has concluded. The information provided is a gift and with all gifts, it needs to be treated with respect and honour. It is important that the researcher remembers that the person who is gifting the information continues to be the caretaker of the information; therefore, the researcher has a responsibility to not misuse the information provided.

Relationship: researchers often do not realise that any form of research creates a relationship and that the researcher soon becomes part of the narrative of the participant of the research process. Oftentimes this narrative of Indigenous Australians is reported as negative because the researcher has ignored the relationship developed between the researcher and the informant. Often it is forgotten that Indigenous Australian culture is built on connectedness, and it is the researcher’s responsibility to develop connections with the participant and to develop respectful relationships with the information provided. Previously, Indigenous people have been taken advantage of by researchers that have violated this very important part of Indigenous culture.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Indigenous knowledge has agency and is therefore alive, and one of the most important relationships that the researcher needs to develop is with the data, information or knowledge. If the researcher does not have a correct relationship with the knowledge, the knowledge will not reveal itself.

Dignity: Every person who enters the yarning space is treated with the upmost honour. Each person is accepted for who they are and honour is given for what they bring to the space. This applies to both the yarning participant and the researcher.
**Equality:** from an Indigenous perspective, regardless of age or gender, each person has the same rights and responsibilities within that space.

**Integrity:** the yarning space is strengthened by each person being honest and fair. Albert Einstein said, “Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.” Within the yarning space, each person demonstrates their trustworthiness in the way they handle the stories told by others.

**Self-determination:** Each participant chooses to be there, can choose to end their participation at any time and may choose to release information even at later stages of the research process.

### 4.9.4 Camp 1D: Connections

This is one of the most important camps connected to the yarning space. It is in this camp that we find a place. Uncle Ossie Cruse (personal communication, July 20, 2013) stated “that in the Australian Aboriginal culture there is always a place for you if are prepared to accept the responsibilities that accompany your acceptance.” Connectivity within Indigenous culture is one of the most fundamental aspects of an Indigenous worldview. These connections are not only between human contacts but they include connections to the land, ancestors, history and future.

The seven principles of Indigenous worldview outlined by Simpson (2000a) demonstrate a strong focus on people and entities coming together to help and support one another in a relationship. Graham (1999) asserts that this has been referred to as a relational worldview. Key within a relational worldview is the emphasis on spirits and spirituality and, in turn, a sense of communityism and respectful individualism. Communityism is the sense of community tied together by familial relations and the families’ commitment to it (Hart, 2010; H. N. Weaver, 2001; J. Weaver, 2007). It is this the relational worldview that needs to be carried forward into the yarning space, and into the discussions on Indigenous peoples’ knowledge that subsequently flow from it.

### 4.9.5 Camp 1E: The yarning place

The yarning place is a protected space. It is protected by seven principles and six protocols and these 13 items come together to protect and enhance the yarning space. The principles are...
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reciprocity, respect, responsibility, dignity, equality, integrity and self-determination. The protocols that are associated with each yarning space are as follows: the space is gender specific, it is inclusive, there is a gift within each one, each person has an opportunity to speak, the participants are in control of the yarning space and there is freedom within the space. This protection allows the participants to bring their history, their ideas and any information they wish to impart,. Each participant also comes with their family history and their narratives, life stories and experiences. Due to the protection and safety within the space, the following can flow from it.

Connections – The first step in the journey of sharing our lives in a yarning space is to form connections with everything that comes into the yarning space.

Strength – Strength comes with joining someone else on the journey of life.

Truth – Truth comes as we hear and understand what has happened to others.

Understanding – When you share your life with another person you gain understanding about their view of the world, how they interact with it and how they allow the world to interact with them.

Knowledge – When knowledge comes we hear and understand new information.

Wisdom – When we learn from others how to apply the new knowledge, wisdom comes.

Relationships – Sharing your life experience with someone else creates a bond and relationships are formed.

Healing – Healing comes from the opportunity to tell one’s own stories and from listening to others’ experiences.

Trust – Trust is developed through the telling and hearing of stories within the yarning space.
4.10 Territory 2: The data

One of the most challenging aspects of using yarning as the data collection method is the huge volume of data that is produced. The data comes in the form of stories or narratives and these narratives come from the lives or the personal history of the storyteller. These stories are very important not only to the research but to the lives of the participants. The stories enable the researcher to investigate behaviours, values and perspectives (Bornat, 2001; Clandinin, 2006; Emden, 1998) while providing opportunities to gain a better understanding and to consider other opinions. In an Aboriginal context, stories allow the exploration of social factors and individual identities, and how they play out in the real world. Some stories will even help to identify and address barriers that limit people’s opportunities, participation benefits and access to services (Bessarab, 2012).

Often a researcher will lose sight of the relationship that has been developed through the research process both with the participants and with the knowledge being shared. If so they may start playing the role of a miner searching for hidden gold or as an explorer trying to discover new territory. The knowledge being shared exists and was part of the participant’s life prior to the research being introduced, therefore, it remains the property of the participant. It’s important to note here that the researcher is not playing a role such as Captain Cook as a discoverer. What is happening through the telling of these stories is an exchange of knowledge, of knowledge that exists and was held by the participant prior to the research being initiated (Wilson, 2001, p. 114).

Another important aspect to be considered in relation to narrative data is that features of the data can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. While it does include the spoken word, it is not limited to this mode of communication. The researcher will find that it is not uncommon for a person from an Indigenous culture to express their stories in dance or movement. All of these things form what is known as data that needs to be processed, interpreted, and coded to determine whether it is useful for the particular project.

Narrative data will generally fall into five categories and each of these categories will determine how the data is used and what impact the data will have on the final results.

A. specific Information
B. personal information
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C. the yarn
D. repository information
E. stimulus for further yarns

While the principles listed below are the same principles that add protection to the yarning space, they are also applied to the knowledge of the data that is collected through the yarning time. These principles are applied here because from an Indigenous perspective knowledge has agency or is alive (Adams et al., 2015, p. 15).

**Reciprocity** – When applying reciprocity to knowledge it is important to understand that as researchers we can give knowledge a stronger platform from which it can be shared.

**Respect** – This form of respect is far more than simply respecting the person you are talking to, is also about respecting the knowledge or the information that has been provided. This type of respect is demonstrated through the way the information is utilised. Indigenous scholars have spoken about how Indigenous knowledge has been disrespected through manipulation, misrepresentation or it being treated as childlike knowledge rather than being given the respect and honouring applied to ancient knowledge. When embraced this knowledge can help save our planet (Calma, 2012; M. Dodson, 1995; P. Dodson, 2007; Gooda, 2010; Langton, 1981; Rigney, 1997; Uncle Larry Kelly, personal communication, September 15, 2014; Uncle Ossie Cruse, personal communication, July 20, 2013). It is important to realise that respecting knowledge / wisdom and honouring this data is may mean putting it aside and then not using it. This is because not all the information provided may be pertinent to the research topic.

**Responsibility** – Once a participant has provided information to a research process, there is not only a responsibility for the researcher to handle the data respectfully, but also to keep the participant informed at each step of the way during the research process. Furthermore, there is a responsibility placed on the researcher to maintain relationships well after the research has concluded. The information provided is a gift and with all gifts it needs to be treated with respect and honour. The person who is gifting the information continues to be the caretaker of the information; therefore, the researcher has a responsibility not to misuse the information provided.
**Relationship** – in order for the data to be treated with honour and respect a relationship needs to be formed with the data. This relationship will inevitably protect the way the data is used. When a researcher develops a relationship with the data that is gathered he / she will come to protect and take responsibility for the way the data is used. As a participant invites the researcher into their life by providing their life story or information that has been handed down to them as part of their cultural practice, the researcher is invited into a sacred space and this space requires an honouring relationship with everything that exists in that space. It is often forgotten that Indigenous Australian culture is a culture built on connectedness and it is the researcher’s responsibility to not only develop connections with the participant but to develop respectful relationships with the information that is being provided. Developing a meaningful relationship enables the researcher to understand the authority and the right that the participant may or may not have to speak on a particular topic.

**Dignity** – As mentioned earlier, knowledge, information or data has agency and, therefore, it is required to be treated with honour and respect.

**Equality** – It is important to note that Indigenous knowledge / data, wisdom and life stories are to be treated with the same respect, the same rights and social status, as any other data collected in the line of research and not treated simply as a novelty.

**Integrity** – For a researcher to act with integrity towards Indigenous knowledge it is vital that integrity does not simply mean respect. It is about being honest with what you want the data for and how the data is to be used and to ensure that the data is not manipulated to say something it never intended to say. The treatment of the data is a quality of being honest and fair to everyone and everything concerned.

**Self-determination** – Once the researcher has established an integral relationship with the data provided, from an Australian Indigenous perspective the data (knowledge) has agency, therefore it will tell you how it can and will be used.
4.10.1 Camp 2A: The narratives

Professor Thomas King, a Cherokee man wrote “…once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories that you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told” (King, 2003, p. 10).

Storytelling has been part of the Aboriginal oral tradition for thousands of years (Neidjie, 2002). The telling of stories is used to teach children what is expected of them and how they are to behave in certain situations. Stories are also used to hand down and to impart information. Bessarab (2012) states that “stories formed part of the Aboriginal cosmology; the dreaming stories informed people of how the world was created, set the protocols for behaviour and outlined responsibilities” (p. 22).

Working with narratives is a culturally friendly and safe process for Aboriginal people as it is a very familiar area. Furthermore, working with stories enables the researcher to develop very important skills in listening and reflecting (Clandinin, 2006). It is critical that the researcher understands that working with narratives is not simply hearing stories and interpreting them; it is an invitation into life of the storyteller. When an Indigenous person shares a story they will include their life, their life experiences and information about a particular subject which also could include history from the beginning of time. As he / she shares their story there is an opportunity for healing to come.

Clandinin (2006) asserts that once a person has participated in a research project the research becomes part of a new story. This story is dependent on how the researcher handles the information and stories provided, so it has the potential to be positive or negative depending on how the participant views the way in which their information was handled.

When talking about stories and telling stories, Uncle Larry Kelly (personal communication, June 21, 2013) demonstrated the use of the same story at three different times during the yarning process to emphasise three different aspects of his life. Therefore, it is important that the researcher be attentive when listening to stories or narratives because potentially the researcher can hear the same story many times with different meanings attached to the story each time, thus making coding very difficult. The narratives told to the researcher make up
portions of the data to be analysed. The following sections discuss the nature of data, and the processes of analysis under the proposed methodology.

4.10.2 Camp 2B: Data
From a research perspective, the data camp is the most important camp as it is from here that information is gleaned. Wilson (personal communication, July, 2014) reminds us that all things are considered data. Therefore, for a researcher utilising yarning as a methodology, the potential data exists throughout the entire process. Potentially, the things that influence the outcome of the research will be discovered within this data. The research needs to engage every aspect of the yarning environment during the research process, and to observe not only what is being said, but how it is being said as well as the accompanying body language. In addition to what is being expressed vocally, it is not unusual for an Indigenous Elder to express themselves through drawings or some other form of physical expression.

Another important source of data that is often overlooked is the data that comes from the researcher because the researcher is involved in the yarning process and has developed a relationship with the knowledge and with the participants. His / her input into these sessions and his / her reflections on these sessions form part of the data and thus it cannot be ignored or removed from the data set. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) suggest that when the researcher uses reflective practice as part of the research method, the reflections become an important source of data, as these reflections can contain epistemological and ontological bias that relate to the researcher that cannot be ignored as these bias’s will have an influence on outcomes.

As discussed earlier, the researcher has a responsibility not only to the participant but also to the knowledge. It is here, within this camp, that relationships need to be developed with the data. With this relationship comes responsibility. Throughout the yarning process, participant information needs to be verified and potentially at each verification new data will emerge.

4.11 Territory 3: Data and analysis

4.11.1 Camp 3A: Specific information on the research topic
This is the first of a series of four camps that contain the research data. Each one has distinct information contained within it while being linked to the other camps. It is important that they
be dealt with separately. However, various aspects of each camp will govern the authority, validity and responsibility of the data found in its neighbouring camp.

In this camp sits all the data that relates to the research topic. This information needs to be analysed using an inductive method. This camp will provide details that will lead to conclusions and recommendations.

4.11.2 Camp 3B: Participant personal information

Camp 3B is typically made up of generic data however, this information is extremely important as it can determine the authority and the authenticity of the information being provided. In the yarns, for example, if the yarn or the research topic is specifically aimed at determining men’s issues, then gender is extremely important as within Indigenous culture, it is inappropriate for women to speak with authority on men’s issues and for men to speak about women’s issues. Location and language group are also important pieces of information as relationship to land, and kinship ties can also provide insight into the authority with which someone can speak in relation to certain topics. For example, it is inappropriate to have someone who is a member of the Yuin nation group speaking on behalf of the Wajuk nation group. As explained earlier, Indigenous knowledge is contextual and has a custodian who is tasked with the responsibility of see that the knowledge is handed on correctly.

4.11.3 Camp 3C: The yarn

Within camp 3C is a great deal of very special information, and at first this information may seem to be irrelevant or of a very superficial nature. This is due to the nature of Indigenous peoples’ method of storytelling. It has been said that Indigenous knowledge is cyclic in nature, and will generally start at a surface level and spiral down to a very deep and meaningful level (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). It is important to note that Indigenous narratives will include a great deal of body language that needs to be included as part of the dataset. This body language will provide important keys when determining what is being said or demonstrated throughout the yarning process. It is important to remember when using the yarning process as a data collection method to remember that everything is to be considered as data.
4.11.4 **Camp 3D: Repository information**

Information in this camp does not directly relate to the research topic, however, it can influence the data that is used as part of the research. Many protocols need to be observed before this information is recorded. Simply because this information is provided, the researcher it does not have permission to utilise it. Non-public information or gender specific information needs to be handled with extreme caution as the release of this information can violate relationships not only between the researcher and participants but also between the participants and the wider community.

Once a relationship has been established, an Elder may use research opportunities to place inside knowledge into a secure recorded space, thus treating the research and the researcher as a repository for inside knowledge. Therefore, simply receiving this information does not give the researcher permission or ownership of this information; the ownership remains with the traditional custodians of the information. Occasionally, an Elder will give permission for the use of some of the information to be utilised under strict conditions, for example, only men can access the information or only women can access the information. It is extremely important that this information is recorded and handed back to the Elder concerned. Certain personal information can only be used with the express permission of the participant. As part of most research processes, personal information of participants is collated and stored in the researcher’s archives and not made public without the participant expressed permission. This also is in agreement with the yarning process. This stored information can be used as a record for the participant of their family histories and used to contribute to their ongoing well-being and healing. Information released in yarning sessions can sometimes contain legal information with potential legal ramifications. It is important to note that the researcher is not a policeman and therefore in most circumstance you are not required to report it or discuss it any further.

4.11.5 **Camp 3E: Stimulus for further yarns**

Quite often during the process of a yarn, information or concepts are brought forward that need further investigation, but are not relevant to the current topic being discussed. This happens as part of the natural process when dealing with the huge volumes of data that will unfold during the yarning session. Because it is inappropriate for the researcher to interrupt or redirect the yarning process, any questions or comments need to be held over until the end of
the yarning session or, another time needs to be arranged for another yarning session on the different topic. When this happens, the research process will need to start again from the beginning.

4.12 Territory 4: Processing and reporting

4.12.1 Camp 4A: Coding and processing

Coding and processing from a western scientific perspective, particularly when using qualitative research methods, is an inductive process that requires a de-contextualisation and a deconstructing process (Beattie, McInnes, & Fearnley, 2004; Pérez-Arce, 1999; Riessman, 2005; Y. Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009a). From an Indigenous perspective, it is important that during this process information, narrative data remains contextualised (Simpson, 2000b). In doing so, it gives the researcher an opportunity to relive the yarn. Working with both a printed transcript of the yarning session and the audio / video recordings of the session gives the researcher access to not only the written word or the words that were spoken, but the vocal inflections and tone of the stories that were shared and the information gifted. Video recordings, if available, will also show body language and gestures that accompany the stories. As explained earlier, everything is considered to be part of the data (Wilson, personal communication, July, 2014) and in this process all of the data has an influence on the way coding is carried out and data is processed. When trying to understand the data and the knowledge it contains, it is important that the researcher gives the data the time it needs to reveal the knowledge it contains. “Research progress ultimately depends on the sincerity and good judgement of those who do the research …” (Starbuck, 1968, p. 161)

Once the researcher is satisfied with the level of coding that has taken place, and has extrapolated the information around the topic being discussed, further consultation with the participant needs to take place. While this is still part of the original yarning process, it allows the researcher to ensure that data remains contextualised. In addition, it contributes to building trust with the participant as they are consulted at every stage of the analytic process, and it ensures the trustworthiness of the research and of the data. This process allows the participant to see firsthand that his / her information has not been misrepresented and that he / she is able to have input into the outcome and observations regarding his / her information.
4.12.2 Camp 4B: Recommendations

All recommendations need to be filtered through the participants and the communities from which the participants have been drawn, as all information and recommendations are of a concern to them. This is a three-part process.

1. Recommendations are presented in a form that the participants can understand and relate to. Participants then comment on the recommendations, and their thoughts concerns and understandings are synthesised into the recommendations.

2. Presenting results and recommendations to the community also needs to be in a manner or a form that the community understands. This can be done through a yarning circle or visualising recommendations into artwork that engages with Indigenous philosophies.

3. Final recommendations can be made in a report form to funding bodies, universities or controlling bodies once the comments and feedback flowing from the communities has been synthesised into the recommendations.

4.12.3 Camp 4C: Reporting

The final results of a research study are most commonly presented in the form of reports, articles or thesis. It is important to honour the participants and their communities by providing feedback or results in a manner that is easily understandable to them. As an example, a number of pictorial diagrams have been placed throughout this thesis to assist with explanations of dignity, the yarning space and the methodology. This method of expression takes away the first person and retains the consistency of a third person (academic) reporting of the results. Results or a thesis can also be presented in the form of a ceremony as a way of honouring the participants for presenting their gift of knowledge.

In this thesis, seventeen original artworks were created originally to provide feedback to the participants in culturally appropriate manner. To honour the participants, these artworks along with an explanation of each picture will be presented to each participant in book format.

4.13 Territory 5: Wider community

The wider community is a representative group of independent stakeholder that have a vested interest in the research results. This group will often include universities, research institutions...
and funding bodies, and each of these institutions will have their own requirements and / or
guidelines for acceptable presentation of results and reports that must also be observed.

4.14 The methods in practice

The following is how the previously outline processes were applied to this research project.

4.14.1 Participant Recruitment

The recruitment for this project was designed to target a particular demographic, namely
senior Aboriginal male community leaders. These men needed to be recognised as Elders
within the communities and be respected as leaders. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal
Peoples (1996, p. 488) states that “Elders are keepers of tradition, guardians of culture, the
wise people, the teachers. In Aboriginal societies, Elders are known to safeguard knowledge
that constitutes the unique inheritance of the nation. They are revered and respected. While
most of those who are wise in traditional ways are old, not all old people are Elders, and not
all Elders are old”.

Grbich (2003, p. 63) emphasises the complexity of gaining access to people who are
considered elite within a community. Gaining access to Aboriginal Elders without prior
relationship for this type of study is almost impossible, therefore it was important to develop a
recruitment strategy based on relationship.

A recruitment strategy was developed using MacDougall and Fudge’s (2001) three-step
recruitment process, as outlined in their 2001 paper on planning and recruiting the sample for
in-depth interviews. Recruitment for this particular project happened in three different
directions. The first direction came through Elders volunteering to participate during
discussions about the proposed project before the project actually became an official area of
research. Once the project was accepted by the University and the ethics application had been
submitted and approved, a letter of invitation was sent to these participant which they
accepted immediately. The second recruitment strategy is sometimes referred to as
convenience sampling where members of the community were invited to participate because
of the researcher’s prior relationship to them. The third type of recruitment came from what is
commonly known as snowballing with someone who is participating in the project
recommends another person who may be willing to participate. The recruitment methods of
volunteering and convenience (methods one and two) were used to recruit participants who were based in Australia. Snowballing (method three) was used to invite the potential participants who lived in Canada.

There are questions in the literature about the outlined recruitment processes that relate to validity and power imbalance when conducting research with people that you know, or who are from a select group. All of the participants are from a select group, namely senior male Elders and half of the participants are well known to the researcher. The methods and methodology that has been utilised within this research relies on the building and maintaining of relationships, therefore having an existing relationship has only enhanced the type of data that came forward and sped up the process.

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**4.14.2 The yarning’s (Interviews)**

Interviews were conducted using an Indigenous style of imparting and receiving knowledge. In some senses, this method could be considered free range because the Elder has absolute control over the content and direction of the impartation of knowledge. The yarning method has been compared to an un-structured or semi-structured interview and the free form nature of yarning method does have the appearance of this being true, except there is one major difference; it is very structured towards the participants having complete control over the direction and content of the yarn.

For example, within this project each participant was simply given a statement to comment on the statement was “Can you talk to me about the dignity of Aboriginal men”. This statement gave the Elders the opportunity to talk about any aspect of dignity they wished and relate any stories that they felt relevant to the topic.
4.14.3  The gift (reciprocity)

Reciprocity is the concept of giving something back to someone who has given something to you. When conducting research amongst Aboriginal people, it is important that they are given something in return for the information that they provide. As part of this research project, there are several levels of reciprocal action taken by the researcher throughout the process. In Australia there is no formal method of reciprocal arrangements, therefore it becomes a negotiated process with the participant. The research reciprocal arrangements could be in the form of monetary reimbursement for time, paying out-of-pocket expenses, or the provision of a meal. By way of contrast, in Canada there was a more recognised process of gifting, with the gift having a much more symbolic nature to it, for example a pouch of tobacco or a tobacco bundle plus some cloth.

Within this research project, the reciprocal arrangements took a number of different shapes depending on the requirements of the participants. Given that this research project was unfunded, monetary arrangements were not possible. Therefore, out-of-pocket expenses were paid for all of the participants, including a meal, and morning and afternoon tea. In addition to this, each participant received a digital version of their stories and a printed transcript of each conversation, thus enabling each participant to have a record of their words and their thoughts at the time of each interview. At the conclusion of the project, the participants were gifted a book relating to the research project containing images that were drawn specifically through the projects and associated with their yarning stories. In Canada, each participant was presented with a digital version of their stories, a written transcript of our conversations, a kangaroo skin pouch containing tobacco and a book containing original images drawn specifically on what they discussed within the yarning sessions as well as an original print by an Aboriginal Australian artist.

4.14.4  The analysis

The data analysis consisted of several components, but focused heavily on the validating of the process by each of the participants. Once each of the yarning sessions was completed, it was transcribed by a professional transcription service and then taken to the participant for verification. This was done by either reading the transcript to the participant or leaving it for participant to work through and come back with additional information.
Once the transcript had been verified by the participant, it was separated into themes and stories. Then the themes and stories were checked by the participants. Again, the themes were analysed further to discover what sub-themes lay within the main themes. Once again, the participants were consulted for an additional verification. This process continued until both the researcher and the participants were satisfied that there were no more themes to be revealed. After this process occurred for each participant, the researcher compared each of the participants' themes to find a common thread as part of the analysis. Once the comparison had been completed, the common themes were then taken back to each participant for their assessment and comments. At the end of this process, there remained 5 themes or concepts that are presented as the results.
Chapter 5: The Voice of the Elders

Image 6: Voice of the Elders

Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?
5.1 Participant profiles

Each of the participants was given a stimulus question at the beginning of the yarning session. The statements in the following section were made by the participating Elders, extracts from information divulged during the yarning sessions.

The statements were made by the following Elders:

Uncle Ossie Cruse is a 78-year-old man from the Yuin Nation, New South Wales. Uncle Ossie is a senior Elder from that nation and he serves as chairperson of the Eden Aboriginal Land Council (EALC). Uncle Ossie is a long-time friend and ex-work colleague of the researcher with a relationship that spans over 25 years. The participant is a mentor and Elder from the researcher’s home nation.

Uncle Larry Kelly is a 75-year-old man from the Gumbaynggir nation, New South Wales. Uncle Larry is a senior Elder within the Gumbaynggir nation group, founder of the Nambucca Heads Elders’ learning circle and advocate for men’s business. He is Elder in residence at the Southern Cross University Campus, Coffs Harbour. The researcher and Uncle Larry have known each other for approximately five years and have worked alongside each other in Indigenous education.

Uncle Charles Moran is an 81-year-old man from the Bundjalung Nation, New South Wales. Uncle Charles is a senior Elder and language holder within the Bundjalung Nation group and a recognised author and educator. The researcher and Uncle Charles have known each other for approximately three years through the Southern Cross University Elders group.

Elder Paul (surname unknown) is a 67-year-old man from the James Bay Cree, of Québec, Canada. Elder Paul is a senior Elder and ex-chief of the Ouje-Bougoumou Cree Nation. The researcher and Elder Paul had no relationship prior to Elder Paul participating in the research project.

Elder Joseph Gilbert is a 70-year-old man from Walpole Island, Pottawatomi Ojibwa Nation, Ontario, Canada. Elder Joseph is senior Elder and chief of the Pottawatomi Ojibwa

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2 Note: The term Elder as an alternative to uncle or aunt is used in reference to the Canadian First Nations participants as this is the preferred title from within that group.
Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?  

Nation and ex-National Chief of Chiefs of First Nations peoples in Canada. The researcher and Elder Joseph had no relationship prior to Elder Joseph participating in the research project. The participant became part of this research project after being introduced by a mutual friend.

The next participant was interviewed using the above outline methods and protocols. Her participation focused on the history of talking stones, talking stick and talking circles. She at no time discussed Indigenous male dignity or wellbeing.

**Elder Barbara Big-Canoe-McDonald** is a 71-year-old woman from Chippewas of Georgina Island, part of the Ojibwa First Nation, Ontario, Canada. Elder Barbara is senior Elder and ex-chief of the Chippewas of Georgina Island, Ojibwa Nation. She is a language holder and educator on Georgina Island. Elder Barbara and the researcher had no relationship prior to the participation in the research project. She was introduced to the study by a mutual friend. Elder Barbara did not participate in the discussions on the dignity of Aboriginal men but provided Indigenous knowledge on the First Nations talking circles’ principles and protocols.

There is one voice missing from these discussions as one of the participant Elders passed during the writing of this thesis, therefore, his discussions have been removed due to the cultural protocols of his country.

The following is an outline of the final concepts that link through all the yarning sessions.

### 5.2 Dignity

#### 5.2.1 Round 1

**Uncle Ossie:** I think that men in general, and I’m not just talking about Aboriginal [men]. Man is basically a provider … whether he’s white or black, he’s a hunter-gather. When a man has been stripped of his potential, then dignity slides, pride of life also slides along with other things. This is not wholesale. It’s not everybody. It’s not affecting everybody, but the amount of people that will never work in our country is amazing, because we’ve chosen to produce in other countries and not promote in our own country, in industries, so that everybody can have a job.
**Uncle Larry:** Yeah, it unites all the groups from different tribal areas and gives them self-respect and dignity of becoming a man. [So] that when they’ve reached that stage [that] their social structure … comes into being … then they have to live by that social structure that they would practice or that was given to them through initiation.

**Uncle Charles:** I think dignity is controlled by other people, for example, because of the way I grew up, … and looking at people around me, they were dictated to by the boat people who’ve come out. So you’re living on a mission there. What I’ve found with those people, it was a manager that made up their mind for them. They’d tell them something and that was law. They had to do that. If they didn’t do it, they’d [say], okay, we don’t want you to speak your language. If you’re in a group, we don’t want you to speak your language. If you do, we’re going to cut your rations.

**Elder Paul:** When I was younger our people had dignity. We could come and go, we could hunt moose and bear and beaver without needing permission. We could live where we liked, we had hunting trails that we would move [from] camp to camp to camp. We were free. Forty years ago the band was told to live here [and] they built houses and schools. This is good but we are not free we are told where we can hunt and when. We have lost the old ways. We are not free. Dignity is lost. (Uncle Barry is a James Bay Cree from Northern Québec and spoke through an interpreter as he spoke only Cree.)

**Chief Joseph:** The dignity of our people has changed considerably over the last five hundred years. A culture that carried much dignity and pride has been severely tarnished by European influences bringing in spiritual components that are not Ojibwe. And it’s hard to get our customs back because we did not have written language and because the oral history has been broken, that is incomplete.

### 5.2.2 Round 2

**Uncle Ossie:** Yep. So, all of this, when you convert it, when you think about it, how does it affect this? This affected Aboriginal men to a large degree, because they weren’t British citizens. They were not British citizens and the colony was only going to look after British citizens from the word go. So … they embedded it down through the ages, like after the
1800s, they invented a caste system. If you were half-caste, you lost all your rights as a—. You gained your rights to be a—. I don’t know how they balanced that out, but you couldn’t have the right of a full-blood. You couldn’t live on a mission or a reserve that was set aside for Aboriginal people.

Uncle Larry: They have to live by that structure, [it] gives them self-respect and dignity in the social structure of the tribal groups.

Uncle Charles: Even when they were kids, him and his cousin, the old police would get onto them and, yeah, had them working. Well, they grew up to work.

5.2.3  Round 3

Uncle Ossie: So, we lost, again, a male lost his right of being able to provide. So, this terra nullius thing had an incredible effect upon people because you didn’t exist and you didn’t deserve to be considered as a British citizen because you weren’t British.

Uncle Larry: The men know what they had to do, because it gave them self-respect and dignity as a man, knowing that they were safe in those areas.

Uncle Charles: He [Uncle Max] had a belief that you had to work, no idle [time this shows dignity].

5.2.4  Round 4

Uncle Ossie: So, I guess what I’m saying to you is that Aboriginal men had to contend with this terra nullius concept that Aboriginal people weren’t fully human. The terrible thing that happened at the same time was that the notion of evolution was starting to find place in the world. Then, they thought they [had] found the missing link with these black people, Aboriginal people. So, they took their bones and their bodies away to universities all over the world, to experiment on them, to find out whether [they were the missing link] – they were convinced this was the missing link.

Uncle Larry: The truth will always set us free, [even if] we’re on the deathbed. If we look at our life our journey’s [as] finished and we accept that, as a human being and say thank you for
that, and it becomes [a new beginning, we] look at it as a new beginning. Death is only a new beginning for Aboriginal people, and that’s the law again. That’s the dignity and the respect that you have from your initiations that’s created within those four stages.

5.2.5  Round 5

Uncle Ossie: Yeah, to clear the lands of vermin. Attitudes – attitudes went deep in the grain of people, including the [unclear] people. It was shameful to be an Aboriginal. Girls, particularly half-caste girls started to try to make themselves look real white, putting a lot of powder on. Aboriginal men then became Indians. They were anything but an Aboriginal.

Uncle Larry: Because they live in two worlds and they’re confused because of the education they’ve got from there all the way up to here becoming a man. But becoming a man carries a lot of respect and dignity that you have to practice. You don’t just talk the talk, you’ve got to walk the walk. When you talk the talk, you’ve got to walk the walk. But … they’re not speaking to the old people about their culture and dignity and self-respect. They’re just going from urbanisation into the Star Casino in Sydney or wherever to the clubs, their clubs, their football clubs, and playing the poker machines and enjoying themselves.

Uncle Charles: The manager said, right, we’ll give you a house block each and we’ll take over the rest – and the government would look after the rest. Well, they just left it there then [and] it didn’t work at all. [And] cane cutting, that’s what the men used to do, they would go cane cutting. But it happened a lot. Down my lot, down Kempsey, there were two or three islands. Pelican Island was one and two other islands.

5.2.6  Round 6

Uncle Ossie: Anyhow, what we’re concluding in all of that [is that] racism, segregation, racism – all these things – it had a real effect on the breadwinner. The man himself. Proud warrior, proud provider. To a large degree, that really affected our people, because we became dependent upon the rations.

Uncle Larry: By displaying that dignity then you’ll get respect from the rest of the community or area from that what we talked about earlier, [and from] different nations or clan groups or tribal areas, tribal nations. Because of that fella that’s standing like that with all of
those [scars] on him, then it unites – like a united nation or a united tribal area or united clan
groups or united people and gives you dignity and self-respect.

5.3 Respect

5.3.1 Round 1

Uncle Ossie: My culture that I’ve got now is extended family. Extended family, respect,
caring and sharing, that’s all our culture.

Uncle Larry: Yeah, it unites all the groups from different tribal areas and gives [each man
the] self-respect and dignity of becoming a man.

Uncle Charles: If anything went wrong, they’d blame somebody else for it. That’s what’s
happening today. Even my family’s like that. If somebody does wrong and they’re in trouble,
it’s somebody else’s doing. But I tell them, look, that’s not the right way. If you do something
wrong, own up to it and pay the price. You do the crime, you do the time.

Chief Joseph: There are elements as far as the principles – the ideals I guess I would say of
Aboriginal or Anishinaabeg spirituality – there’s nothing wrong with what they call the
grandfather teachings, respect, honour.

5.3.2 Round 2

Uncle Ossie: The beautiful thing of the totem system was it gave a meaning to family and
tribe. We never ceased to practice that, because – we practiced it in – we converted it in a way
[to] age – when you get to a certain age, you automatically became uncle and auntie to the
children. You were as much uncle and auntie as the bloodline kids, when kids adopt you into
that mode of respect.

Uncle Larry: They have to live by that structure, [it] gives them self-respect and dignity in
the social structure of the tribal groups.

Uncle Charles: Yeah, and the two girls, they were a little bit younger. I worked down the
railway for about seven years and then moved into town. I bought a house and moved in, after
starting off from scratch. I thought it was … pretty good – on one wage and things like that. But when I settled down, I looked after the money a bit better.

5.3.3  Round 3

Uncle Ossie: That's right across our country. Even I still practice in our little children’s church. Aunties and uncles … look after the kids there. They still maintain that respect for them. They call them Auntie and Uncle.

Uncle Larry: The story that I still identify with today and believe that they dare [try to change] – they were there for a purpose and they were there for – to help Aboriginal people understand law and their social being within the structure of Aboriginal communities.

Uncle Charles: When they got into [missions], they weren't allowed to do that. That's what's put them down [and took away their dignity]

5.3.4  Round 4

Uncle Ossie: They had a beautiful way of exchanging gifts and that, and welcoming each other and then when they invited you in, into the tribe, they would then show you the totem system, show you your family. Here’s all your family here. So, you immediately came into the tribe with respect and you had responsibility.

Uncle Larry: Because if they haven’t been through the law, well they don’t really know, or if they don’t know about kinship and what’s involved with kinship law and Aboriginal initiation law, … and country, that brings them all together, and [brings] unity [to] all that.

5.4  Culture

5.4.1  Round 1

Uncle Ossie: The sad thing is he didn’t know Aboriginal culture. He didn’t know and of course this was his first contact. Aboriginal culture in the tribal world was that nobody forcibly intruded on other places, [in] another person’s country. Actually, they came to a certain spot when they were coming towards another person’s country and they waited there to be invited in.
Uncle Larry: That’s why that was put into place with those where they went to different tribal areas and saw that then they knew what they had to do. The men know what they had to do, because it gave them self-respect and dignity as a man, knowing that they were safe in those areas – in that area coming down at Wallaga Lake all the way up here to the Queensland border.

Uncle Charles: When they were five or six – mothers could rear them up till then, girls and boys. But when they get to a certain age, they go with the fathers and uncles, the boys, and the girls stay with the mothers and they go and do all the gathering. The boys go out with the fathers and with the uncles and they learn how to hunt.

5.4.2 Round 2

Uncle Ossie: I always wondered about that part of our culture. I took a lot of pains to learn more of our totem systems and our culture.

Uncle Larry: My two grandfathers who were fairly old men anyway when I was growing up. That’s [Bobbo Dick] and [Natty Jack]. Natty is a grandfather too. That’s where I got all my discipline from when I was growing up, because when I was growing up my grandfather took me on walkabout all over the Gumbaynggirr country, from [Barraba] right up to Kyogle to [Mackay] and back down to here, on foot. We did that on foot.

Uncle Charles: Learning culture takes time, one skill at a time. They [the boys] used to have a [piece] of bark or something round like that and the boys had to be lined up down there, they’d have to hit that while it was rolling. That was their first test of skills. They had to do that till they were really good at it.

5.4.3 Round 3

Uncle Ossie: [Culture needs to be taught] I always wondered about that part of our culture. I took a lot of pains to learn more of our totem systems and our culture. Because I befriended a tribal man in the National Aboriginal Conference and I actually brought him down here and we went out [to] a spot out here near the lake, [Unclear] Lake, [and] done all this fishing. I went up, said hi, sat down and we talked about all these different aspects of our culture.
Uncle Larry: The missing link is a cultural side of that person whether it’s an Aboriginal or not, because all men on this planet have got a culture.

Uncle Charles: Then [they] had to give up taking young people out and putting them through initiation and that. Well, that would have hurt a lot too, because that was their whole life, initiation for the young people and the young people growing up to be strong warriors. I hear people say now, look, I’ve been through the [rituals]. They’d go out for about a week and come back and [say] oh look, I’ve been initiated. Like, what would you learn in a week? See?

5.4.4 Round 4

Uncle Ossie: Culture, we never lost our culture. We never lost our culture. My culture that I’ve got now is extended family. Extended family, respect, caring and sharing, that’s all our culture. So yeah, culture’s alive. You see, when they say culture like we were having a natter, [in a] program the year before last … I was teaching the kids there how to make canoes and spears and all that sort of stuff.

Uncle Larry: I believe we all are brothers and sisters on this planet Earth because that’s my tribal area, it’s called planet Earth. My small part I play on planet Earth is in the Gumbaynggirr country, and the Gumbaynggirr teachings, and Gumbaynggirr’s law and culture.

Uncle Charles: [Language is an important part of culture] They were really strict. … I remember our old grandfather [Teonries] learned the language, he was sitting down like that and we’d be round here, sitting round here. He’d say something to us and if we didn’t get that right, we’d have to repeat that time and time again till we got it right. See today, you hear these people talking the language now, and they say, oh, near enough is good enough. Well, it’s not. You see the government tried to stop culture by stopping the use of language. They would say if you’re in a group, we don’t want you to speak your language. If you do, we’re going to cut your rations.

I told them a lot about the country and that, what’s happening out there. Place to go. You go to a place, [a] certain place, I said, just be careful, don’t take anything from there. If you walk
into a place and see something there that you like, don’t take it. Because the old people say that’s stealing. They used to say to us, if you steal, we’ll cut part of your finger off.

5.5 Relationships

5.5.1 Round 1
Uncle Ossie: [Relationships] Yeah, there was a breakdown, that’s right. But the reconciliation that they’re trying to bring about is to appease this terra nullius thing that they won’t accept.

Uncle Larry: They have to live by that structure, gives them self-respect and dignity in the social structure of the tribal groups, that markings [initiation scares]. It brings unity. If I go to his country or they come to my country then there’s a unity there that we’re not going to beat one another or kill one another because that’s not what it’s about.

Uncle Charles: Because of the way I grew up, sort of thing, and looking at people around me, they were dictated to by the boat people who’ve come out.

5.5.2 Round 2
Uncle Ossie: That’s what happened. An incredible amount of money spent trying to make this native title thing work. The most insidious thing to happen to us, I think, native title. It’s still destroying our people, it’s still destroying families, because [it tears] at the roots of this extended family relations. There are no outsiders and nobody owned the land either.

Uncle Larry: [An] agreement or whatever, you know [like a] United Nations agreement. But it’s tribal, it’s a tribal agreement with men that’s gone through law so that once they go through law then it puts … under the privacy act it puts a zipper on their mouth so that they’re not allowed to talk about it to family or in family homes or whatever. It’s only to be talked about when they go to ceremony.

Uncle Charles: In the old days the boys go out with the fathers and with the uncles and they learn how to hunt.
5.5.3  Round 3

**Uncle Ossie:** You mightn't see anyone, but they know you're there. You sit down and you wait for someone to come out to you. They're observing you to see whether you're coming as a friend or a foe and when they've satisfied themselves you're coming as a friend, they'll send someone out.

**Uncle Larry:** That's Bubba Dick and Natty Jack, Natty is a grandfather too. That’s where I got all my discipline from when I was growing up.

**Uncle Charles:** [Family stuck together] Because my brother that I was staying with, he had a partner and a sister-in-law and an old grandfather and two sons.

5.5.4  Round 4

**Uncle Ossie:** There are no outsiders and nobody owned the land either. It was community owned. It was community controlled and we all had community responsibility of protecting the land and looking after the land.

**Uncle Larry:** [Relationship with country] I have to go through on my own country. If we could put that into place throughout New South Wales then we’re making a big step in bringing men back to square one in New South Wales. Because that’s been taken away.

5.6  Responsibility

5.6.1  Round 1

**Uncle Ossie:** It was community controlled and we all had community responsibility of protecting the land and looking after the land.

**Uncle Larry:** Being safe is physically and mentally you’re safe and you’re looking after – you’re carrying out your responsibility for family and community or lands by different clan groups within your tribal area.

**Uncle Charles:** Even my family's like that. If somebody does wrong and they're in trouble, it's somebody else's doing. But I tell them, look, that's not the right way. If you do something
wrong, own up to it and pay the price. You do the crime, you do the time. [you take responsibility for your actions]

5.6.2 Round 2

Uncle Ossie: because you didn't own the land; the land owned you. The land was my mother, calling it the original concept, because it provided everything for you and we were all custodians of our motherland, Earth.

Uncle Larry: That’s the unity and that’s the law. That’s the law of the land. We’ve got to look after the land. That’s Aboriginal law. That’s initiation law. That’s cultural law, we have to look after the environment.

Uncle Charles: I thought it was a pretty good - on one wage and things like that. But when I settled down, I looked after the money a bit better. [take responsibility]

5.7 Reciprocity

5.7.1 Round 1

Uncle Ossie: I don't think we should make that as an excuse. We should still see them as men, Aboriginal men, stand proud. I have. I wouldn't accept none of that rubbish that went down. I didn't accept racism whatever. I didn't accept none of it. I just took my place like dad did and other men before us. Not that we wouldn't live on reserves, but we saw what the problem was when they lived there.

Uncle Larry: Our country was for sharing and caring, and that was a share and care for the country. We’ve cared for the country, looked after it. We looked after one another because our neighbours were part of our group, [they] were part of our group.

Uncle Charles: Give them a week out to do - to go out and find a job, or take them out and see if you can get them a job. Then they'll get a bit of money in their hand and look at it and then say I can earn money.
5.7.2 Round 2

Uncle Ossie: But the damage will always be while the Aboriginal people were seen as subservient and not equal to others. Even when foreigners came in, like the Indians came and Chinese came, and other people came, they were treated better than Aboriginal people.

Uncle Larry: because the environment looks after us. It supplies us with the food, the medicine, and all our needs are met off the land. If we destroy the land or the land is destroyed in any way then we’ll have to do something about it otherwise we … will not survive.

Uncle Charles: If they said, oh, well I’d like to be a carpenter, mechanic or plumber or something like that, well you could understand then. But when they just shake their head and say, no, then I think the interest is not there they all want something for nothing. As I say, when I left school, I worked and worked and then I had to retire at 50 because my back went on me. Boy did I do some hard work in my time.
Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?

**Image 7:** Indigenous Analysis: Knowledge remains in context
The following is an overall description that profiles the participants, the data set and the conclusions that flow from the data set. While the participant list is small the method used to collect the data has produced a large data set. The data set consists of 350,000 words that constitute seven yarning sessions and thirteen subsequent consultative contacts.

6.1 Stages of analysis

The analytic process consisted of four stages. The first stage was to divide the initial yarning sessions into individual stories and derive themes from those stories. In the second stage, the researcher returned to the participants to discuss the themes that had been deduced from the initial yarning session. At the consultation surrounding the themes, the participants were given the opportunity to add or subtract from their original narratives. Each participant chose to add to the narratives, thus increasing the size of the data set. At this point with the new data added, the revised data set was analysed to bring the new themes out. Once the new data had been added and analysed, the participants were consulted regarding the new narratives and themes. Thus, stages one and two were repeated. When the participants and the researcher had come to an agreement around the themes, the process proceeded to stage three. Stage three is a comparative process where each of the narratives and yarning sessions are compared, bringing forth a set of overall themes and responses to the discussion topic. The participants were consulted regarding the overall themes that existed within the project. The fourth stage was to compare themes to each yarn and rank them according the importance given to them throughout the yarning sessions.

After the four processes had been completed, the dominant themes were then compared to each of the individual yarning sessions and this produced the final results. There were five themes or concepts that were consistent across all of the yarning sessions and subsequent consultative contacts.
6.2  Thematic analysis of the interviews

6.2.1  ID number: 0004 (deceased)

Participant’s name:  name withheld for cultural reasons
Participant nation:  Anangu, Northern Territory
Participant’s age:  78
Participant’s position in community: respected senior Elder within the Arunta nation group; author, songwriter and advocate for Indigenous issues.
Relationship to researcher: the researcher had known the participant for approximately six years on a personal and academic basis.

This participant passed away during the research period, during which he had provided two interviews for the research. The cultural protocols from his nation dictate that further permissions need to be sought before his material can be used within this research, and his nation adheres to a 12 month mourning period. After consultation with Elders and thesis supervisors, it was determined to not delay this project for that period of time. To honour this well-respected man, he continues as part of the project, but his material will not be included within this research project.

6.2.2  Uncle Ossie Cruse

Interview length:  2 hours 23 minutes
Number of stories:  19
Number of themes:  7
Total number of words: 15,256
Use of silence:  4

The word analysis was carried out using Nvivo 10 software after the transcript had been finalised and approved by the participant. This proved to be ineffective due to the style of storytelling.
Keywords:  dignity, identity, men, terra nullius, government

Key finding: In the yarn, the use of the term dignity by the participant indicated that Aboriginal men had had their dignity stolen by the process of terra nullius “our dignity was stolen when we were declared no people”. He continued by saying that “this is still happening
Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?

The Howard government branded every Aboriginal man not just those in the Territory as paedophiles and women bashers”.

The participant mentioned that some Aboriginal men had given their dignity away: “they put their dignity down when they took up the drink and violence against their own mob”.

The participant also mentioned that over the years Aboriginal men have tried to take their dignity back by joining the army and fighting alongside the white fellas or trying to fight the system using the white man’s system against them. He then made the observation that “when we beat them they simply change the rules”.

After analysing the seven themes that the participant had brought to light, a pattern started to emerge that was spiral in nature. This pattern started at a superficial level, winding its way down to something quite significant.

Men have lost their ability to provide for their families either by being usurped by the government or by abdicating this responsibility through poor decision-making. The participant started by saying that men had had their ability to provide for their families taken away. The alternative attitude was that the government will take care of your family now if you let them. The participant then told a story of how his family were rounded up and placed on the mission. Uncle Ossie emphasised this point by adding “even today some of the young men from my mob will never work they will live their whole life on government handouts”.

**Broken protocols:** The participant related that things would have been very different today if Captain Cook had followed protocols, that is, “if the man in the crooked hat knew what the mob were trying to tell him when they [were] waving him back to the ship”. The participant believes that the Eora mob were telling Cook to “go back to [the] ship and wait until they were ready, instead he started [to] shoot those fellas”. He then stated that “white fellas have been breaking our laws and protocols since day one”.

**Terra nullius:** The participant believes that Captain Cook was angry at what he believed to be a hostile reception and that despite seeing camp fires all the way up the coast, Cook still declared Australia as belonging to nobody. “That lie has been destroying Aboriginal people
ever since.” The participant believes that the Mabo decision has only helped the lawyers: “It’s now legal to tell Aboriginal people that they don’t belong in their country”. He said that MABO stands for “Money Available Barristers Only”. The participant gave two examples of how the Native title process has caused division within the Aboriginal community. First, he said, “We never owned the land, it is a kin relationship. The land is mother, she looks after me and I have to look after her. She is not mine she is part of everyone.” In his second example, he said, “There is a place for everyone, unless you broke the law we would find a place for you in our mob close.” The participant stated, “Lieutenant Cook broke protocol. He should have waited then he would have been invited in and a place would have been found for him and his mob.” During the interview, the participant returned to the theme of terra nullius three times.

**Government policies or settlers interpretations:** The participant talked about various government policies that have taken away Aboriginal men’s ability to look after their families and fulfil their customary responsibility in order to become part of the white society. He told three stories to emphasise these points.

The first was how his father had a small business collecting mutton fish, drying them, packing them into a barrel and exporting them to China. He did this for about 10 years before the government found out and passed a law making it illegal for people to do this. The participant said that his dad refused to stop so he was sent to jail for six months. Before his dad was released the government had sold an export license to a white fella who took over their business.

The second story was about how Aboriginal men were not allowed to be in town after 6 pm. The participant told of an event that happened while his dad was taking the family up to Nowra for some sorry business. He recounted that while travelling through Narooma they were stopped by the local policeman as it was approaching 6 pm. His dad was told, with a lot of abuse that they had to be out of town by 6 pm. His father’s response to this was that the policeman would have to put them out. He then drove to the centre of town and parked the car to wait for the policeman to put them out of town. At about 10 pm, five police officers came with their guns to escort the family to the edge of town.
The participant relayed another story of how the government policies work to remove control and his ability to be a parent. This happened in the late 1960s. According to the participant, his children were sick and needed to be hospitalised while they were visiting in Kempsey on the north coast of New South Wales. “We were visiting family when we took the kids to hospital. Beryl (the participant's wife) and I left the kids there to let them settle. We came back [and] the kids had been moved to an old aircraft hangar that was out the back. Their clothes had been taken from them and they were given hospital gowns with big red letters on them that said “ABO”. When the hospital staff were asked to explain, he was told that they were not allowed to mix the sheets, that is, “if blacks used the sheet from the white section they would have to be burnt.” In response, he took his children out of the hospital and left town.

**It became shameful to be Aboriginal:** The participant added that because of the laws and the way they were being enforced, that “many back fellas stop being back fellas. They tried to be anything but Aboriginals”.

The participant told stories of how young girls would try and paint themselves white and how men would do whatever they could to be accepted as white.

**Aboriginal law:** The participant started to speak about how the removal of customary law meant that men no longer had to fulfil the things that helped to hold the community together. (Then the participant seemed to be reluctant to continue and was asked if he wanted to stop. He responded that no, he wanted to continue.) The participant spoke about the law and how it has two major components. First, the Law establishes community to continue life for another 50,000 years in harmony with the seen and the unseen. Secondly, it is a demonstration to the world that if you break the law, each offence carries some kind of visible punishment.

Governments ignored the advice of the tribal men and let pornography into the Aboriginal communities. The government brought satellite television into the Northern Territory and introduced open sex into private communities.

The above is a summary of an extract of the interview as the participant requested that parts of the interview not be released.
6.2.3 Uncle Larry

Interview length: 110 minutes
Number of stories: 12
Number of themes: 6
Total number of words: 11,200
Use of silence: 0

The word analysis was carried out using Nvivo 10 software after the transcript had been finalised and approved by the participant. This proved to be ineffective due to the style of storytelling.

Keywords: dignity, identity, men, terra nullius, government, culture, respect.

Key findings: In the yarning session the participant strongly linked together the concepts of dignity and culture. “They have to live by that cultural structure, gives them self-respect and dignity. The government took the dignity away by trying to stop culture being practiced.”

The participant spoke of how governments are still trying to keep the men apart by removing special sites or not granting them access to special sites for cultural purposes. He went on to say that some young men are realising the importance of culture and are looking for opportunities to become involved in ceremony.

Again after analysing the six themes that the participant had brought to light, a pattern started to emerge that was spiral in nature. This pattern started at a superficial level, winding its way down to something quite significant.

Near death experience: The participant told the story of how he had been declared dead and came back to life. “When I seen them all running out and running in I wanted to scream too. I said what’s going on. I said nothing I didn’t do anything, I said … how come I’m sitting on this table. She said because of that [and] she showed me a death certificate she was writing out. I said no, no … that’s ridiculous.” The participant explained that he had been an alcoholic but since that day he had never had another drink. “I never had a drink. I never had a drink from that day until this. I give up smoking and everything, because it changed my mind and it gave me that near-death experience, and it gave me a second chance, I suppose you could say, at life.”
**Culture:** The participant stated that during his recovery he realised that the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program had the same foundational principles as the cultural principles that his grandfather had taught him when he was a boy. “The AA principles in what they teach in AA is similar to Aboriginal cultural principles, and everything that they were teaching me I could identify with, similar to what my grandfather and my uncle told me and taught me.” This revelation started him on a journey to reconnect to his culture. “I put them all together and it was exactly the same principles, those initiation principles that I had to go through, you know.”

Being connected to your culture gives you strength and a sense of belonging. For Aboriginal men it will bring respect and dignity. “By displaying culture that brings dignity then you’ll get respect from the rest of the community or area from that what we talked about earlier, that different nations or clan groups or tribal areas, tribal nations.”

**Lost direction:** The participant believes that the young Aboriginal men are losing their way because they are trying to be white fellas. “Young men believe that they are men because they have a job or a housing commission house. This will make them the same as white fellas. The participant believes they think are playing by the same rules and have the same rights as the white fellas and, therefore, they don’t need to get connected to their own culture and laws associated with it. He said that the problem is that the government has complete control over every aspect of your life and will take control whenever they want to. “But it is not the same, the government still has complete control of your life.”

The participant said that he believes that the government has always had control. “Control has been taken away from the beginning” and it has never been given back regardless of the rhetoric.

**Respect:** The participant believes that there is a clash of two worlds. “That’s why a lot of the young people today, young men today, they believe that they are a man because they live in a community and they have a job, and they’ve got a mobile phone, and they live in a housing commission house.” This will give them respect and dignity in the community. But the participant says that respect comes from knowing who you are and where you fit in the world. “Because they live in two worlds and they’re confused because of the education they’ve got from there all the way up to here becoming a man. But becoming a man carries a lot of
responsibility that brings respect and dignity that you have to practice.” Therefore, “to be a man, dignity is needed to be displayed and it brings respect from the community.”

**Convict culture:** “We have a convict culture and that has been given to us from colonisation.” The participant believes that the young men now see prison as a better option than going through ceremony. He went on to explain that this is the reason he became involved the “circle sentencing” programme. Via this programme, the Elders can start to introduce cultural norms back into the lives of the young men. He said that some of the men believe that jail is like an initiation and “rehabilitation in gaol today, is like a new high school or university when you go in there [and] you learn all the bad things [from] all the ones that’s locked up in there it the new initiation”.

According to the participant, is possible to break this culture. “If they are worthy of staying out of gaol, then they’ll do what the Elders tell them they have to do, and they’ll be sent to a place where they learn culture and they’ll learn language, and they learn to be a man. We have a place like that already in place between Kyogle and Biugal.”

**Finding culture:** The participant believes that for the young men to regain their dignity they need to “spend time with the old people” to learn about their culture and take up their responsibility. He says, “They are making the wrong choice because they don’t know any better.” If we don’t start to take our culture seriously and “if we don’t look after the land, this is what brings life. This is the law Aboriginal law, initiation law and natural law means life.” Working together is what makes the culture strong and “unity brings dignity and self-respect”.

**6.2.4 Uncle Charles**

Interview length: 85 minutes
Number of stories: 7
Number of themes: 5
Total number of words: 14,000
Use of silence: 5
Keywords: dignity, culture, work, respect and Elders
**Dignity:** The participant reflected on the dignity of Aboriginal men as a quality that has been under attack since the first boat people arrived and decided to stay (Captain Cook and the First Fleet peoples). The participant indicated that language was a key to maintaining the dignity of Aboriginal men.

**Culture:** When young men today talk of culture, they talk more about all the things everybody can see and they neglect things that you cannot see.

**Work:** The participant said that work was very important to him and for his survival through his entire life and that for the dignity of young men today they need to work. He relayed several stories about how he was able to find work everywhere he went and made the statement that he was never afraid of work and indicated that young men of today may be afraid of work.

**Respect:** The participant relayed a number of stories about the importance of respect, respect for women, for themselves, for the country and for their culture.

**Elders:** The participant discussed the importance of Eldership and how he had Elders in his life that gave him direction, gave him knowledge and taught him how to be a man and take responsibility for his actions, for his family and for his community.

**6.2.5 Elder Barbara**

Interview length: 120 minutes  
Number of stories: 12  
Number of themes: 8  
Total number of words: 9,750  
Use of silence: 0

**Language:** The participant spent a lot of time talking and telling stories about the use of language and the need to teach it in schools. An emphasis on the importance of language as part of culture was also made.
The participant discussed the importance of teaching culture to young people stating that this would help them as a support for when things started to go wrong. She also talked about how children today don’t want to learn about culture or they are receiving lessons about culture from non-natives and are getting a warped view of how to live with culture. The participant told stories of how nature shows honour when you do things according to the cultural ways.

**Yarning / talking sticks:** The participant talked about how talking sticks help keep you honest and strong in culture as they remind you of what was taught to you by your Elders.

**Children:** It is important that the children know that they are loved and cared for by their parents and by the community. The participant told stories about when she grew up and how hard it was. She explained that they were still living according to traditional life, living in tents and how they had travelled from camp to camp following the animals.

**Respect:** The participant told stories of how the old people were held in great honour and were respected by all and how the young ones were taught respect as they interacted with the old ones who have great knowledge. She said that teaching respect is very important as respect gives you strength when you come up against things that are different or people that treat you the wrong way.

**Hard work:** The participant told several stories about how hard it was growing up. You had to go hunting or didn’t eat; you had to build your tent or didn’t have shelter. In winter you needed to have a lot of firewood to keep warm and to cook your food. These days people do not know what work is as “we live in houses and have power for cooking and heating. We hunt for fun so it doesn’t matter if you don’t catch anything. We get our food from IGA, our clothes from the shop next door. We even get money given to us.”

**Residential schools:** The participant told of how a lot their children were taken to the residential schools. She also told of the impact this had on their nation, saying that this was one of the reasons that they had stopped living the traditional way and building their community. “We have a big gap in our population. We are trying to rebuild our culture, we teach Cree in the school. It is good to hear some of the young people speaking the language.”
Honouring: The participant told a number of stories about how men do have honour. She repeated the story of when you honour the Mother Earth the way culture does then Mother Earth will honour you by supplying you with food or shelter. She said that this is important for men and they need to lead by doing this.

6.2.6 Elder Joseph (Chief)

Interview length: 130 minutes
Number of stories: 15
Number of themes: 10
Total number of words: 17,984
Use of silence: 5

This participant has served as Chairman of the National First Nations Council for five years and chief of his local tribe for 10 years.

Residential school: The participant spoke at length regarding the residential schools stating that the impact of them caused severe damage within Ojibway culture. He also mentioned that the continued practice of forcing their children to leave home for school has had a devastating impact on the community as less than a quarter of them return. But, despite the impact of the young people needing to leave to attend school, the Elders believe that it is very important that the young people receive an education “as this is the only way that life can become better for them now and into the future”.

Language: The participant felt that language was extremely important for their culture and the government policy up until recently was that native languages were not to be taught. He spoke at length about how language is connected to culture and that some believe that with the revitalisation of language, the Ojibway culture will also be revived.

Colonisation: The participant explained that the colonisation practice of forced removal from land, the setting up of reserves and the outlawing of cultural practices continues to devastate Ojibwa culture. He said that colonisation has no respect for what has gone before it and that his culture could do nothing to withstand it. During the colonisation process, massacres of his people took place and mass graves from this time are now starting to be uncovered. Some of
these graves hold 1600 bodies. The participant indicated that these graves are there because of the resistance waged by his people against the colonisers.

**Nation:** The participant described that his nation group (the Ojibwa) are a proud people and were fierce warriors. He explained that his nation group is made up of eighty-six different dialects, and that their lands stretch from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains.

**Christianity:** According to the participant, Christianity is extremely important within his community. Some Christian practices have had a devastating impact on their culture and yet he believes that in some way Christianity has saved them from destruction. He believes that Christianity helped them to assimilate easily into western society by accepting their faith and incorporating their belief systems into some of the Ojibwa ceremonies. Ninety per cent of the participant’s community attend a Christian church regularly and he is a pastor in his local church.

**Chief:** The participant explained how chiefs are elected today. He compared them to Australian council elections or a popular vote for one of the candidates. He served as chief for his community for ten years and participated as a senior chief within the nation for over five years. This system of electing a chief began their community in the mid-1800s.

**Culture:** The participant talked about the importance of culture, lamenting that when he was a boy he was unable to participate in cultural events. This was due to the involvement of the church and the impact that they had had in stopping cultural activities. The participant spoke about how important it is for young men today to understand culture because it enables them to understand who they are and where they belong and it demonstrates to them that they are not alone. The participant said that some of the older men are trying to reintroduce cultural lore as they believe that this will enable the community to have more control over what is happening within its borders and to its people. He went on to say that “some people believe being cultural is simply going and hunting for food, where the older men are saying culture is far more than just hunting”. Culture is a way of being and a way of presenting in yourself in your community.
**Reciprocity (caring and sharing):** The participant spoke at length about the importance of participating in community, helping the Elders and helping your fellow man. This participant stated that giving something of yourself is a highly important aspect of community for young people to learn. He said that young people today have grown up in a ‘me’ society, whereas traditionally an Ojibwa society was one of sharing. For example, “if a buffalo was killed it was for the community to share in not just the person who killed it”.

**Respect:** The participant explained that respecting the Elders and the older people of this community is something that the young people desperately need to learn. He talked about drug misuse within the community amongst the young people and that this is developing in them an intolerance towards the older people within the community. When men learn to respect themselves, their families, the Elders and the community, then community is strengthened and a level of peace will return to the community.

**Without a country:** The participant said that because he was sent away from home to a residential school and due to the impact the church had on him, it was a long time before he found out who he was. He related a story about when he discovered who his mother was, that she was an Ojibway person from Canada and his father was a Mohawk from the USA. He found that because he was a native with parents from both sides of the border, neither country would accept him.

**Hunting employment:** To generate employment and to help revive culture, the participant told of how the community and the Elders have set up a tourism business to teach people how to hunt geese using traditional methods. This venture provides income for the community and for the participants it provides a cultural perspective and an enhanced respect for the geese. The men who participate in the program are encouraged to explore their own cultural heritage and then apply it to the business.
6.3 Final results

It is important when utilising an Indigenous concept to analyse Indigenous stories and Indigenous knowledge that the overall process includes a process of consultation at every new stage. This allows the participant and/or the knowledge holder to understand what is being done to the knowledge and to offer insight into the validity of the processes being applied to the knowledge. As stated earlier, Indigenous knowledge has agency, therefore, it is important to give knowledge itself an opportunity to express itself, which is done in part by allowing the narratives to interpret themselves. Keeping the narratives in context is vital and consequently, working from transcripts alone will be ineffective (Simpson, 2000b). The audio recording of each yarning sessions is a vital tool to use alongside the transcript when analysing an Indigenous narrative. The deduction and interpretation part of the process also needs to be executed in consultation with the participant, constantly referring back to the context in which the information was provided, again through the audio recordings.

During the analytic process, it is important that the researcher allow the time required for the knowledge to reveal itself. This section of the process cannot be rushed. The researcher needs to be vigilant at all times during this process or he/she could miss what is being offered.
From the Elders yarning sessions there was an overwhelming indication towards there being five concepts that can restore dignity and maintain it among Aboriginal men, with each of the five concepts being mentioned at some point in every interview while discussing the dignity of Aboriginal men. It was the stories associated with each concept that indicated their importance.

The concepts that emerged during the analytical process were culture, respect, responsibility, reciprocity and relationship. It is important to note that they are all linked and the yarning sessions indicated that they needed to be seen as a group.

6.3.1 Culture:
Each of the Elders spoke about Aboriginal culture and its importance in keeping balance in life. Culture was referred to by the Elders as providing the keys for life, not just a set of abstract rules but a set of guidelines that allow the men to understand their roles and responsibility. In some circles it is believed that Indigenous culture is not worth pursuing because it is no longer relevant in today’s world and that young people need to adapt to another set of values. Uncle Ossie spoke of how some the young people have tried to hide their Aboriginality as though it were something of which to be ashamed (Uncle Ossie Cruse, personal communication, July 20, 2013).

While the participating Elders spoke of the strength of the Aboriginal culture, this strength has been discussed in the literature for a long time now in terms of resilience (Sheehan, 2012) and the culture’s ability to build strong and healthy communities (Brownleea, Rawanab, MacArthurec, & Probizanski, 2009). Indication from this research is that the Elder believed that culture is the foundation that Aboriginal men require to build their life.

6.3.2 Respect:
Respect is not only directed at the outside world, but is it is crucial it is internalised. Each of the Elders discussed respect in such a way that it gave this quality an importance above all else. The Elders spoke of respect as something that comes from within and is generally reflected outwards, and that self-respect is far more than just being proud of yourself. Along with respect that is shown to you by somebody else, the Elders also discussed the type of respect that you need to show yourself.
The Elders referred to the respect that comes when a man is performing his role as provider and offering leadership within the family and community alike. These actions provide an individual with both the types of respect and self-respect that come from knowing that they are an active part of society and from fulfilling their roles both culturally and personally. In addition, self-respect grows when you receive the respect that comes from others as they recognise the way you actively participate in your family and community.

The Elders believed that this respect is earned, and that it cannot be bought or bullied from someone else. Respect for their culture is something that featured heavily in the yarning sessions with the Elders. Each of the Elders stated that respecting culture is the source of an Aboriginal man’s identity. Understanding who you are and where you come from is established from culture. Respect for culture is demonstrated by the way in which a person responds to their Elders, to their laws and to their country.

A way in which an Aboriginal man demonstrates respect for his family is to provide for them in the best possible way despite what is going on around him. In addition, this respect is demonstrated through creating a desire to learn both from their culture and from mainstream education in his children. Within their community, respect is demonstrated through being involved in a positive way through leadership and reciprocity.

6.3.3 Responsibility:

The Elders spoke of the responsibility that comes when a man follows cultural protocols and has a family. Cultural responsibility is demonstrated through following the guidelines for behaviour in community and in his country. As a boy becomes a man, he is given more responsibility. This is demonstrated by the way he fulfils his role within the community. Responsibilities come when a man has a family as it is his responsibility to see his family educated both in cultural ways and mainstream ways. Each of the Elders talked about how a man demonstrates dignity in the way he fulfils and handles his responsibilities. There is a side of responsibility that is not often spoken of that is accountability. Once a man accepts responsibility for something he can be held accountable for that thing.
6.3.4 Relationship:
The Elders talked about how dignity is demonstrated in the relationships a man has. It is important to understand that whatever people come in contact with they develop a relationship with, whether it be another person, a culture, our country and even ourselves. These relationships develop over time and are critical to have in place for a man as he matures, to help him to know who he is, where he belongs and how he fits into his world.

The Elders pointed out that when a man becomes isolated there is a tendency for him to develop destructive relationships. Destructive relationships are demonstrated and made visible in the way in which a man treats himself, the people around him and the environment that he finds himself in. These destructive relationships have a negative impact causing him to become more isolated and self-destructive. It stands to reason that the opposite is also true, and when a man has constructive relationships with himself, the people around him and his environment, he will see that he is valued and has things to offer.

6.3.5 Reciprocity:
Reciprocity in this context is far more than a reciprocal relationship, as a reciprocal arrangement is usually based on a mutual action or relationship that binds two parties equally. Reciprocity from an Australian Indigenous perspective is based on kinship lines. The Elders indicated that when entering into this type of relationship there is a responsibility that needs to be upheld. This means that if a person is indebted to someone that person owes them whatever they may need. For example, a person may have borrowed some cigarettes and sometime later the lender may need somewhere to stay. Reciprocity means that it is the responsibility of the person who borrowed the cigarettes to provide the bed, that is to provide for the need of the lender. This type of caring and sharing has always been a way of making sure that the community has what it needs to survive.
Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Discussion on dignity

It is very important to state at the outset, that the researcher honours the men who participated in this research, for not only their discussions on dignity, but their modelling of the concept of dignity. Each man demonstrated their personal dignity despite their backgrounds and the events of life that surround them. It was also important to note that from observations and discussions undertaken with these men that, while their dignity was apparent to the observer, in every case they failed to recognise their own dignity. Yet they could see dignity in other people.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, the concept of dignity has been described as complex, ambiguous and malevolent (Moody, 1998, p. 14), while many other authors have also described this concept as being vague (Becker, 2001; Feldman, 1999, 2000; Horton, 2004; Jacelon et al., 2004; Schachter, 1983; Widäng & Fridlund, 2003). In the literature, dignity is also described as a complicated concept with no real definition and no real understanding of its importance. However, through the yarning process the Elders without exception understood the importance of dignity. From the very beginning of the research project the participants demonstrated an understanding of the concept of dignity and the impact when dignity is removed. It appears that this understanding encouraged each participant to commit to this project. This research has demonstrated not only the importance of the concept of dignity for Aboriginal men but also has demonstrated that dignity is a concept that encapsulates five distinct additional concepts and when all five concepts are allowed to impact all areas of your being, dignity is the result.

The literature gives little guidance or understanding on how dignity is obtained or recognised. This research provides an understanding of how to recognise dignity and its importance to each person, but also breaks down the five underlying concepts that give guidance on the process of obtaining personal dignity and how it is attached to identity for Aboriginal men.
7.2 **Yarning as a method and methodology**

The three major qualitative research methodologies currently used among Indigenous Australians, failed to provide sufficient assurances that all knowledge gained from the research process would be utilised in accordance with the cultural understanding of knowledge and its impact on the world, on the participants and on the researchers. A pilot project was then established to test the validity and usefulness of yarning as a method of data collection. In researching this process, significant principles and protocols associated with this method were identified as useful from an Indigenous perspective. These principles and protocols provided the foundation for the research methodology.

There are some significant differences between this methodology and methodologies traditionally used when researching Australian Aboriginal people. The first difference relates to ethics. Under other research methods and methodology, there is a guarantee of anonymity and although this anonymity is intended to protect the participants. However, while discussing this issue with the participants, it was discovered that the participants of this project felt that continuing to use anonymity as a form of protection was simply a way of removing their voice from the issues. All of the participants felt that to be heard clearly they needed to speak out on this issue, and they wanted their names recorded as participants, and for each of them to be given credit for what they said. In line with this, they also felt that if researchers did not acknowledge them, they felt that it would become unnecessary for the researcher to acknowledge the ownership of the knowledge. This methodology clearly states as a core concept, that knowledge has agency and that knowledge is contextual.

As this research was discussing dignity, it was important that we took the opportunity to maintain dignity whenever possible providing credit for the information that was gifted and acknowledgement for their participation in the final results. This was an extremely important and rewarding part of the process.

One of the issues raised during the research was how to protect the inside knowledge that had been provided as part of some of the explanations and examples of how dignity can be restored or maintained. This information in some ways provided a foundation and credibility for some of the ideas and concepts that were being explained in the yarns. Yet this kind of information was often followed by “you can’t use this” or “this information is for you only”. When discussing this matter with supervisors, other university staff and participants, several
options were put forward. One option was to place a sealed section in the thesis as this was a common practice in the past when discussing sensitive information.

To test this option, two theses written in the last thirty years were located that contained secure or restricted sections. The first thesis was written in 1989 and discussed Aboriginal men’s initiation ceremonies with a restricted section containing detailed information about the male initiation rites. This thesis is now available as an electronic item and although it states that certain chapters are restricted, there is nothing in place to restrict access to them. The other thesis, written in 1995, recorded that it had restricted sections and those chapters were not present in the hardcopy version. However, the appendices contained a CD of the restricted chapters and this was not restricted in any way. Therefore, this method of restricting chapters from public viewing was discarded. Another option was to create two theses, one containing all of the information and the other containing the information to be made readily available. This too was discarded as there would still be versions available that could at some point be misused. Therefore, this thesis has no restricted knowledge included in any form within the thesis document. The participants who are the knowledge holders of that information received it back in the form of an audio recording and a full transcript of their yarning sessions.

As part of the learning process of how to implement and work with yarning as a research methodology, the Elders tested the researcher’s resolve and commitment to the principles and protocols of the methodology and in relationships with the participants. The Elders with whom The researcher had the greatest relationship prior to the research were the ones who held most strictly to the rules of protocol. As an example, part way through a yarning session with an Elder who was well known to the researcher, the researcher changed the way of relating and started to relate to him as an old friend rather than as an Elder or a knowledge holder. This caused an offence and without warning the Elder got up and left the yarning session. Outside of the yarning session he explained his actions, emphasising that within this process it is very important that the knowledge holder and knowledge caretaker be treated with the upmost respect. The Elder went on to say that if we cannot treat the knowledge holder with respect and honour, then we would be unable to treat the knowledge itself with respect and honour. From an Indigenous perspective, the knowledge holder and the knowledge itself are the same thing.
At different points in the process, another of the Elders tested the researcher’s resolve to complete the research. The Elder who knew that 1800 kilometres was travelled to meet with him delayed the meeting by three days. Finally sitting down together he said that most researchers that he had dealt with would have packed up and gone home two days ago. He felt honoured by waiting until he was ready, that the research was worth doing and therefore, he felt it important that he be involved.

When analysing the research process it was apparent that this is a very long process as it means building relationship and maintaining relationships not only during the process but into the future as well. While this was a relatively small sample group, further testing of this methodology will need to take place on a much larger scale. Given an average of five or six contacts with each participant during the course of this project, this time factor and the commitment to establish and maintain these relationships must be considered for each new contact added to the data set.

Utilising some of the analysing software such as Nvivo or Lexi Mansour proved somewhat difficult as this process requires de-contextualising the data and breaking it down to individual words. When working with Indigenous narratives, individual words don not make any sense. For example, the data set of this research project discussing the restoration of dignity for Aboriginal men contains over 200,000 words as part of 47 individual narratives. However, the word dignity was used ten times across all the participants but, every one of the participants discussed the concept of dignity at length and in detail. Using a thematic approach that included intuition, deduction and consultation, this methodology was able to achieve a result that is positive for Aboriginal men and in general immensely rewarding for the participants and satisfying for the researcher.

When the researcher first started to use this method it was very difficult to allow the narratives to unfold without asking further clarifying questions. It is important under this methodology that the participant has complete control over where the yarn goes and what topics are discussed within the yarn. During this process, the Elders were teaching the researcher two things: the importance of sequential learning and the importance of patience. Each of the Elders used sequential learning as a method to mete out knowledge. They did this by using a series of narratives based on Aboriginal history, their personal lives and their
cultural understandings. Each narrative brought out an understanding of the topic being discussed at a different level, ranging from surface level without a lot of content down to a very deep understanding of culture, respect, relationship, responsibility and reciprocity. This demonstrated that each of these Elders understood from a cultural perspective the importance of dignity in how men relate to each other, themselves and their culture. They all taught patience through this process by discussing things on the surface that seemed at first glance to not be relevant to the current discussions.

Each of the Elders used a particular style of imparting knowledge, which was to start at a seemingly insignificant or irrelevant spot and tell several narratives explaining this concept by laying layer upon layer thus building a significant piece of information on a particular concept. There is a congruency in the way the Elders told their narratives. Abram (1996) describes the life that a narrative has in this way:

> Stories, like rhymed poems or songs, readily incorporate themselves into our felt experience; the shifts of action echo and resonate our own encounters – in hearing or telling the story we vicariously live it, and the travails of its characters embed themselves into our own flesh. The sensuous, breathing body is, as we have seen, a dynamic, ever unfolding form, more a process than a fixed or unchanging object. As such, it cannot readily appropriate inert “facts” or “data” (static nuggets of “information” abstracted from the lived situations in which they arise). Yet the living body can easily assimilate other dynamic or eventful processes, like the unfolding of a story, appropriating each episode or event as a variation of its own unfolding (p. 120).

This process requires patience on the part of the researcher to allow the Elders to direct the conversation in any way they choose without interruption or redirection into some areas that the researcher may feel are more relevant. It was interesting that every one of the participants whether they lived on the east coast of Australia or central Australia, Canada or the United States all used the same method of building and disseminating information. The success of this model is due partly to the understanding that the participants had about this method of imparting knowledge.

The method of imparting knowledge utilised by the Elders has demonstrated very clearly how knowledge reveals itself.
7.2.1 Indigenous knowledge and yarning methodology

As discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, an individual’s worldview is an important filter when it comes to understanding knowledge. Simpson (2000a) asserts that there are seven principles that underpin an Indigenous worldview. From within these principles comes the understanding that knowledge has agency, meaning that it is alive.

Knowledge inhabits in the places between things, in the environment. Knowing where knowledge inhabits helps us to understand that knowledge is contextualised and is attached to country, the local community and in some cases a certain individual. According to J. J. Fox (2006), research has revealed that place is shown to provide the underpinnings of a diverse array of social knowledge. It is because of the diversity of the knowledge that inhabits a place that no one person can hold all the knowledge.

Therefore, we need to build a relationship with the knowledge before we can begin to understand it. As we build a relationship with the knowledge, it is the knowledge that decides to whom and how it will reveal itself. Thus, knowledge is relational, and it is from within this relationship we can begin to understand the connections that emanate from the knowledge. From an Australian Aboriginal perspective, it is believed that the knowledge connections flow from the Dreaming (the beginning of time) to the future or the end of time covering both the physical and the meta-physical of the world. It is from within the knowledge that truth is expressed. Knowledge requires respect.

One of the benefits of utilising yarning as a research methodology is that this methodology provides a safe place for knowledge to inhabit, it from within this place that a context is established for knowledge to reveal itself. Yarning is primarily a relational methodology, therefore, it provides a perfect backdrop that allows the participant to engage with and develop relationship with the knowledge that inhabits the place.

7.3 Discussions and explanation of the Artworks.

Throughout this thesis, 17 individual pieces of art were created by the researcher, Stuart Barlo. The story behind the artwork relates to the first year of the PhD journey when it was suggested by one of my then colleagues, to draw the interviews as a means trying to understand what was being told to me. The thought of doing this was very strange to me as I
was not an artist, nor did I have any interest in being an artist. However, out of respect for him I did make some attempt to comply with the request. Although that supervisor had to move on, while I was preparing my conformation presentation I asked a colleague who had been recommended to me for some assistance, and her first question was, “What colour is your PhD?” My initial response to this question was B****dy hippies. But after thinking about the question for some time and finding the reason behind the question, I decided that the colours of my PhD were gold and grey. I attribute these colours to dignity: something that is highly valued (gold) and is displayed in quite strength and assurance (grey).

From an Indigenous perspective, art is a highly recognised form of communication and enables the communicator (artist) to tell a multi-level narrative in the one piece of artwork. As an Aboriginal man performing Indigenous research with Indigenous male participants, it was appropriate to utilise visual art to help communicate the findings of this thesis.

Therefore, with this in mind there are seventeen pieces of artwork throughout the thesis, where each piece of art represents a significant portion of the thesis. The artwork was designed specifically as a presentation of the thesis to offer the participants as a gift and to aid in communicating the research findings in a culturally sensitive manner.

While the artwork presented in this thesis developed naturally and was not predesigned, the use of art in qualitative research has become quite common. The use of art has developed into nine directions within qualitative research. 1st is a way of conducting research using art that has become commonly known as art-based research (Riddett-Moore & Siegesmund, 2012). In the 2nd, art is used to disseminate research results and knowledge that flows from the research (K M Boydell, 2011; K M. Boydell, Gladstone, Volpe, & Stasiulis, 2012). Boydell et al. (2012) describes art in research as a way of highlighting the complexities and multidimensionality involved in understanding of new knowledge. With this in mind knowledge translation is an important aspect of disseminating new knowledge. Boydell (2011) explains knowledge translation as harnessing that potential and bridging the gap between what we know and what we do. The way the artwork is used in the thesis is to aid in the distribution of the knowledge gained from the Elders involved in the yarning sessions.
Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?
The literature indicates that the concept of dignity is made up of four individual concepts: identify, human right, merit and moral stature. This artwork portrays these concepts connected to dignity. The words culture, connection, law and respect were added after consultation with the Elders. The significance of some of the terms came out later in yarning sessions. The background net represents a screen that allows people to see dignity in part, but not completely.
7.3.2 Artwork two: Factors influencing male dignity

This Artwork is a graphical representation of how the literature describes the influencing factors for each of the various concepts of dignity, concerning male dignity.
7.3.3 Artwork three: Academic analytical process

This piece of artwork is a diagrammatical representation of a standard academic process could impact Indigenous knowledge. It starts by gathering the data in a culturally safe manner, then place the data into system that de-contextualises, deconstructs and then tries to reconstruct and re-contextualise the data in a different setting which cause a loss of relationship.
This Artwork was developed from the limited literature concerning yarning as well the significant conversations that were held with Aboriginal Elders from both Australia and the First Nations from Canada and the USA, incorporating the principles associated with yarning, talking circles, talking sticks and talking stones. The central yarning space (orange circle) is a representation of the protection offered to the participants when yarning is used properly. It is from here that the participants provide their stories – the narratives and the gifts of knowledge. The red and black circle around the outside represents the protection that is offered by the protocols and the principles associated with yarning as a research method. The footsteps leading out of the circle show the ideas that flow from the yarning process. The concepts developed by yarning are symbolised by yellow spaces on the outside of the diagram. All things on the outside of the circle are connected both to the inner circle and to the protocols and principles associated with the yarning process. The red animal prints indicate the flow of knowledge that runs back into the circle when a yarn happens. The red represents the strength that comes with each yarning session. Within each yarn there is the potential for non-public knowledge or inside knowledge to be made available. The screening of this information is again represented by the background net.
This Artwork is a visual representation of all the components that come together to make yarning as a methodology work. This diagram has sixteen components that embody yarning as a methodology with the linkages and impacts that each section has on the one before it or on the analysis process.
This Artwork represents the significant contribution that the Elders have made to this research project. It embodies the uniqueness of their amazing gift of knowledge and their willingness to participate in this study. The feathers that encircle the bulk of this artwork represent the Elders of the past and their contribution to the Elders of the present. The net in the background is cut and coloured to signify the Dreamtime creator and is placed behind to imply the ancestors and their constant impartation of foundational knowledge through our Elders.
This piece of artwork is a representation of an Indigenous method of data analysis. This method allows the data to remain in context and maintain its relationship. In any research project, data analysis is an important component. This project was no different. The Elders’ circle releases knowledge in the three melting pots which, in turn, possess the knowledge through analysis of the narrative with consultation, deduction and intuition also with consultation that continued until a result was achieved. The results (culture, responsibility, respect, relationship and reciprocity) flow into the last melting pot.
This Artwork of law reflects an important part of each of the yarning sessions. Indigenous Law is male and female. The artwork consists of two Artworks, almost identical, but different. This reflects what the Elders said as to the characteristics of male and female law – that they are complementary of each other. The female law is depicted on the right hand side but not made clear. Indigenous Law has been handed down by the ancestors and is multifaceted. On the left of this artwork is an outer border of dots that indicates general law that governs social behaviour, with the other objects depicting other stages of law that are protected and enhanced. The centre circles hold the male law.
Culture is the first of the five key concepts that are a part of Indigenous men’s dignity. Culture was discussed in all of the yarning sessions and was highlighted consistently throughout the consultations. Therefore, it is a significant component within the study. The artwork depicts the various concepts and elements that make up culture. The outside border represents the hidden portions of culture; and the inside is knowledge that is at times gender specific. The Artwork depicts culture as having three main components: spiritual, physical and environmental. These components are inclusive of men’s and women’s business and demonstrate the need for them to work together. The Artwork in the centre, an eagle surrounded by hand prints, represents the ancestors.
Respect is the second of the key concepts revealed in the yarning with the Elders. This Artwork depicts respect as both internal (self-respect) and external (respect for others). To represent self-respect we have the group looking inward and reflecting on itself. Respecting the things that are around about us and the environment, is depicted by the inner group looking outwards. Respecting things that are different and things that we don’t understand is critical when we live in a world that is changing so rapidly. The changing world is represented by the multi-coloured ring around the outside. One of the Elders said that respecting something that you don’t understand can be as simple as acknowledging its existence and choosing not to engage with it. The net again is indicating respect for our ancestors, culture and history.
7.3.11 Artwork eleven: Relationship

Image 12: Relationship

Relationships is the third key concept of significance. The Elders explained the importance for Aboriginal men to be in relationships that are positive and constructive. This Artwork depicts the importance of relationships with everything. All things are connected. The Artwork shows a sequence of connections moving from outside to the inner circles. It is important to note that the further or closer in we go the less relationships we have but we still have relationships. Once again, the use of the coloured net depicts the connection to culture, ancestors and the future.
Responsibility is the fourth key concept of significance and the Elders explained the importance for men to stand up and take responsibility for the things they are accountable for. This Artwork depicts the responsibilities we all have, for ourselves, to our country, to each other and our culture. This concept is depicted by the use of a hand cupping these elements.
Reciprocity is the fifth and final key concept of significance that flowed from the yarning sessions with the Elders. The Artwork depicting reciprocity demonstrates that caring and sharing flows from relationships and covers every aspect of our lives.

It is number five because it embodies all of the preceding concepts. For example, caring for one another is part of Indigenous culture particularly along family lines. Respect is demonstrated through reciprocity as it is an honouring process both when asking for help and giving help. According to the Elders, the ability to give and receive is enhanced through relationships and the willingness to help somebody you know and to be helped by somebody you know. Once this type of relationship has been entered into there is a demonstration of responsibility that you have to fulfil your part of the relationship.
This Artwork depicts Aboriginal men’s dignity as described by the Elders. It is made up of a series of five grey lines each representing one of the five key concepts (culture, respect, relationship, responsibility and reciprocity). The Artwork is divided into various sections representing each aspect of a man’s life. Each of the five key concepts needs to overlay each area of his life.
This Artwork has three components. The first is the top message stick in the shape of a boomerang, which is complete and represents the end of this project. The second component is the Male law symbol that represents the protection of some of the inside knowledge and gender specific knowledge that was shared during the project. The third component is an incomplete message stick and its incompleteness indicates that there is more research needed regarding how to introduce the findings into the current Aboriginal men’s social and emotional wellbeing programs.
7.3.16 Artwork sixteen: All five equal dignity

**Image 17:** All five equal dignity

This is the final Artwork in the group as it represents everything coming together. They are tied together by history and the future as represented by the coloured net.
Over the course of this research project, Indigenous knowledge systems became important to understand and to try to describe. This image is a representation of some of the types of knowledge discussed during the process. Each Elder held pieces of knowledge that brought a special understanding to the concept of dignity and how it impacts Aboriginal men.
Chapter 8: Tying up loose ends

This thesis began with the question: Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed? The short answer to the research question is, “Yes” they can be reversed and dignity can be restored. However, the restoration of dignity will not be a simple process, it will require a change of attitude at every level of society. If adopted by Aboriginal men, the five concepts outlined in Chapter 6 will impact every aspect of their lives. Once men start to embrace these five concepts, the way they interact with the world around them will change. Other factors need to occur to assist this to happen, and the women who have had to take on the responsibilities that belong to the men will need to allow the men to take them up and then trust that the men can do what is required. Governments will need to remove the political blockages that prevent the men from being able to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In some circles, allowing Indigenous men to be empowered is considered dangerous. However, it is important for them to be empowered to enable them to gain / restore their dignity and the respect that they require to move forward in this ever-changing world.

As with any multi-faceted research project, it is impossible to bring all aspects to a conclusion within a single project. This research project is no different and it has opened up three areas that will require further research and discussion to advance them into the realm of mainstream academia.

First, the unique yarning methodology needs to be further developed by applying it to different research topics and utilising different sized groups of participants. As mentioned earlier, the success of this model was due in part to the understanding the participants had of disseminating Indigenous knowledge. To test this model further, a research project that includes a non-Indigenous group of participants would be beneficial to discover how transferable this process is.

Second, additional research is required in the area of Aboriginal men’s dignity, now that the participants’ information has been analysed and a five-concept answer has been determined. The concepts are culture, respect, relationship, responsibility and reciprocity. The development of these concepts in regards to how they can be implemented and introduced
into the lives of Aboriginal men requires further research. It is envisaged that this will require a stepped approach by first holding more yarning circles specifically on these five concepts with a variety of men to discover if they connect to these concepts and believe that they would be beneficial. The second step would be in the area of gaining an understanding of current programs and how they could accommodate the five concepts.

Third is to continue the discussions on the agency of knowledge by exploring its connection with all of creation. As highlighted in Chapter 4, knowledge is not just an interpersonal relationship, nor just with the research subjects, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, with the animals, with the plants, and with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. I propose that further understanding the different models that knowledge uses to reveal itself when treated with respect, and in different contexts, requires further investigation.
Chapter 9: Bibliography


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Glossary of terms

**Aboriginal:** People who have heritage to the first nations people from mainland Australia excluding the Torres Strait Islanders.

**Colonisation:** Colonisation is the forming of a settlement or colony by a group of people who seek to take control of territories or countries. It usually involves large-scale immigration of people to a ‘new’ location and the expansion of their civilisation and culture into this area. Colonisation may involve dominating the original inhabitants of the area, known as the Indigenous population.

**Contemporary Australia Country:** Existing or occurring at the present time in Australia. When Aboriginal people use the English word ‘Country’ it is meant in a special way. For Aboriginal people culture, nature and land are linked. Aboriginal communities have a cultural connection to the land, which is based on each community’s distinct culture, traditions and laws.

**Cultural traditions:** Knowledge handed down from generation to generation concerning the values, norms, attitudes, and predispositions of a given culture.

**Culture:** The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

**Indigenous:** First nation’s people from Australia include both Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

**Indigenous men’s group:** A group of Indigenous men coming together to support one another.

**Invasion:** The act of invading; the act of encroaching upon the rights or possessions of another; encroachment; trespass. A warlike or hostile entrance into the possessions or domains of another; the incursion of an army for conquest or plunder.

**Partnership:** The state or condition of being a partner; participation; association; joint interest.

**Racial stereotypes:** A generalised idea or impression about a racial group or culture.
**Racism:** The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as... Prejudice or discrimination directed against someone of a different race based on such a belief.

**Self-Control:** Control of one’s emotions, desires, or actions by one’s own will.

**Self-determination:** Determination of one’s own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will.

**Self-esteem:** Respect for or a favourable opinion of oneself.

**Torres Strait Islander:** People who have heritage to the first nations people from the Torres Strait Islands.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of invitation

My name is Stuart Barlo. I am conducting research as part of my Doctor of Philosophy at Southern Cross University. My research project is titled: The restoration of Dignity of Aboriginal men

What is this research?

As part of this research I am seeking to understand what dignity means for Aboriginal men from your prospective.
It is an opportunity for Aboriginal men to speak for themselves about what they need.

What does this research involve? (for example),

Therefore it is proposed that a senior men from various Aboriginal nations of New South Wales and first Nations from with in Canada will be given the opportunity to tell their stories in relation to the dignity of Aboriginal men both historically and in the contemporary society.

You are being asked to speak freely or “yarn” giving as much information as you wish regarding the topic. After our yarn I will give you a transcript of what you said you can change anything part or all of what you say.

You are in complete control of this process – you can stop at any time and even withdraw altogether. It is important to note that under this method you as the Elder remains the owner of your story and can have it removed from the research at any time.

It is important that you know that the results of this study may be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at conferences, but only group data will be reported”.

All information that you provide will be kept in a secure place for up to 7 years as per University policy.

Inquiries

Researcher contact details
Stuart Barlo
PO Box 157, Lismore, New South Wales 2480, Australia
T: 02 66 203553 | E: stuart.barlo@scu.edu.au

Supervisor contact details
Professor Bill Boyd
PO Box 157, Lismore, New South Wales 2480, Australia
T: 02 66 203569 | E: william.boyd@scu.edu.au

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Southern Cross University. The approval number is ECN-13-142
If you have concerns about the **ethical conduct** of this research or the researchers, the following procedure should occur.

*Write to the following:*

**The Ethics Complaints Officer**  
**Southern Cross University**  
**PO Box 157 Lismore NSW 2480**  
**Email:** ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

*All information is confidential and will be handled as soon as possible.*
Appendix 2: Consent form

Title of research project: Restoration of Dignity of Aboriginal men

Name of researcher: Stuart Barlo

Tick the box that applies, sign and date and give to the researcher

I agree to take part in the Southern Cross University research project specified above.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand the information about my participation in the research project, which has been provided to me by the researchers.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I agree to allow the interview to be *audio-taped and/or video-taped.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I agree to make myself available for further interview if required.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I understand that I can cease my participation at any time.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that my participation in this research will be treated with confidentiality.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that any information that may identify me will be de-identified at the time of analysis of any data.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed or published.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that all information gathered in this research will be kept confidentially for 7 years at the University.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I am aware that I can contact the researchers at any time with any queries. Their contact details are provided to me.  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

I understand that this research project has been approved by the SCU Human Research Ethics Committee  [ ] Yes  [ ] No

Participant’s name: __________________________

Participant’s signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________

☐ Please tick this box and provide your email or mail address below if you wish to receive feedback about the research.

Email: __________________________________________

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Appendix 3: Ethics approval

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC)
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE (HRESC)

NOTIFICATION

To: Professor Bill Boyd/Mr Stuart Barlo
School of Environment, Science and Engineering
William.boyd@scu.edu.au; stuart.barlo@scu.edu.au

From: Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee
Division of Research, R. Block

Date: 3 September 2013

Project name: Aboriginal men’s Dignity and roles and responsibilities

Change of Protocol dated 27th August to Approval Number ECN-13-142

The Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee has established, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – Section 5/Processes of Research Governance and Ethical Review, a procedure for expedited review and ratification by a delegated authority of the HREC.

Thank you for your change of protocol notification dated the 27 August. This has been considered by a delegated HREC member, Dr Rudi Meir and is approved.

Please note that the standard conditions of approval are mandatory reporting for researchers and their projects.

Ms Sue Kelly
HREC Administration
T: (02) 6626 9139
E: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au

Dr Rudi Meir
HREC
E: rudi.meir@scu.edu.au

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The following standard conditions of approval are mandatory for all research projects which have been approved by the HREC or a HRESC and have received an ethics approval number.

All reporting is to be submitted through the Human Research Ethics Office, either at Lismore, Coffs Harbour or Gold Coast. The email addresses are:
- ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au
- ethics.goldcoast@scu.edu.au
- ethics.coffs@scu.edu.au

Forms for annual reports, renewals, completions and changes of protocol are available at the website:

**Standard Conditions** in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Statement) (NS).

1. **Monitoring**
   
   (NS 5.5.1 – 5.5.10)

   Responsibility for ensuring that research is reliably monitored lies with the institution under which the research is conducted. Mechanisms for monitoring can include:
   
   (a) reports from researchers;
   
   (b) reports from independent agencies (such as a data and safety monitoring board);
   
   (c) review of adverse event reports;
   
   (d) random inspections of research sites, data, or consent documentation; and
   
   (e) interviews with research participants or other forms of feedback from them.

2. **Approvals**
   
   (a) All ethics approvals are valid for **12 months** unless specified otherwise. If research is continuing after 12 months, then the ethics approval MUST be renewed. Complete the Annual Report/Renewal form and send to the ethics office.

   (b) **NS 5.5.5**

   The researcher/s will provide a report every **12 months** on the progress to date or outcome in the case of completed research including detail about:

   Maintenance and security of the records.

   Compliance with the approved proposal.

   Compliance with any conditions of approval.

   Changes of protocol to the research.

3. **Reporting to the HREC**

   (a) The researchers will immediately notify the ethics office, on the appropriate form, any change in protocol. **NS 5.5.3**

   (c) A completion report, on the appropriate form, must be forwarded to the ethics office.

   (c) The researchers will immediately notify the ethics office about any circumstance that might affect ethical acceptance of the research protocol. **NS 5.5.3**

   (d) The researchers will immediately notify the ethics office about any adverse events/incidences which have occurred to participants in their research. **NS 5.5.3**
4. **Research conducted overseas**

**NS 4.8.1 – 4.8.21**
Researchers conducting a study in a country other than Australia, need to be aware of any protocols for that country and ensure that they are followed ethically and with appropriate cultural sensitivity.

5. **Participant Complaints**

**NS 5.6.1 – 5.6.7**

**General information**

Institutions may receive complaints about researchers or the conduct of research, or about the conduct of a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or other review body.

Complaints may be made by participants, researchers, staff of institutions, or others. All complaints should be handled promptly and sensitively. All participants in research conducted by Southern Cross University should be advised of the above procedure and be given a copy of the contact details for the Complaints Officer. They should also be aware of the ethics approval number issued by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The following paragraph is to be included in any plain language statements for participants in research.

*Complaints about the ethical conduct of this research should be addressed in writing to the following:*

**Ethics Complaints Officer**

**HREC**

**Southern Cross University**

**PO Box 157**

**Lismore, NSW, 2480**

**Email: ethics.lismore@scu.edu.au**

All complaints are investigated fully and according to due process under the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and this University. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and you will be informed of the outcome.