

**Developing identity as a light-skinned Aboriginal person with little or
no community and/or kinship ties.**



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Originality statement

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere (except as detailed below) or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

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Photograph of Kookaburras sourced from <http://www.ingrids-welt.de/reise/aus/htm/voekoo.htm> in January 2012.

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Abstract

Background to the issue

Due to Australia's colonisation history, Aboriginal people now have a complex process of both claiming and building a cultural identity, especially if they have light skin. There has been little research into how light-skinned urban Aboriginal people who lack community and/or kinship ties formulate and build their Aboriginal identity. This is an important area to research for the sustainability of the Aboriginal culture and for light-skinned Aboriginal people for now and the future.

Aims and significance of the research

This thesis explored the question of how light-skinned Aboriginal people, who have little community and family connections, formulate their cultural identities. Colonisation and the resulting policies in Australia have impacted strongly on Aboriginal people in a range of significant ways. Light-skinned Aboriginal people are surrounded by debate as to the legitimacy of their claim to Aboriginality and its culture. Light-skinned Aboriginal people continue to identify as Aboriginal despite the complexities and difficulties experienced. It is important therefore to look at this process, to have a deep understanding of the process and how individuals formulate an Aboriginal identity in the current context. This understanding of Aboriginal identity formation will assist in the sustainability and strengthening of Aboriginal culture. This thesis also argues that understanding and supporting this process is critical because of the evidence that a strong cultural identity improves wellbeing.

Method

A qualitative methodology was chosen as the most appropriate approach to understand the process of identity formulation by light-skinned Aboriginal people with little community and /or kinship networks. Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants for qualitative interviews. Data were collected through in depth semi-structured interviews with 15 participants. The interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. Thematic and narrative methods were used to analyse the data.

Alongside these interviews a media analysis was conducted to explore the dominant discourse in the Australian media from 2009–13 on the perceived issues surrounding the subject of light-skinned Aboriginal people. Discourse is an important consideration as it can affect wider debates in society and individual and group ideas. The way light-skinned Aboriginal people develop their identity will be impacted by these social discourses as well as broader society that accepts the discourse. The analysis examined several sources of Australian social media and their recent discussions on light-skinned Aboriginal people including newspapers, blogs, internet sites, television programs and radio interviews.

Results

This thesis found similar elements across the individual stories of the participants in their journey to develop an Aboriginal identity. These shared elements included: community acceptance, community participation and self-acceptance. This research identified successful strategies used by participants to develop strong cultural identities, which can extend to assist others in their development of a cultural identity.

Conclusion

Developing an Aboriginal cultural identity requires an understanding of the Aboriginal lived experience, for which the ability to link with the Aboriginal community is critical. Claiming and developing an Aboriginal identity with light skin can be a painful and difficult process but one that the participants in this study have persisted with. Understanding and supporting this process is critical for the continuation of Aboriginal culture.

Note in regards to terminology used within the thesis: Some participants refer to themselves as Indigenous (meaning native to this country). Otherwise this thesis refers to participants as Aboriginal (name given to original inhabitants). Whilst it is acknowledge that there are many Aboriginal peoples, the term 'Aboriginal people' will be used in this thesis to refer to original inhabitants and reflect the manner in which it was used throughout many of the time periods

discussed throughout the thesis where Aboriginal peoples were commonly treated as a singular population.

Chapter 1: Setting the scene

I am trying to find myself. Sometimes that's not easy: Marilyn Munroe¹

Thesis problem

Due to Australia's history of colonisation, Aboriginal people now experience complex processes of both claiming and building a cultural identity, especially if they have light skin. There has been little research into how light-skinned urban Aboriginal people who lack community and/or kinship ties formulate and build their Aboriginal identity. This is an important area to research for the sustainability of the Aboriginal culture for light-skinned Aboriginal people for now and the future.

While there is much debate in Australia as to who and what is a 'real' Aboriginal person, those light-skinned people who have been impacted by colonisation policies and practices will be impacted in Aboriginal cultural identity development formation. Understanding how cultural connections are developed and maintained is important as this is not well understood in the current context and there is evidence that a strong cultural identity can improve an individual's wellbeing (Pere, 2006, Kickett-Tucker, 2009). Participants interviewed for this study identified the journey they undertook to develop their Aboriginal identity. As a result, this study identifies strategies which may also be helpful for other light skinned Aboriginal people without community or kinship ties experiencing or thinking about developing and forging an Aboriginal cultural identity.

My passion to understand the process for strong Aboriginal cultural identity formation drives this research. I wanted to try to find out how urban light-skinned Aboriginal people found their cultural identity successfully and if this contributed to their overall wellbeing. I wanted to know if light-skinned Aboriginal people saw cultural identity as relevant to them and to their families and if having little or no community or kinship ties affected identity development. Lastly, I wanted to see if there was a specific process to light-skinned Aboriginal identity development

¹ Accessed 1 March 2013 from <http://www.brainyquote.com>.

and if it could be replicated for future generations to support individual wellbeing and the sustainability of Aboriginal culture.

Personal introductions

The purpose of this section is to introduce myself using culturally appropriate Aboriginal ways to the thesis examiners and readers. This process highlights a critical dimension of Indigenous research practices (Kovach, 2009). Introducing who I am as an Aboriginal woman locates me in the broader Aboriginal community. This is particularly critical for Aboriginal readers as it provides them with the information they need to clarify any kinship connections and obligations that we may share. In a research context this cultural introduction highlights the values and worldviews that inform the research and the need to develop reciprocal relationships with all aspects of the research, including the readers.

Following Aboriginal protocol and ways, I will briefly introduce who I am and where I come from. It is important for Aboriginal people to introduce themselves and to place themselves in their Country (this is explained further in Chapter 2). This introduction also reflects the Indigenous Research Paradigm which frames the thesis and which is discussed in the methodology section in Chapter 4. I am sharing this information as working with Aboriginal people is relational work. In the Aboriginal community I would share this introduction with people orally when I first meet them. I would give enough information about myself and my links for Aboriginal people to establish who I am and who I am related to and thereby build relationships.

My mother's parents were German with some possible Polish ancestry and came to Australia after the Second World War. My father's mother was an Aboriginal woman whose last name was Davis. She was related to the Davis, Harradine and Stuart families from Moree and Narrabri in NSW with the possibility of links in the Central Coast/Kempsey region in NSW. My father's father was a station owner by the name of Samuel Bennett who was English. I don't know much about my father's upbringing. My father met my mother when he was around twenty-eight years of age (he never had a birth certificate) and she was fourteen. They eventually moved to Canberra, ACT, where I grew up. My mother and father had two children together, my older

sister and myself. I also had four half siblings (my father's children to a prior relationship) who had an Aboriginal/Chinese mother. Throughout my childhood I have memories of one or more of them coming to see us but there was no long term contact for various reasons.

My grandmother with her valuable kinship and community knowledge (who also physically looked Aboriginal in photos and also as described by others verbally) died before I was born. My father did mix with Aboriginal people but they did not seem to come from or stay in Canberra. For example for some time my father socialised with a Northern Territory family and a lifelong friend from Moree but we eventually lost contact with them and their families. We often had Aboriginal people come to our house. They sang in language, danced and ate traditional foods, but I never really got to know how I could establish contact with them.

My mother was very proactive around our Aboriginal identity, more so than our father. She did this by explaining at every opportunity to us that we were Aboriginal and that we should be proud of this. She told us stories about our grandmother and Moree and, on occasions took me to Moree. When I got older, Dad would share stories with me. It was then that he told me his past was very painful for him. Due to a racist and painful upbringing, he had been ashamed to be Aboriginal. He had even pretended to be Greek to gain employment. He told me it took him a long time to reconcile with his identity and to learn to be proud of it.

I have always identified as Aboriginal, however I was often told by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that I did not have to tell anyone that I was Aboriginal because you 'could not tell' as I have light skin and no distinguishable Aboriginal features. I do not fit what society expects I should look like as an Aboriginal person. However, I am an Aboriginal person, I am light skinned and I am connected to my cultural identity and to my community. Gaining a strong cultural identity has been a process for me and as such I am an insider in this research, within inside knowledge into the experiences under research (explained in chapter 4).

The current issues

Within both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community there are people that question light-skinned Aboriginal people's authenticity and there is much debate as to what a 'real' Aboriginal

may or may not be (Gorringe, Ross, & Fforde, 2011). Perceptions of authenticity generally revolve around issues of: “skin colour; degree of retention or loss of language; degree of connection to or loss of culture (for example, not knowing where they are from); place of residence in particular remote, rural or urban areas; degree of possession of traditional land versus dispossession of land; and Traditional owners versus historical people (for example, you’re not from that area originally)” (Gorringe, et al., 2011, p.8).

Aboriginal people are amongst the oldest continuous cultures in the world (Dockery, 2010). At the time of Australian colonisation, beginning in 1788 and addressed in detail in Chapter 2, there were at least seven hundred Aboriginal tribal groups (Personal Communications, Uncle Stan Grant²). Following colonisation several ideas emerged that caused ongoing issues and trauma for Aboriginal people. The first problematic action was the Europeans taking of Aboriginal land and the associated idea that the land was *terra nullius* (empty land), thereby reducing Aboriginal people to ‘flora and fauna’ without corresponding civil rights (Bolt, 2009, Reynolds, 1996). The second was the Darwinian based ideas of natural selection (discussed further in Chapter 2) which were prominent in public debate at the time and reinforced a view of Aboriginal people as being inferior, savages, primitive and on the verge of dying out as a response to being taken over by the superior race- the colonisers (Muecke, 1992, Reynolds, 1996, Prentis, 2009). These ideas and ideals lead to damaging policies and actions (discussed in Chapter 2), and created issues around identity for some Aboriginal people that persist to this day.

Light skin/lack of ‘traditional’ features

In the 1980s, Charles Darwin (2001), a now well-known naturalist, put forward the theory of ‘survival of the fittest’. This evolutionary theory was attached to Aboriginal people (who were colonised by the ‘fittest’) and was the reason given for Aboriginal people inevitably dying out. When European people started to have children with Aboriginal people, key theorists of the time found that the children would have lighter skin and have less distinguishable Aboriginal

² My communications with Uncle Stan Grant about cultural issues have spanned 22 years and were a repetitive subject; therefore it is difficult to place a date on any communication topic.

features. By the fourth and definitely by the fifth generation, all distinguishing Aboriginal features would be 'bred out'; one of the intentions of the assimilation policy which aimed to integrate Aboriginal people into wider White society (Neville, 1947). Assimilation actively removed large numbers of Aboriginal people from their kinship groups and communities. . The policy and associated actions sought to remove Aboriginal people from their culture, their people and their communities; basically doing away with everything that was or would be Aboriginal (Dodson, 1994).

For Aboriginal people, biological traits such as skin colour, nose shape and overall body shape have been used to stereotype who they are and what they should look like. Paradies (2006) argues that there is a fantasy of the "Indigenous look" (p.359) that prioritises past biological traits of Aboriginal peoples over integration with other heritages. It is clear, however, that skin colour and physicality have been seen as an exceptionally important part of recognition and validation of Aboriginal identity (Boladeras, 2002; Carlson, 2011; Cunningham, 1997; Kickett-Tucker, 2009). People who do not fit into the physical, social or cultural stereotypes can be rejected by their Aboriginal community as opportunists or imposters if they claim their Aboriginality (Tonkinson, 1990, 2012).

Many light-skinned Aboriginal people experience prejudice, doubt and a lack of acceptance in the wider community. This tension is evident in both academic and popular literature, where arguments about who is a 'real' Aboriginal are based on perceived traditional behaviour or customs, language, law, social aspects and physical features (Bolt, 2009; Carlson, 2011; Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1990; Gorringer et al., 2011; Kickett-Tucker, 2009). It is also argued that Aboriginal people themselves have internalised the values of the oppressive society, escalating identity issues further (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1990; Fanon, 1967).

Paradies (2006a) discusses how due to his family's history of being part of the Stolen Generations, he does not speak an Aboriginal language, did not inherit a deep connection with his ancestral lands, has little contact with his extended family and is middle class. He suggests there are many Aboriginal people who do not fit into 'traditional' categories and argues that

due to this interracial history and ancestry he is now both coloniser and colonised (Paradies, 2006a).

Light-skinned people are often placed in difficult positions, such as experiencing scorn and disbelief from others, leading to doubts about themselves as 'real' Aboriginals (Boledaras, 2002). Alternatively they can be accepted, given privileges of 'White' people and treated as a 'White' person by the broader community, based on their physical looks alone; having a choice to identify as an Aboriginal person. Having lighter skin, however, does not make it any easier to find a place within the Aboriginal and/or broader community (Cunningham, 1997).

Some light-skinned Aboriginal people feel they have to explain their heritage constantly to others and are "too black to be white and being too white to be black" (Foley, 2000, p.48). These experiences create feelings of frustration, hopelessness and in some cases denial of identity (Bolt, 2009, Foley, 2000, Boladeras, 2002). As well as trying to find a place to fit in the non-Aboriginal world, many light-skinned Aboriginal people have to actively seek acceptance in their own communities where physical appearance is deemed important, especially if you have few or no relatives to speak up for you (Kickett-Tucker, 2009).

A light-skinned Aboriginal person will never be acknowledged instantly as Aboriginal. At times it can be frustrating to have to explain, defend and articulate this to others who often find it hard to believe a person who appears white would prefer to identify as Aboriginal. Aboriginal identity in a light-skinned person cannot survive without a deep and passionate commitment to that identity (Boladeras, 2002).

Aboriginal identity, then, is the most fragile, brittle of possessions. Blond hair, blue eyes, a straight nose, or just as easily a good car, a nice house, an education, can shake a so-called Aborigine's world. The piercing questions, the sneers and jibes are just as often posed by our own as by whites. Yet I cherish my identity. Black I am, black I will ever be (Grant, as cited in Boladeras, 2002, p. 31).

In the urban context there are many Aboriginal people who cannot comply with the practice of family identification,³ or whose family has passed or who are unknown to the current community. The number of people who are Aboriginal but who have not been connected to their communities or kin has increased due to past policies called the Stolen Generations⁴ (Paradies 2006a). There is a growing need to prove your Aboriginal ancestry as money is attached to Aboriginal scholarships, positions and welfare benefits. There is a social perception that non-Aboriginal people will pretend to be light-skinned Aboriginal people to gain these benefits (Gorringer et al., 2011).

Aboriginal people with light skin who have also lost their birth family (e.g. Stolen Generations, removal into care, fostered, adopted) are vulnerable in a range of ways including isolation from the community network. As Boladeras says:

If there are no visual markers that confirm an Aboriginal identity, and that person is not known by family or association, then there is suspicion that the person in question is not Nyungar (language for an Aboriginal person from the Perth region). In contrast, people who have been reared away from Nyungar families, or who have no knowledge of their birth parents, are accepted without question as Aboriginal if they display physical characteristics that are deemed popularly to be 'Aboriginal' (Boladeras, 2002, p.24- 25).

There is limited literature on how Aboriginal identity is formed when an individual lack kinship or community ties. Gorringer et al (2011) began to explore this topic in their research interviews and note this issue is only just recently being addressed by the community; strongly encouraging more open discussions and research in this area. Identity and the discussion of Aboriginal people who have light skin is only beginning to be openly debated in Aboriginal communities (Gorman, 2010). Gorringer, et al's (2011) report is significant as it identifies key issues and debates which need to be addressed. In particular it recognises that being Aboriginal and claiming Aboriginal identity is not as easy as just saying to both Aboriginal and non-

³ Being able to tell someone where your Country is and who your family are. For example: I am Bindi, I am Kamilaroi. I am related to the Davis, Harradine and Stuart families.

⁴ From the nineteenth century to the early 1970's the Australian Government assumed legal guardianship of all Aboriginal children and removed large numbers of these children from their families in order to assimilate them into European society and culture. This has become known as the Stolen Generations (Bennett, 2013).

Aboriginal people 'I am Aboriginal' when you have light skin or do not have any relatives to vouch for you. A light-skinned Aboriginal person must also demonstrate a knowledge of connections and culture which is difficult to gain without guidance and support from the community itself.

Multi-racial identity

Issues surrounding multiple identities have been a matter of great sensitivity in the Aboriginal community and have not been widely debated in literature. There are tensions amongst Aboriginal people when it comes to culture and identity (Gorringe et al., 2011). This could be because of Pan Aboriginality that arose from a political need to represent Aboriginal people as homogenous to fight for rights and privileges (examined in Chapter 2). Tensions also arise as the authenticity of Aboriginality can be challenged by anyone within society; leaving those challenged in a vulnerable position where their identity can be effectively removed from them by the communities at large. These identity pressures may also account for why many Aboriginal writers still present a unified 'Aboriginal' response in their writing as can be found in Dudgeon and Oxenham (1990), and Dodson (1994). Some argue that negative identity perceptions and the constant debate and need for authenticity have a range of effects on wellbeing (such as mental illness and suicidality) and broader social and economic development (Dockery, 2010; Gorringe et al., 2011).

For Aboriginal people, claiming a multi-racial identity is not easy because it challenges the importance of racial loyalty. That is, the need to choose to either exclusively identify as Aboriginal or be seen as non-Aboriginal (Ang, 2001, Boladeras, 2002; Cowlshaw, 2004; Paradies, 2006a). Some individuals who want to identify as multi-racial feel they exist in a 'strange in-between space' (Russell, 2001, p. 139). It is argued, however, that individuals should not have to be more or less loyal to any of their multi-racial realities (Ang, 2001, Paradies, 2006a).

Not acknowledging the variety and complexity of diverse Aboriginal identity risks fragmenting the Aboriginal community into those who can produce evidence as to their authenticity and those who cannot, or will not, produce this evidence (Paradies 2006a; L. T. Smith, 2006).

Paradies (2006a) argues that this denies “the existence of actual Indigenous people, who, by adapting and changing, have survived colonialism” (p.361).

Dodson (1994) argues that Aboriginal people have the right to express themselves through descent, history, ways of living and relating, or any element of the culture. He argues that to deprive anyone of this right and their connection to any part of their culture is a racist act. Clearly an approach to Aboriginality that avoids a fixed or frozen way of being is needed (Dodson, 1994, Paradies, 2006a).

It also imperative to recognise the effects of colonisation do not disappear in one generation. Emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical effects (explored in chapter 2) can be carried from one generation to another. Many people have grown up without their language, cultural activities, or socialisation through family connections (Gorringer et al., 2011; Grieves, 1995). Growing up without these points of connection has huge ramifications for Aboriginal formulation of identity; leaving some individuals to pursue and learn these aspects of their identity on their own – a difficult task if there has been little or no community contact. Indeed the most important element in both forming Aboriginal identity and feeling confident and well within it, is receiving confirmation from your own community (Boladeras, 2002). This act of being claimed by a family or community and being acknowledged by others is crucial to acceptance, identity and wellbeing for Aboriginal people.

Thesis question

In light of this history and context the present study aims to explore how Aboriginal people with light skin and little or no community and/or kinship ties develop and maintain their cultural identity. Exploring the perspectives of light-skinned Aboriginal people will provide important insights into how this process is experienced and understood and whether a strong cultural identity acts as a protective factor for light-skinned Aboriginal people’s wellbeing.

Why is this research important?

Ongoing colonisation and subsequent policies have dramatically affected the morale and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. Indicators of the resulting crisis experienced by Aboriginal people include high: mortality rates, incidences of substance abuse, incidences of domestic violence, levels of mental illness and completed suicide particularly for youth, levels of families coming into contact with child protection services and levels of incarceration (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Despite these high risk indicators, Government policies and programs are not working quickly or efficiently enough to raise the health and living standards for Aboriginal people.

Cultural (ethnic/racial) identity is a positive factor in the development of a strong ego identity (Erikson, 1959; Waterman, 1993). Research consistently shows ethnic identity to be related to positive wellbeing (Phinney, 1992; R. Roberts et al., 1999). Therefore, a strong ethnic identity should provide individuals with a sense of strength, confidence, competence and positive personal wellbeing (Outten, Schmitt, & Garcia, 2009; Ruiz, 1990). Research on ethnic identity and wellbeing has predominantly focused on people of colour particularly in North America (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; T. Smith & Silva, 2011). This ethnic identity - wellbeing link is, however, not unproblematic. There is contrasting evidence that indicates a strong ethnic identity does not always buffer an individual from negative wellbeing outcomes and could make them more susceptible to distress (T. Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008; Yoo & Lee, 2008). This point of divergence has been associated with the discrimination experienced by people with a strong ethnic identity, leading to high levels of distress. There is also evidence in Australian literature (Kickett-Tucker, 2009) that wellbeing and increased socio economic outcomes are linked (explored further in chapter 3).

The most pressing areas of concern for future inquiry are the association between a strong ethnic identity for Aboriginal people and improved mental health, increased socio-economic status and reduced involvement with the criminal justice system. This study is the first step to understanding identity formation for Aboriginal people with light skin who lack community and/or kinship ties. This research focus makes an essential contribution as strong Aboriginal

identity can improve self-affirmation skills, coping skills, wellbeing and life circumstances. Further, this knowledge will help social workers to develop interventions to support positive outcomes for individuals and complement existing client's strengths. While current literature has focused on ethnic identity development, more exploration of how this facilitates wellbeing, increased social skills and improved socio economic status for Aboriginal Australians is needed. The process of identifying as an Aboriginal person, socially, emotionally and spiritually has been largely undocumented.

Benefits to social work

This study will inform social work practice in important ways. In particular, social workers need to understand how to reconnect Aboriginal people to their culture, identity and to each other in order to be effective practitioners and to address the current socio-economic disadvantage and marginalisation that many Aboriginal people are experiencing in Australia. This research and the insights gained from the participant's experiences, offer potential practice directions for working effectively with this particular group of Aboriginal people. In addition, the research offers social workers an avenue through which to critique and re-define the Western view of Aboriginal identity.

As stated above, there is evidence of the relationship between cultural identity and wellbeing. Research on how cultural identity is developed for Aboriginal people in Australia is, however, limited. There is no current research by Aboriginal social workers in this area, specifically for light-skinned people. There has been no identified literature on how Aboriginal people develop strong cultural identities particularly if they have no family or community network to teach them. In addition, there has been no research into the impact of having no connections or light skin on the development of cultural identity.

Social workers must address social justice and structural inequalities that continue to exist for Aboriginal people. To date, however, there has been no attention from social work about Australian Aboriginal identity formation. As a social worker and given social work's strong commitment to social justice, it is timely to investigate how a strong cultural identity might help improve wellbeing for Aboriginal people. To support the profession's social justice agenda and

improve outcomes for Aboriginal people it is critical that the evidence from this study be used to inform the development of social work practices which effectively support cultural identity formation. These research implications are considered in-depth in chapter 9. This research aims to address the identified gaps in knowledge by contributing a more in-depth understanding of Aboriginal identity.

The thesis structure

The thesis is divided into nine chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses the historical contexts of Aboriginal people in Australia. It briefly discusses what life was like for Aboriginal people pre-European contact, before examining the impact of dispossession and colonisation, especially in terms of developing identity. The chapter considers emerging issues of Aboriginal identity formation and development for those Aboriginal people who are living mainly in urban contexts, who have light skin, and may have little or no kinship ties or community links. In particular, chapter 2 seeks to identify why this history resonates loudly in the lives of contemporary Aboriginal communities and why this historical context is critical to understanding identity and identity formation. The chapter explores why it is now not uncommon to find Aboriginal people who are light skinned, lack kinship networks and community ties.

Chapter 3 presents the existing literature and key concepts that underpin the thesis. These concepts include culture, cultural identity, racial identity, Aboriginal cultural identity and identity formation. These concepts provide an understanding of how identity and cultural identity is developed generally and outlines the sometimes complex process that surrounds this social development. The chapter highlights the relationship between strong cultural identity and improved wellbeing. This provides the rationale for why exploring these processes has the potential to improve our understanding of identity and lead to improved responses for Aboriginal people within social work practice.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology, theoretical framework and methods of the research including a discussion about the Indigenous paradigm; Aboriginal knowing being and doing, and

qualitative research. It outlines the way participants were recruited for the study, the interview process and how the data were analysed. The entire thesis and research approach is located within an Indigenous paradigm as developed by Indigenous scholars, which respects the inter-relational manner in which many Aboriginal people are raised and incorporates Indigenous voices and perspectives (Battiste, 2002; Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009; G. Smith, 1997, 2003; L. T. Smith, 2006; Wilson, 2008). An Indigenous research paradigm aims to achieve a positive outcome for Indigenous peoples and reflects Aboriginal ethics, worldviews, ideas, knowledge and systems. It is an approach which ensures research is meaningful to, and for, Aboriginal people. This research is located within a cultural context, focused on change and empowerment for Aboriginal people and promoting and privileging Aboriginal voices. It and aims to be flexible, portable, critical and user friendly (G. Smith, 1997; Rigney, 1999).

Before reporting on the findings of the interviews **Chapter 5** provides an analysis of the public discourses that surround light-skinned Aboriginality. Many light-skinned Aboriginal people have heard and been part of the issues and messages present in public discourse surrounding light-skinned Aboriginal people in Australia, making it an important consideration and one which may have negatively impacted their identity formulation. An examination of the Australian media from 2009-2013 is discussed, highlighting the perceived issues surrounding the subject of light-skinned Aboriginal people. The chapter examines several sources of Australian social media and their recent discussions on light-skinned Aboriginal people including newspapers, blogs, internet sites, TV programs and radio interviews. As many of the participants were not linked to the Aboriginal community, the media can provide a powerful point of reference and influence their views about light-skinned Aboriginal people. Both positive and negative views in the media have the potential to influence decisions around identity formation such as whether to commit to an Aboriginal identity, how to articulate identity and how society views the value of a light-skinned Aboriginal identity. In this chapter, three dominant perspectives portrayed in the media - those of Andrew Bolt, journalist; Tony Abbott, current Prime Minister and Anthony Mundine who identifies as Aboriginal - are explored and discussed.

Chapter 6 introduces the participants, their background and current circumstances, and describes their journeys of developing cultural identity in detail. Discussions with participants

focused on their personal experiences of identity as light-skinned Aboriginal people who may not have had community or family network to socialise or introduce them into the Aboriginal culture and community. This chapter examines the participant's Aboriginal heritage, feelings of legitimacy as a light-skinned Aboriginal person and the journey to their current Aboriginal identity. This chapter seeks to honour and privilege the participant's voice and experiences and draws heavily on participant's quotes to that end.

Chapter 7 discusses the key themes which emerged from the interviews including legitimacy of identity, feelings associated with identifying as an Aboriginal person, efforts to become part of an Aboriginal community, and why participants had bothered to identify as a light-skinned Aboriginal person. It examines what it might be like to live as a light-skinned Aboriginal person and the journeys to forming varied and diverse Aboriginal identities without the community or kinship links to guide them.

This chapter highlights the insights gained through interviewing light-skinned Aboriginal people and the subsequent data analysis. It offers a rich description of the participant's journeys and the processes through which Aboriginal people with light skin and little kinship and/or community ties negotiate, construct and express their Aboriginal identity. This discussion seeks to understand how this group of people, sometimes with lack of guidance, experienced the journey and maintained and sustained their identity in a complex world.

Chapter 8 focuses specifically on the experiences of racism that emerged from the research interviews. These experiences were pivotal in identity formation and the level of commitment to identifying as a light-skinned Aboriginal person. The chapter begins by exploring where this racism comes from, what form it takes, and what effect it has on the participants. Participants identified racism they had experienced from non-Aboriginal people and other Aboriginal people and discussed their thoughts and feelings around these incidents.

Chapter 9 draws the study together, ending with a reflection of how this research can inform social work knowledge and practice. This chapter discusses how the participants developed their Aboriginal identity, particularly without key kinship or community ties to socialise them into the community. It discusses the role of genealogy, avenues to gain knowledge about the

Aboriginal community, entering the Aboriginal community, and how the identity journeys of participants relate to existing literature. Finally, this chapter discusses the intellectual contribution of the thesis, and the implications for social work, including the need for anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice. It concludes by looking at how identity can be socially constructed, but also learnt, developed and nurtured through access to cultural information.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have followed the Aboriginal way of being, introducing myself in the context of Country and thereby starting a relationship with you, the reader and also the topic. The current issues and debates surrounding the research topic have been introduced, and the antecedents, research problem and research questions established and presented. The chapter concludes with an outline of the overall thesis.

The next chapter provides an overview of the history of colonisation and contact, as well as the relevant policies for Aboriginal people, and their influence on the present day. It explores why there is debate in Australia around light-skinned Aboriginal people, and establishes the context for the thesis and the need for more research in this area from an Indigenous paradigm.

Chapter 2: Historical contexts

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. Desmond Tutu⁵

Chapter introduction

Chapter 1 outlined the issues that are at the heart of this thesis; that is it is important to understand how cultural identity is formed by people who are light-skinned and who may not have community ties. It also argued it is an important area of research for social work and for social workers to understand when working with Aboriginal people, but it is also an important topic for Australia and Aboriginal people. As raised in Chapter 1, the history of colonisation practices in Australia continues to impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today and is reflected in a range of health and social issues. These include intergenerational trauma, substance abuse, mental health issues, poverty, over-involvement in the criminal justice system, health issues, family violence and loss of family connection. All of these health and social issues have their roots in the history of colonisation (Dockery, 2010).

To understand the ongoing impact of colonisation this chapter examines the history of colonisation on Aboriginal people. This chapter also presents the history of Aboriginal social policies that have also affected current urban Aboriginal identity. This historical analysis provides the context with which to understand the historical and socio-cultural factors that have shaped and impacted upon Aboriginal society. As well as how and why 'identity' is such a key issue in the Aboriginal community today, especially given key movements such as pan-Aboriginality. The historical and political history explains why there are light-skinned Aboriginal people and why there are Aboriginal people who lack kinship networks and community links. This chapter will also discuss trans-generational trauma and lateral violence as direct consequences of colonisation and discuss how this impacts on developing an Aboriginal identity. It will then discuss the theories of Whiteness and privilege in relation to the relevance to

⁵ URL accessed 1 March 2013
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_history.html#QFJg5CUowEPfGpSj.99

Aboriginal identity formation. The chapter begins with the historical overview of colonisation in Australia.

Aboriginality definition

There are two definitions of what an Aboriginal person is in Australia. One, predominating in legislation, defines an Aboriginal as 'a person who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia'. The other, predominating in program administration but also used in some legislation and court judgments, defines an Aboriginal as someone 'who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, identifies as an Aboriginal and is accepted by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal'(Gardiner-Garden, 2003, p. 1). However, this definition seems limiting, especially for the complex process of formulating an Aboriginal identity as a light skinned Aboriginal person with no community or kinship ties.

What else makes up an Aboriginal identity? A knowledge of where you come from (family history, Aboriginal history in general), who you are (personal identity), who you belong to (family, extended family and community), where you belong (land and/or water), what you do (participation, cultural expression) and what you believe (cultural values, beliefs and practices) (SNAICC, 2012).

Aboriginal people pre-European contact

Aboriginal culture is believed to be among the oldest continuous culture in the world (Dockery, 2010; Rodriguez, 1998). The precise length of time that Aboriginal people inhabited Australia pre-colonisation is not known but archaeological evidence shows at least 50,000 years, with an estimate of up to 200,000 years (Broome, 1982). There is debate about the size of Aboriginal populations pre-settlement but estimates range from 500, 000 to 100, 000 (Ranzijn, McConnochie, & Nolan, 2009). At the time of European settlement there were estimated to be around seven hundred tribal groups and languages in common use (Personal communications, Uncle Stan Grant). Over the next century from contact, this population declined to '60 000 due to introduced diseases, deliberate violence and killings and the loss of access to land and resources' (Ranzijn et al., 2009, p. 72).

The first documented contact between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander⁶ peoples and Europeans was in March 1606 when Captain Willem Janszoon, aboard the vessel *Duyfken* chartered more than three hundred kilometers of Queensland's north-west coast (Forsyth, 1967). In other instances Indonesian fishermen traded with Aboriginal and Torres Strait inhabitants in the northern parts of Australia and the Torres Strait. Archeological sites in northern Australia have shown broken Indonesian pottery, coins, fishhooks and pieces of metal and clay (Bolt, 2009) which suggest trade since the seventeenth century or before. Indonesian influence is also evident in the ceremony, custom, art, myths, songs and language in groups in the north of Australia (Russell, 2001).

Prior to invasion, Aboriginal people were distinct and unique peoples with great diversity. Aboriginal people formed their personal, group and community identities in terms of territory, language groups, Law definitions (totems, clans) and kinship systems (Hollinsworth, 1992). Many people today claim their descent from a particular Aboriginal clan, tribe or language group. These include Wiradjuri, Gamilaraay (Kamilaroi), Ngunawal, Biripi, Darkinjung, Eora and Yolngu to name a few. These names are referred to by Aboriginal people as the 'Country' they belong to or come from. Aboriginal people's genealogy is often traced by this Country and by the people who lived on this Country (for example: someone might identify like this: I am James (pseudonym) Blue family from Darkinjung Country). Aboriginal people continue to identify themselves also in broader terms that are regionally specific and include Koori (New South Wales and Victoria), Murri (Queensland), Nyungah/ Nyoongah (Western Australia), Nunga (South Australia), Palawa (Tasmania) and Yolungu or Anangu (Northern Territory).

The category 'Aboriginal' was a social construction of the colonists (Hollinsworth, 1992). The term Aboriginal or Aborigines was an identity created by outsiders and not originally a term of self-description by the original people of Australia who had no view of themselves as one distinct group (Prentis, 2009). Due to being identified by the Europeans collectively, there was also a false assumption that Aboriginal people were the same socially and culturally (Davis, 1991). The concept of a single racial identity called 'Aboriginal' was a European construct, which

⁶ The term Indigenous is used by several authors to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; however Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander will be used in this thesis.

allowed the colonists to label, subordinate and exclude the original inhabitants. 'Labelling Aboriginal people as one group was economical, efficient and required little thinking' (Olsen, 2008, p. 4).

A feature of Aboriginal culture prior to colonisation was the emphasis placed on kinship and the relationships within families and other members of the Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people spent their time concentrated upon maintaining and sustaining themselves, their country, relationships and ecosystems. In pre-contact times Aboriginal people believed that the creation of all things occurred in a time called the Dreaming. Many Aboriginal people still believe this today. The Dreamtime is a cycle of life where all things return to the Dreamtime to be reborn or renewed. People and all living things were created out of the land. In this belief, the wellbeing of the land is tied to the wellbeing of the people. A person was defined by his/her relationships (Personal communications, Uncle Stan Grant). The Dreaming is a place where "the past, present and future are not separate concepts... only one time and place that creation is forever unfolding yesterday, today and tomorrow " (Wal Wal Ngallemetta as cited in Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 2).

Dispossession and colonisation

Colonisation occurred in many countries and needs to be seen in the context of European imperial expansion. Historically the occupation of Australia happened around the same time as the colonisation of parts of America, Africa and Asia (Prentis, 2009). The global expansion of Europe was due to a period of economic and industrial growth. There was increased demand for raw materials such as minerals, food and clothing and overseas expansion helped to meet these needs. The main reason to expand to Australia was to alleviate an over-large jail population (Prentis, 2009). For the purposes of this thesis, colonisation relates to the period of expansion in which Britain invaded, settled and exploited Australia (L. T. Smith, 2006).

Aboriginal people lacked two things which would have made effective defense possible against the British. The first was developed technology and the second was the capacity for large scale warfare (Prentis, 2009). Europeans recognised 'civilisation' by a group having a key leader and by that group owning and controlling the land (in the form of infrastructure, religion, written

communication, animals and agriculture). Aboriginal people appeared to lack an organised leader (such as a King or Queen); Aboriginal people apparently neither owned nor used the land (in particular to grow crops or herds of animals) and appeared to have no form of infrastructure, religion or written communication. This was all visible evidence to the colonisers that there was no proof of a civilisation or culture (Prentis, 2009).

When the British arrived they regarded the land as *Terra nullius* which means 'empty land' (Herbert in Bolt, 2009, p. 11). This meant a land empty of everything except flora and fauna. Land perceived to be *Terra nullius* could be colonised, as the Europeans considered that there was no pre-existing human habitation of sufficient significance to warrant the use of the concept 'conquest' (Bolt, 2009, p. 11). By conceiving Australia as *Terra nullius*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were classified as flora and fauna and not as people in their own right and this allowed British authorities to claim sovereignty and ownership of the land (Reynolds, 1996).

Darwinian theory of the time reinforced the discourse that Aboriginal people were primitive and therefore inferior (Muecke, 1992; Darwin, 1991). Charles Darwin (1859) had put forward his theory of natural selection. Within this theory the introduction of stronger, more advanced members of the species naturally overtook less advanced species. 'As new species in the course of time are formed through natural selection, others will become rarer and rarer, and finally extinct' (Darwin, 2001, p. 104). Darwin argued that natural selection could be seen clearly 'for in all countries, the natives have been so far conquered by naturalised productions, that they have allowed foreigners to take firm possession of the land' (Darwin, 2001, p. 82). Aboriginal people were therefore treated as problematic requiring management. These discourses continue to inform ideas about Aboriginal people today (Gorringe et al., 2011).

Europe at the time was experiencing an industrial revolution that developed after the emergence of the Age of Enlightenment⁷ (Prentis, 2009). Due to unemployment, poverty and overcrowding, crime became an issue in England, with no space to house the growing number of people convicted of petty crimes. England needed somewhere to place their convicts away from the cities, and if possible away from England, particularly after they lost the American

⁷ Was a cultural movement of intellectuals beginning in the late 17th and 18th century in Europe. Its purpose was to reform society using reason and scientific thought (Kors, 2003).

colonies⁸. On 26 January 1788 British ships containing 290 seamen, soldiers and officials and 717 convicts sailed into Port Jackson' (Broome, 1982, p. 22). Between 1788 and 1868, approximately 161,700 convicts (of whom 25,000 were women) were transported to the Australian colonies of New South Wales, Van Diemen's land and Western Australia (Bassett, 1994).

Early resistance to colonisation

Even though Aboriginal people lacked the technology to challenge the British, European settlement was often met with resistance from the Aboriginal population. There were at least seventeen hostile encounters between Aboriginal people and British people in the first month of colonisation (Broome, 1982). Broome (1982) states that three factors shaped this hostility. The first was due to the colony being set up as a jail with some angry prisoners to start hostility. The second was that the British came with preconceived ideas that Aboriginal people were inferior and less worthy and so it can be imagined that they treated Aboriginal people with disrespect and Aboriginal people may not have reacted kindly to this treatment. Thirdly the British dispossessed Aboriginal people of their land and did not offer a treaty⁹. The three legal ways to claim land at the time were by 'discovery', 'conquest' and 'treaty negotiation' (Reynolds, 1996). Aboriginal people were not considered as people, let alone a unified people with a recognisable government and so a treaty was not offered. The absence of this perceived unity (in the form of a government or war party) limited Aboriginal people's ability to challenge and resist colonisation (Reynolds, 1996).

The frontier warfare of hostile encounters meant that there were numerous reprisals and massacres of Aboriginal peoples across Australia by the British (Reynolds, 1987) resulting in a dramatic decline in the Aboriginal population. By 1888 the Aboriginal population reduced to 60,000 and by 1911 it is estimated that the Aboriginal population was only 31,000 (Evans, 2004, p.107). A good example of this dramatic decline in population is the history of the Aboriginal

⁸ In 1776, America declared independence which meant Britain had to withdraw governance and control of thirteen colonies they had established there (Canny, 1998).

⁹ In 1840 in Aotearoa (New Zealand) the Treaty of Waitangi was signed. This treaty served as a contract between the Maori and the British Crown indicating the Maori would retain ownership of their land but that they would recognise British sovereignty. Three basic principles of the treaty were partnership, protection and participation. Maori people became participants in decisions about their lives. The government took responsibility for protecting Maori interests. The Maori experience of colonization differed due to this treaty (Taylor & Guerin, 2010).

population in Tasmania, where from 1824 to 1831 the population was decimated from approximately 1,500 to 350 Aboriginal people (Reynolds, 1999, p. 71). Using the so called 'Black Line' troops moved across the land in a line killing all the Aboriginal people they discovered. After this decimation the Tasmanian Government then removed the remaining Aboriginal population to Flinders Island in order to 'protect' them. On Flinders Island what began as a population of over 200 reduced to 47 by 1847, through disease or despair (Reynolds, 1999).

Westgarth, an observer of early Victoria suggested four reasons for the decline of the Aboriginal population of that time (Prentis, 2009). Firstly, contact with violent colonisers. Secondly, diseases were introduced which Aboriginal people had not encountered before and therefore had no resistance too (such as smallpox, measles and influenza). Thirdly, infant mortality was high due to malnutrition and other diseases related to poverty (such as pneumonia and gastroenteritis). Finally, once missions and reserves were established (in the late 1870's (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1998), the general living conditions Aboriginal people experience lead to them being under nourished, they suffered from the extremities of the weather and began a general cycle of disease, poverty and then death (Prentis, 2009; Sherwood, 2010).

The eugenics movement

The discipline of anthropology played an integral role in the perception of Aboriginal people as primitive and therefore inferior. Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen are considered to be the founding fathers of Australian anthropology because they were the first to adopt a 'scientific' anthropological approach to Aboriginal people (Charlesworth, 2005, p. 6). Theorists such as Spencer and Gillen writing in the 1800s presented arguments that Aboriginal people were not only inferior but culturally, intellectually and biologically unable to progress. Anthropologists informed by these perspectives went on to conduct much of the early research on Aboriginal peoples, cultures and communities studying Aboriginal people for their 'otherness' (Gorringe et al., 2011). Early anthropology encouraged the concept of the 'pristine' Aboriginal people living in a remote traditional community held up as authentic as opposed to the Aboriginal people living in urban settings. Much discourse occurred around 'real' Aboriginal people through

'scientific' testing and 'real' characteristics such as skin colour and blood quantum (Hollinsworth, 1992). These discourses continue to inform contemporary ideas about Aboriginal people and the discussion of these issues will be addressed later in this thesis.

The construction of inferiority and lack of progress evolved to theories of imminent Aboriginal extinction since those who are unfit and unable to progress were expected not to survive. Darwinism, in placing all species on a primitive/civilised continuum argued Aborigines were at such a level of primitiveness that in the face of the 'civilised' British they would soon die out (Tatz, 1999). Missions and reserves were established and Aboriginal people were moved onto them as places where they could peacefully die out (Ranzijn et al., 2009; Tatz, 1999) away from the settled white communities. At the same time relationships (often forced) between white men and Aboriginal women resulted in increased numbers of 'half-caste (sic)' children being born. This was considered to be alarming and a 'problem' by white authorities and the general non-Aboriginal community as it indicated that Aboriginal people were not dying out, but increasing in population (Neville 1947). There was, however different opinions about 'half-castes (sic)' who were seen to have some white blood and therefore able to be assimilated into the dominant society (Neville 1947; Walker, 2002).

An important aspect to this death, poverty and loss of land was the resulting loss of pride and confidence for Aboriginal people. The many deaths also left gaps in people with knowledge about skills, way of life and culture. Settlement and expansion by non-Aboriginal settlers also meant that Aboriginal people's access to their Country, and their ability to maintain societal, legal and religious obligations or even to speak their own language/s was reduced (Reynolds, 1987; Sherwood, 2010). The destruction of the social and political infrastructure had a significant impact on the ability of Aboriginal people to maintain their culture and pass it on. Subsequent poverty, social rejection, lack of education, housing and health has all had a toll on Aboriginal people and their culture.

Past policies that impacted on Aboriginal people

This section will discuss the main policies that were implemented that affected Aboriginal identity. These include protectionism, assimilation and the attempt of cultural genocide on

Aboriginal peoples. The forced disconnection and removal from kinship and community from these policies have created much of the issues for today's generation of Aboriginal people.

This section will also discuss pan-Aboriginality as a response to these policies and outline why it has impacted on Aboriginal cultural identity in Australia. It will examine the influence of trauma on generations; in particular Aboriginal people traumatised by both colonisation and colonisation practices and discuss lateral violence and its implications for Aboriginal communities. Lastly it will examine the concept of Whiteness and privilege and how they impact on light-skinned Aboriginal people.

Protectionism

By the late 1800s protectionism as a formal policy was established by a series of Select Committees in response to Darwin's theory that stated Aboriginal people were so inferior and unlikely to succeed that only segregation would minimise their suffering (Ranzijn et al., 2009). The policies of protectionism supported the view that Aboriginal people were to be separated from the broader community whilst they died out. They were also necessary to make sure Aboriginal people were 'civilised'. Church-run missions were established designed to encourage (and coerce) Aboriginal people away from their lands and into a kind of hospice. As one observer of the time noted, 'all the mission can really achieve for them is a kind of Christian burial service' (Tatz, 1999, p. 326).

Missions and reserves¹⁰ were a way of controlling and restricting Aboriginal people into one area. Malgoa Reserve was the first established in New South Wales (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1998). By 1939, at least one hundred and eighty reserves had been created in New South Wales (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1998). Although not necessarily established by churches, reserves were eventually administered and controlled by churches. Both missions and reserves used the opportunity to convert Aboriginal people to Christian faiths. 'I sometimes wondered whether missions were needed for the blacks-to convert them to Christianity – or the blacks for the mission- to create a job for someone' (Neville, 1947, p. 98-

¹⁰ Missions were compounds established and run by Churches. Reserves were established by the Government and controlled by the Aboriginal Protection Board (ABC, 2012).

99). On these missions Aboriginal people were 'civilised' by being taught hymns, scripture, housework, horticulture, livestock management and skilled trades (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1998).

In 1883 a series of Protectors of Aborigines¹¹ were established (HREOC, 1997; Ranzijn et al., 2009) and in 1909 New South Wales introduced the Aboriginal protection Act which gave protectors unprecedented control over Aboriginal people's lives. By 1911 all States and Territories had established Protection Boards (Ranzijn et al., 2009). Aboriginal people became wards of the State and the State gained legal guardianship of their children (Walker, 2002). Protectionism continued to control various aspects of Aboriginal people's lives such as mobility, marriage, employment, nutrition, ran schools, provided water and sewage, wages, monitored sexual behaviour, placed social restrictions, prosecuted people, controlled income and forbade traditional cultural practices (Tatz, 1999; Westerman, 1997). On the reserve Aboriginal people were denied the right to speak their language, have their tribal name or participate in ceremony (Reynolds, 1987).

By 1910 all usable Aboriginal land had been taken by colonists or the crown (Benedek as cited in Jacobs, 2009). Aboriginal people, by not being recognised as citizens (or humans), were denied the ability to purchase land (Attwood, 2003) and were encouraged to remain on the mission/reserves. This led to increased welfare dependency (such as food in the form of flour, tea and sugar) (Dodson, 1994). Although some Aboriginal people were paid for their labour, their wages were often kept under the control of the Protector. Education was mostly denied to Aboriginal peoples, at best a rudimentary education was given to lighter-skinned children in the hopes it would help them get into domestic services (Ranzijn et al., 2009). The Chief Protector had the power to move Aboriginal people into various towns, place them onto reserves and put 'uncontrollable' Aboriginal people into jail indefinitely (Prentis, 2009). Removing Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands onto reserves or missions led to momentous familial, social and cultural disruption.

¹¹ A person appointed to look after Aboriginal people nationally and to promote their civilizing and Christianity (Ranzijn et al., 2009).

After World War 1 the Australian government gave away reserve land to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander returning soldiers and families. Settlers surrounding missions and reserves were demanding more land for farming and other agricultural pursuits. The Government in response began to sell up parts of the reserves, affecting their viability. As well as this the Protection Act meant that individuals with mixed heritage were not allowed to live on missions or reserves if they were under the age of 35, thus reducing the number of residents to the point that the Government could justify closure of most of the reserves and missions (Goodall, 1996). Aboriginal people could not go back to living off the land and they were forced into the towns and cities (Prentis, 2009, Reynolds, 1996).

The experience of the war has brought about changes which will leave little room for the native to pursue his existence in the manner of his forbears; his emergence into civilization or acceptance of a fuller civilization is being forced upon him whether he likes it or not (Neville, 1947, p. 25).

Certificates could be obtained by Aboriginal people and issued to allow them into the towns to work and live by officially naming the person non-Aboriginal. If an Aboriginal person took up a certificate they were not allowed to visit their 'former' family and could be jailed for doing so (Prentis, 2009). This certificate was referred to by Aboriginal people as a 'dog tag' or 'dog collar' both because those who applied for it were considered to have betrayed their heritage but also because those who applied for it were forced to produce it to non-Aboriginal people at regular intervals (Personal Communications, Wilbur Bennett¹²). Aboriginal people were required to have these 'dog tags' on them at all times, especially when they went into towns or were working. Some of the 'dog tags' were like large collars which were placed around the necks of Aboriginal people (Prentis, 2009, Personal Communications, Wilbur Bennett).

The protectionist policies further restricted Aboriginal people's ability to fully participate in their culture by demeaning and demoralising them and keeping Aboriginal peoples impoverished (Reynolds, 1987). 'It remains one of the mysteries of history that Australia was able to get away

¹² Personal Communication with Wilbur Bennett around cultural content occurred between the years 1980-2000. Some content occurred more than once and hence a date is difficult to define.

with a racist policy that included segregation and dispossession and bordered on slavery and genocide' (Knightley as cited in Neill, 2002, p.4).

Assimilation

Assimilation was adopted as an official policy for the States and Commonwealth at the 1937 conference of 'Native' Welfare Ministers (Neville 1947; Rigney, 1999). The Assimilation policy assumed that Aboriginal culture and subsequent way of life was of little to no value. It was decided that Aboriginal people and therefore their culture and identity should be 'assimilated' into the dominant Western European culture since it was now realised that Aboriginal people were not dying out and in fact, 'half-castes' [sic] were increasing in numbers (Prentis, 2009).

In 1951 the Native Welfare Conference was held which was attended by various ministers and their advisors responsible for Aboriginal affairs, apart from Victoria and Tasmania who claimed to have no Aboriginal 'problems'. The policy of assimilation was formulated as follows:

That all Aborigines shall attain the same manner of living as other Australians, enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and being influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians (McConnochie, Hollinsworth, & Pettman, 1991, pp. 110-111).

Assimilation would occur by forcing Aboriginal people to give up their Aboriginal culture and embrace the dominant White culture.

Whiteness was seen as more valuable and a signifier of racial superiority, hence a program of regulated reproduction to 'breed out' the colour of Aboriginal people commenced (Walker, 2002). The government did this by using segregation to enclose mixed descent communities and to actively intervene to promote the reproduction of lighter-skinned individuals with other light-skinned or white people. This would make sure that each successive generation looked progressively more European in ancestry (Walker, 2002). Dr Cecil Cook, Chief Protector and Medical Officer of the Northern Territory at the time outlined the view:

Generally by the fifth and invariably the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the Australian aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes will quickly be eliminated by

the complete disappearance of the black race, and the swift submergence of the progeny in the white (HREOC, 1997, p. 137).

In 1925 Adelaide anthropologist, Dr Herbert Basedow, also suggested that because of the close affiliation between the Aboriginal people and Caucasians, their children of mixed heritage could be rapidly whitened without the danger of the Aboriginal characteristics reasserting themselves in later generations (Basedow, 1925, p. 59). The Western Australian Chief Protector, A.O. Neville developed a three point plan to assimilate Aboriginal people and remove the 'blackness'. First the 'full bloods'(sic) would die out; second, take 'half-castes' (sic) away from their mothers and families; third, control marriages among 'half-castes' and so encourage intermarriage with the white community. In this way, it would be possible to 'eventually forget that there were ever any Aborigines in Australia' (Neville as cited in Manne, 2004, p. 219; Neville, 1947; Tatz, 1999).

Breeding out the colour sought to maintain a White Australia (Walker, 2002). Notable people of the time such as anthropologist Dr Cyril Bryant were opposed to those who were not white saying the 'continued infiltration of white blood will finally stamp out the black colour, which, when all is said and done, is what we object to' (Jacobs as cited in McGregor, 2002, p. 294). Public opinion supported assimilation with statements such as 'our antipathy to darkish skin colour and broad noses...will be realised in two or three generations' (Elkin in Neville, 1947, p.17).

Reading A.O Neville's book provides valuable insights into why and how the assimilation policy was successful in Australia. Between 1936 and 1940 A.O. Neville was the Protector of Native Races and the Vice-Chairman of the Aborigines' Welfare Board in Western Australia. He was also an anthropologist who argued that bringing Aboriginal people into the general economic, recreational and religious life of white Australia would save them from dying out (Neville, 1947). To achieve this objective, light-skinned Aboriginal children were removed from their families and placed in institutions (also named homes) and with non-Aboriginal families in order to teach them about white culture. McGregor (2002) argues that assimilation occurred due to white Australians believing in and wanting a White Australia policy. This made the policy of assimilation look appealing at the time.

Although assimilation was meant to benefit Aboriginal people and raise them to the status of whites, instead they were still denied their basic rights such as being able to receive an award wage, marrying without permission, eating in restaurants, entering a pub, swimming in a public pool or having the right to vote (Westerman, 1997).

Assimilation policies which dissolved integral parts of Aboriginal culture have left a legacy for many Aboriginal people in relation to their own Aboriginal identity. Advocacy of the complete physical dissolution of the group 'Aborigines' has created issues for Aboriginal people today. Instead of being absorbed into White dominant societies for social betterment, light-skinned Aboriginal people have instead fought to be acknowledged as being of Aboriginal descent.

Cultural genocide

We have to know and own our past to be free of it...We also need to remember the past, so that we can be vigilant against those who have learnt nothing (Hall as cited in Bartrop, 2001, p. 85).

A number of writers have argued that the political and social actions of early colonial contact within Australia was genocide (Evans, 2004; Kieken, 1999; Manne, 2004; Moses, 2004; Weaver 2001). Since colonisation, Aboriginal children were kidnapped and exploited as slaves (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1998; Reynolds, 1987; Westerman, 1997). From at least 1814 to the 1970's, authorities' assumed legal guardianship of all Aboriginal children and removed large numbers of these children away from their families in order to assimilate them into European society and culture. This has become known as the Stolen Generations (Gilbert, 1995; HREOC, 1997).

Choo (1990) notes that by removing children from their communities future elders, workers and leaders were also removed . In other words the important carriers, interpreters and transmitters of Aboriginal culture were lost.

In 1946 the United Nations made genocide illegal under international law and began to consider whether or not genocide had been perpetrated on Aboriginal people (Evans, 2004; Manne, 2004). This issue was raised again in 1997 with The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children named the *Bringing Them Home* report (Moses,

2004) where it states that the policy and practice of Aboriginal child removal was cultural genocide (HREOC, 1997; Kieken, 1999; Manne, 2004).

Genocide is not necessarily the immediate destruction of a nation. It can be seen as 'coordinated plans and differing actions that aim at destroying the foundations and life of a group' (Lemkin as cited in Manne, 2004, p.268). Disintegration of political and social institutions, language, religion, economic existence, personal security, health and dignity could be seen as part of a planned genocide (Manne, 2004). When looking at Australian history we can see that Aboriginal economic stability was affected by taking land, resources and wealth. Aboriginal political institutions, not as visible in the form of Law, kinship systems, rules on inter-marriage and various infrastructures, were replaced with British administration. Aboriginal social systems were replaced with the imposition of British laws. All forms of expressive culture including language were prohibited and the system of educating the next generations into culture was limited by moving people into different areas and onto missions. Unequal food rationing and lack of basic nutrients caused physical issues as well as overcrowding, mass killings and inadequate shelter. Finally all religious practices were prohibited (Manne, 2004).

In 1915 the NSW Protectionist Act was copied in most States and gave governments particular powers, such as the removal of children deemed in need of care and protection (Reynolds, 1996; Westerman, 1997). History is not sure of the exact numbers of Aboriginal children removed by authorities. The *Bringing them Home* report states that at least 100,000 children across Australia had been taken (Tatz, 1999). It is estimated that from 1912-1962 two out of three mixed descent Aboriginal children spent some of their lives away from parents as a result of the removal policy (Austin as cited in Kieken, 1999, p.303). In addition to this, at least one in ten and as many as one in three children were removed between 1910 and 1970 (Anderson 2002, p. 239). This means that most families have been affected in one or more generations (HREOC as cited in Kieken, 1999, p.303). Simply being Aboriginal entitled the Government to remove a child (Sherwood, 2010). The Stolen Generations have been compared to the Nazi holocaust in terms of genocide and devastating consequences (Neill, 2002). The practice of forced removal continued until the 1970's.

Child removal still remains as an issue for the present day. There is current overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the current child protection system (HREOC, 1997; Walker, 2002). The rate of Aboriginal children on welfare orders is nine times higher than non-Aboriginal children (AIHW, 2011). The national rate of Aboriginal children in the Out of Home care system is ten times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal children. The *Bringing them Home* report (HREOC, 1997) notes that two of the underlying causes of this overrepresentation in the child welfare system are the legacy of past policies of forced removals and intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture. Some argue this continued over representation of children in the child protection system is another form of Stolen Generation due to the fact that children are often removed not only from their families but from kinship and community systems (AIHW, 2011; HREOC, 1997).

Some politicians and authors have argued that the removal of children from their families in the past were actions that were based on ideas of the time (such as assimilation), and the desire to do good (Kieken, 1999; Neville 1947). It is difficult to argue that these acts were based solely on positive outcomes for Aboriginal children when people such as the Chief Protector were quoted as saying:

Are we going to have a population of 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there ever were any Aborigines in Australia (Neville as cited in Manne, 2004, p. 219).

It was not just racism that drove governments to remove children, it was a way to dispossess Aboriginal people of land and negate distinctive groups which were perceived as threatening in many ways. As in many other Indigenous populations in the world, colonisers sought to sever the close connections between children and their families, land and culture as a way to conquer land and people (Jacobs, 2009).

Great care was often taken to ensure that Aboriginal children never saw their parents or families again. The children were often given new names, taken great distances and generally discouraged from making contact with their families again (HREOC, 1997).

Quadroons or nearer whites must go as soon as possible to institutions for white children and learn to forget their antecedents, and their parents and colored relatives should be strictly excluded from any contact whatever with them (Neville, 1947, p.179).

This disconnection and forced removal from kin networks, cultural information, land and language have resulted in many Aboriginal people having difficulties forming their Aboriginal identity (Clark, 2000). These policies are one of the major reasons why there are many Aboriginal people with blood ties to the Aboriginal community who have little or no cultural knowledge (Gorringer et al., 2011; Paradies 2006a).

Positive changes and developments

Not all policies and change were negative for Aboriginal people. Nor were Aboriginal people passive bystanders, rather they tried to resist oppressive Government policies and actions on many levels. Aboriginal people fought for issues such as equal wages in the pastoral industry, improvements in education, housing and for land rights (Hollinsworth, 1992). In 1940 the president of the Aborigines Progression Association wrote to the Governor-General pleading for full citizenship for Aboriginal people. Debates about legislation, citizenship and then land rights continued until the 1970's when the obvious large socio-economic gap between Aboriginal people and other Australian citizens became so concerning that the Government of the time acknowledged that it must be addressed (Prentis, 2009).

The introduction of key social reforms from the late 1960's was a turning point for the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia. In May 1967, a Constitutional referendum to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the national census and to enable the Commonwealth Government to make laws on Aboriginal affairs passed with a 'Yes' vote of almost 91%. Before 1967, Aboriginal Affairs was a State responsibility and the Commonwealth Government was only in charge of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The successful 1967 referendum led to Australian Aboriginals being recognised for the first time as full citizens in their own country after almost two hundred years of settlement (Neill, 2002). This also meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could for the first time be counted in the census.

In 1976, the Federal Government passed land rights law for Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Territory. Most other states also have some form of Land Rights legislation in place although the degree of control given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over the land in question differs significantly from State to State.

In 1992 the High Court of Australia rejected the long-standing doctrine of *terra nullius*. The Mabo decision refers to two judgments in the High Court of Australia that by overturning the notion of *Terra Nullius* provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the possibility of pursuing Native Title.

The Native Title Act (1993) found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have maintained a continuing connection with their land, according to their traditions and customs, may have their rights to land under traditional law recognised in Australian law. The High Court of Australia said in its Wik decision (1996) that Native Title could coexist with pastoral rights or leases. This means that Aboriginal people could claim Native title over pastoral land. However, in situations where pastoral rights conflict with Aboriginal rights, pastoral rights still take precedence.

In 2007 a federal Labor Government led by Kevin Rudd was elected. On 13th February 2008 Prime Minister Rudd finally apologised to the Stolen Generations (Australian Government, 2008). This historical event gave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hope that government policy and practice would change and become more inclusive, collaborative and humane.

Northern Territory Emergency Response

In 2007 Wild and Anderson's the *Little Children are Sacred* Report (Wild & Anderson, 2007) was released. Within it concerns about widespread child sexual abuse in the Northern Territory were discussed. The report was the result of an eight month inquiry that held consultations in forty five communities (Watson, 2009). It made a total of ninety seven recommendations to the federal government but only one was fast tracked and implemented. This report acted as a catalyst to the Coalition Government's 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention (NTER). Wild states that the NTER missed the central point of the

recommendations of the report (Wild & Anderson, 2007) in that the NTER approach missed a crucial opportunity to consult with communities about how they would like a problem to be solved. Liberal politician (and now Prime Minister) Tony Abbot agreed when he stated there had been 'no prior consultation' and that the intervention had been 'top down' in nature (ANTaR, 2011).

Soon after the announcement of the intervention the Australian military entered parts of the Northern Territory. Due to this action, the intervention was interpreted by some as a contemporary invasion of Aboriginal lands rather than the humanitarian intervention as sold by politicians (Watson, 2009). There were some who argued that it was no coincidence that the Commonwealth emergency response to Aboriginal violence and sexual abuse was only focused on the Northern Territory- the only part of Australia that still has a federal Aboriginal land rights regime but is also earmarked for the opening of a number of new uranium mines (Watson, 2009). Therefore, it has been suggested that the Intervention had less to do with child abuse and more to do with the government gaining a greater control and access to Aboriginal land (Macoun, 2011; Watson, 2009).

Within the emergency intervention laws there have been two measures that have been argued to impact negatively on Aboriginal peoples. The first was the compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal townships for five years. This meant the Commonwealth government acquired control of approximately seventy Aboriginal townships. This was seen to be necessary to allow the government unfettered access to the community. This acquisition did not provide any greater benefit to Aboriginal communities in the areas outlined as priority by the government such as health, housing and violence (Brough, 2007). Secondly the intervention disallowed the consideration of customary law or the cultural background of an offender in sentencing or bail proceedings (Brough, 2007). There are concerns as to increased imprisonment for Aboriginal people due to this change (Brough, 2007).

Specific measures of the intervention included "alcohol restrictions, welfare reforms (especially compulsory income management), enforcing school attendance, compulsory (quickly changed to voluntary) health checks for children, acquisition of seventy three prescribed townships,

increased policing, housing and tenancy reform, banning pornography, 'scrapping' the permit system and reforming governance with the appointment of managers of all government business in prescribed communities" (Hinkson, 2007, pp. 1-2). In August 2007 the Intervention consisted of seven measures with a total of thirty six sub measures that now included welfare reform and promoting law and order (Hinkson, 2007). There have been some supporters of these changes from both wider society and the Aboriginal community but this intervention has also been met with cynicism. In 2011 NTER was transitioned into Stronger Futures.

There have been several evaluations of the Intervention. There have been two narratives surrounding the evaluations. The first is the conflict over the interpretations of the evaluation findings and the second about the validity of the evaluation techniques (Australian Government, 2011a). The Australian Government evaluation recognised a key gap stating that there was a lack of systemic collection of data about the experiences and views of local peoples from the NTER communities (Australian Government, 2011a). In the 2011 census data there were next to no changes across the Northern Territory in comparison to 2006 (Altman, 2012) indicating less success from the Intervention than was expected. After evaluation, there are some individuals and organisations in the wider community and government who think the Intervention was successful and others who are more doubtful.

In 2007 the government sought to reframe the Intervention by linking it the 'Closing the Gap' Strategy. Closing the Gap was a response to the Social justice report released in 2005 with the aim for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve equity in health in twenty five years (Calma, 2005).

In 2009 the Government, after consultations with Aboriginal communities, reinstated the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act in relation to the Intervention. It also redesigned alcohol and pornography restrictions, five year leases and community stores licensing and redesigned law enforcement powers (Australian Government, 2011b).

In 2011 the Australian Government announced that the Intervention would continue beyond 2012 and released a discussion paper, Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (Australian Government, 2011b). This policy is a ten year commitment to work with Aboriginal people in the

Northern Territory with the aim of building their independence, safety and healthier communities. The Government has pledged \$3.4 billion to improve services and create jobs among other aims as well as making sure children attend school and community alcohol issues are addressed (Australian Government, 2011b).

The policy has been criticised by organisations such as Amnesty International as they believe this policy still maintains racially discriminatory elements. In addition there has also been wider criticism about the continued lack of Aboriginal community consultation in regards to this policy and all Aboriginal policy development and implementation. The Australian Government continues to support the policy and their approaches.

Aboriginal responses: Pan-Aboriginality

The previous sections have outlined how colonisation and a series of Government policies have attempted to destroy and fragment Aboriginal culture and identity. This section examines the impact the idea of pan-Aboriginality has on how Aboriginal identity is discussed and formed. This political movement has shaped and impacted how Aboriginal people see themselves and portray themselves, as well as how others see what an Aboriginal person is.

The concept of a pan-Aboriginal identity was developed for political reasons in the 1960's and 70's (Dodson 1994; Paradies 2006a; Yamanouchi, 2010) and remains influential in how Aboriginality is conceived. This movement called for Aboriginal cultural identity to be treated as one distinct, coherent homogenous group. Using this idea pan-Aboriginality enabled freedom fighters to unite against oppressive policies, fight for equal wages and improvements in education and housing (Hollinsworth, 1992). Since initial colonisation, there have been ongoing attempts by Governments to remove any sense of group identity that was shared by Aboriginal people (Gilbert, 1995). As outlined above, Aboriginal people found themselves in a position where they had to struggle to be recognised against systems that were prejudiced, racist and neglectful. Attwood states 'the more consistently and rigorously authoritarian and oppressive colonial racial policy and practice has been, the more the conditions for a common Aboriginal identity have grown' (1989, p. 150).

The policy of protectionism where Aboriginal people were kept separate to white Australia gave Aboriginal people no choice but to see themselves as set apart from other Australians. Many Aboriginal people saw how their culture was threatened by successive government policies which insisted that they reject their own values and ways of life.

Pan Aboriginality gave a space for people who had not previously identified as Aboriginal or had renounced or were fearful to acknowledge their identity due to colonisation a chance to re-identify. Communists such as Donald McLeod and Frank Hardy worked with Aboriginal people encouraging them to unite in protest against the government. These white activists regarded Aboriginal people as a homogenous black group. Pan-Aboriginality was a necessary way to survive ongoing colonisation, (Dodson 1994; Russell, 2001) and also provided a shared identity that gave those who identified as Aboriginal with feelings that were both pleasurable and empowering (Ang, 2001).

Aboriginal activists and leaders relied on their kinship ties and loyalty from other Aboriginal people to begin to fight for issues of importance to them (R. Tonkinson, 1999). In the 1960's activists looked overseas for examples of how to fight colonisation. In particular, activists were influenced by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. The message of 'Black Power' inspired activists such as Gary Foley and Paul Coe to form an Australian Black Panther Party in 1972 (Martinez, 1997). Activists pushed for power both at a State level but also for power for Aboriginal people at an individual level.

Pan-Aboriginality and the activists who worked within this framework achieved much. With land rights, traditional ownership and the acknowledgement of beauty within the Aboriginal culture (such as dance and art) came profits, benefits, power, kudos and status. However arguments arose within Aboriginal groups about who were the 'real or rightful' traditional owners, who had the right to dance or paint due to the perceived benefits one would receive. The wider population joined this debate. This debate still continues today with much argument about who is an elder, who is allowed land rights and who really deserves the benefits. It has widened to include the question as to whether any Aboriginal people deserve benefits at all (Gorringe et al., 2011). These debates complicate the process of identifying as an Aboriginal person for those

people with light skin or little kinship ties. They are also seen as a threat by some groups as people might 'pretend' to be Aboriginal to gain these perceived benefits (Gorringer et al., 2011).

Not all Aboriginal people agreed with the concept of pan-Aboriginality. Pat O'Shane, (who was a leading magistrate in NSW and who has now retired) was one person who spoke up against it. She argued that Aboriginal people did not have one territory and did not have one central government but were people who were diverse across Australia (Martinez, 1997). This view continued the debate as to what then and who were Aboriginal people and what constituted an 'Aboriginal' identity. By developing a firm boundary as to what constitutes Aboriginal identity, some Aboriginal people would be excluded and may be seen as having a less legitimate claim to their identity. Paradies (2006a) argues that this is especially relevant for urban Aboriginal people who are living in increasingly anonymous communities without kinship networks (Paradies 2006a).

Trans-generational trauma and the impact on Aboriginal identity

The traumas inflicted upon Aboriginal people from the colonisation process and policies of Australian governments have created a deep psychological trauma, particularly for those who are part of the Stolen Generations. Trauma impacts on multiple levels including on the individual and their ability to develop and formulate their identity generally and cultural identity particularly. Historical trauma is defined as 'the subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual or the life of a community, passed from adults to children in cyclic processes as collective emotional and psychological injury...over the life span and across generations' (Muid, 2006, p. 36).

Bessel van der Kolk, a clinician, researcher and teacher in the area of posttraumatic stress and related phenomena since the 1970's states that psychological trauma is 'the loss of faith that there is order and continuity in life. Trauma occurs when one loses the sense of having a safe place to retreat within or outside oneself to deal with frightening emotions and experiences' (1987, pp. 2-3). Duran et al (1998) refer to this as the 'soul wound' which is a fracture in relatedness to the self, others and the environment. Historical and psychological trauma

becomes embedded in the cultural memory of a people and is passed on to the children of that culture and then becomes normalised within that culture (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Milroy (2005) discusses how trans-generational trauma is transmitted and the role of community networks in this transmission. She states that there are a variety of effects of trauma including on attachment with caregivers, ability to parent, associations with physical and mental illnesses and difficulties connecting to family, culture and society in general. These effects can be made worse by added stress and trauma (such as multiple losses).

Even where children are protected from the traumatic stories of their ancestors, the effects of past traumas still impact on children in the form of ill health, family dysfunction, community violence, psychological morbidity and early mortality (Milroy, 2005, p. xxi).

There are long term physical, psychological, emotional and social outcomes of trauma when it has been experienced by children. These include grief, destructive behaviors, unmodulated aggression, clear links to suicide and mental health issues, links to substance misuse, increased likelihood of obesity and other health issues and increased dealings with the criminal system (Van der Kolk, 2007). In fact, studies by Van der Kolk have shown that people with a history of trauma make up almost all of the prison population (2007). Looking at Australian statistics around these issues, the indicators are that Aboriginal people are suffering from these long-term trauma symptoms.

Blanco (as cited in Levine & Kline, 2007) describes how violence effects subsequent generations of Indigenous South Americans. His study has relevance to the Australian context. In summary he states that in the first generation, the damage is inflicted. In the second generation cultural identity is diminished along with a sense of self-worth. Government responses in this generation either directly or indirectly exacerbates trauma that was already being suffered. In the third generation intergenerational effects begin to be seen through increased violence and family breakdown. In the fourth generation trauma is re-enacted through for example domestic violence and lateral violence. In the fifth generation the cycle of violence is now compounded and is seen in families and in broader societies (Levine & Kline, 2007). Blanco shows a breakdown of function for the individual and in society within five generations

Atkinson (2002) writing in the Australian context shows a strong link between Aboriginal people's experience of trauma and historical events associated with colonisation in her six generation traumagram. Atkinson's research indicates a clear link between the imposition of government policies and interventions and variations in trauma experiences for Aboriginal people. Atkinson's studies indicate that people entering the Aboriginal community for the first time, are witnessing the effects of trauma created by colonisation and continued with inter-generational passing on of this trauma. Understanding this link helps to appreciate why some members of the Aboriginal community removed themselves from the violence and trauma and chose not to identify as a way to protect themselves and their children from the long-term impacts of this trauma. It could help explain why the Aboriginal community remains ill and with terrible socio economic statistics currently.

The data on intergenerational trauma raises questions around what sense young people make of the current and past trauma in Aboriginal lives and communities, if they feel it is still affecting them and in what ways and if it affects the development of their identities. In particular, how do young people with light skin, little or no community or kinship ties understand intergenerational trauma?

Lateral violence as a response to colonisation: and implications for identity

It is claimed that many Aboriginal people commit lateral violence to each other, especially over the issue of authenticity and legitimacy of Aboriginal identity (Butler, 2012; Gorringer et al., 2011). The concept of lateral violence (also known as horizontal violence, bullying, horizontal abuse, horizontal hostility, verbal abuse and vertical abuse) was identified and highlighted in nursing literature over twenty five years ago (Griffin, 2004; S. Roberts, 1983). It is the name given to harmful practices that members of an oppressed group engage in towards members of their own group.

Paolo Friere wrote about the behaviour of oppressed people. He explained that the powerlessness of being oppressed leads to the oppressed becoming their own oppressors (Friere, 1970). 'Oppression exists when a powerful and dominant group controls and exploits a

less powerful group' (Sheridan-Leos, 2008, p. 399). In other words, lateral violence occurs when the people who are the victims of oppression turn on each other rather than confront the system that oppresses them. Oppressed groups/individuals internalise feelings such as anger and rage and manifest their feelings through behaviors such as gossip, jealousy, putdowns and blaming.

Lateral violence occurs both covertly and overtly and is an act of aggression. Lateral violence has been described within nursing literature for at least twenty five years (Farrell, 1997). Roberts suggests that the origins for lateral violence for nurses is because they have been oppressed due to the profession being mainly women and reporting to mainly male physicians and administrators (S. Roberts, 1983). Griffin (2004) conducted a study in which twenty-six newly licensed nurses were taught about lateral violence and how to combat it. In this study Griffin found that lateral violence included behaviour such as non-verbal innuendo, verbal affront, undermining activities, withholding information, sabotage, infighting, scapegoating, backstabbing, failure to respect privacy and broken confidences (by nurses to nurses)(Griffin, 2004).

The psychological consequences from lateral violence are concerning. The effects include increased stress, mental illness such as depression and anxiety and even post traumatic disorder. Lateral violence also affects the family and friends of the victim who can also suffer stress, anxiety and anger about the violence (Sheridan-Leos, 2008). Lateral violence can be seen to be linked to unresolved grief and trauma that is multiple and across generations. Some of these 'layers of trauma' include colonial aggression; genocide; racism; alienation from tribal lands; breakdown of social structure; loss of spirituality and languages; removal of rights and responsibilities; labour exploitation; and large-scale removal of Aboriginal children from their families ('Stolen Generations'). These and other factors have contributed to the erosion of social structures and traditional values and a range of social problems in current Aboriginal communities' (Memmott, Stacy, Chambers, & Keys, 2001).

Lateral violence is thought to occur in Aboriginal communities due to their continued oppression, marginalisation and colonisation (Osterhammel, 2005). Lateral violence creates

division between groups, individuals and communities. The significance of lateral violence for Indigenous groups is that it is seen to be increasing and there has been a recent focus on its prevalence in Australia (Boladeras, 2002; Dudgeon, 2000; Dudgeon, Mallard, Oxenham, & Fielder, 2002; Gorringer et al., 2011). Lateral violence and its occurrence is explained within the experience of oppression by Benson:

With lateral violence the oppressed become the oppressors. We've internalized the pain of colonisation and our oppression and we've taken it into our communities in the factionalisation and in the gossip and talk of blood quantum, 'you're half-blood etc' (Benson in Gorringer, et al., 2011, p. 8).

Aboriginal elder Brian Butler recently spoke about his experience with lateral violence saying:

I cannot count, how many times, I have heard comments about this one being 'too white' or a 'coconut', or that one not knowing anybody from their 'real community' or they have never been 'home to country', or that one's parents didn't identify so they shouldn't be acknowledged or accepted either. This is pure lateral violence. How can we have this mentality within our own ranks where a person who may be the product of the 'Stolen Generations' can be ridiculed and denied services from the community and labeled as 'not black enough'. Aboriginality comes from within and is about a spirituality that extends far beyond the colour of the skin. Being 'not connected to your country' is part of the deliberate intent of colonisation, surely not knowing your 'homeland' is punishment enough and requires no further alienation from us, doesn't it? They were after all STOLEN. And the way in which some families from those times chose to survive was to attempt to assimilate. So many of our young people are experiencing this type of violence on a daily basis, how demoralizing it must be to have your identity constantly in question by mainstream and even more soul destroying when it comes from within our 'own mobs' (Butler, 2012, p. 3).

A growing body of research on lateral violence (Boladeras, 2002; Dudgeon, 2000; Dudgeon, Mallard, Oxenham, & Fielder, 2002; Gorringer et al., 2011) reinforces the extent to which it occurs and the serious consequences it creates. Understanding lateral violence requires the ability to unpack multiple layers of trauma and to discover the meaning that lies beneath this.

This study will explore if light-skinned Aboriginal people are experiencing lateral violence and if so in what circumstances. It will look to understand the context of lateral violence for light-skinned Aboriginal people.

Whiteness and the relevance to Aboriginal identity

The consciousness of what one really is (entails) 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory (Antonio Gramsci as cited in Frankenberg, 1993, p. 240).

When examining the link between why it may be difficult for a light-skinned person to identify as Aboriginal and why it may be difficult for the non-Aboriginal community to accept them as such, it is important to understand the concept of Whiteness. This section highlights the key ideas of Whiteness which is important to the thesis because it assists in explaining how Aboriginal people became disempowered in Australia. It has been argued that Whiteness helps White people gain a sense of themselves but also sets up levels of dominance, privilege and racism which Indigenous people and other oppressed peoples experience. This study will look at the concept of Whiteness in regards to its application to light-skinned Aboriginal people.

W.E.B Du Bois, an African American intellectual of the twentieth century wrote about race and its significance. He argued that race was a marker of difference and shaped people's lives. He developed the theory of double consciousness that discussed and explained the alienation experienced by marginalised peoples and different ethnicities (Du Bois, 1964). Theorists such as Du Bois began to look at the processes of racial formation, identity politics and political inequality and their relation to race.

In the 1980's a critique of white feminist racism by feminist women of colour was developed. Frankenberg, a feminist of this time, argued that white people were racist and coined the term 'Whiteness' (Frankenberg, 1993). Frankenberg stated that Whiteness gives the white race privilege. She argued that white people have a lens of themselves, others and society at large and that Whiteness also has a set of cultural practices that are usually unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993). Therefore, Whiteness is a social construct that is about more than identity or skin colour but also represents the structure of society. In this way it becomes both personal and political.

Whiteness is the production and reproduction of dominance (leaving the Other to be subordinated), being perceived as normal (leaving the Other to be marginalised) and privilege (while the Other is disadvantaged). In this way White people gain a sense of themselves, their identity and their worldview through the racialised concept of Whiteness.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson defines Whiteness in the Australian context as 'the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, subjectivity, nationalism and the law' (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. vii). This privilege of Whiteness is built into the White dominant society underpinned with beliefs and values, which include how colonists believed that they were racially superior to Aboriginal people (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). 'This enables racial and cultural differences to be managed without disturbing normative practices or the structural location of white power and privilege' (Moreton-Robinson, 2000, p. 182). In other words Whiteness has been imbedded in our knowledge production, discourse, social structure and in some cases in our identities. It is only recently that a critique of the structuring of Whiteness has occurred in Australia.

Whiteness sets up those who are superior and White versus those who are not. This means that Aboriginal people with dark skin can be viewed as more authentically Aboriginal than light-skinned Aboriginal people, who appear to be physically White. This sets up the need to prove authenticity (C. Anderson, 2009). As Muecke explains:

This legacy forces contemporary Aboriginal subjects in turn, into positions of essentialism (you are Aboriginal), or representativeness and knowledge (you would know about kinship systems of the Western desert), and consequently they are constantly called upon to display this essence, or this or that skill, as if culture were an endowment...Culture thus seems to me to be the prison of twentieth century Aborigines (Muecke, 1992, p. 40).

Whiteness is a process in that it is one of the ways that humans 'do' social dominance. It is not something that is only an identity or that comes with having white skin, it is something that is performed or practiced (Levine-Rasky, 2002). Frankenberg (1993) states that there is a need to separate Whiteness as a form of structural privilege from Whiteness as a standpoint from which

white people view dark-skinned people as 'others' and also as a 'set of cultural practices that are visibly unmarked and unnamed' (p1).

Whiteness then is a theoretical perspective that explains the impacts not only on Aboriginal people but also on other cultures who would experience the impact of Whiteness to varying extents within Australia (for example the Indian population). In fact, it could be argued that Whiteness, like colonisation, has a far reaching impact on all who are not privileged by being White.

Race has been used historically to categorise and place value on people on the basis of their physical characteristics (Pease, 2010). Such biologically based theories have legitimised the inequality based on race and allowed Whites to regard difference in a hierarchical way (Pease, 2010). It is important to keep noting that race is socially constructed (Kendall, 2006) and as such changes depending on geographic area and time and is never static or fixed. This is important because many of the everyday beliefs about race (including about Aboriginal people) are now dated and based on colonial assumptions.

Certainly in today's debates light-skinned Aboriginals are often regarded as knowing less than others and being less entitled to call themselves Aboriginal. For example, journalist Andrew Bolt stated 'for many of these fair Aborigines, the choice to be Aboriginal can seem almost arbitrary' and again 'even full-blood Aborigines may wonder how such fair people can claim to be one of them and in some cases to take black jobs' (Ritchie, 2011). Aboriginality becomes attached to blackness or dark skin. Watson asks 'how do they 'know' that some people know more than others?' (2002, pp. 12-13). This debate is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Concepts of deficit, difference, authenticity and validity have been part of societal constructs for some time. Examples of this are the use of insults as tools of social exclusion (such as 'coconut', 'up town black') and accusations of privilege, favouritism and 'real' Aboriginals which adds to stereotyping and attempts to make some Aboriginal people more valid than others which can then be linked with lateral violence in communities (Dudgeon & Oxenham, 1990; Gorringe et al., 2011; Paradies 2006a).

What has not been examined in research or literature in great detail is the role that light-skinned people now play within whiteness. Boladaras discusses how light-skinned Aboriginal people can be seen to have been brought up within this privileged, unmarginalised, normal view. Therefore they may feel guilty that they have not experienced the same degree of racism or need to protect their identity as darker-skinned people have (2002). The experiences of light-skinned Aboriginal people and how they feel about Whiteness and where they fit has not been researched as yet in Australia but is something that will be explored with the participants. This will be discussed in the analysis section.

Rodriguez (1998) believes that some degree of confusion and destabilisation and to an extent trauma will confront an individual who is starting to engage with their whiteness. Some non-Aboriginal people feel guilt about their whiteness in Australia due to the colonisation history, policies and actions that were taken by predominantly White people. Pease (2010) states there is potential for White people to undo the elements of White privilege and to develop a new self-identity. Curry- Stevens (2007) developed six steps to challenge the reproduction of privilege which are; developing awareness of the existence of oppression, understanding the structural dynamics that hold oppression in place, locating oneself as being either oppressed or privileged, understanding the benefits that accrue due to one's privilege and understanding oneself as being implicated in other's oppression and acknowledging one's oppressor status. This model seems to focus on White people but might be relevant to light-skinned Aboriginal people also.

There are also those who believe that they are disadvantaged by the specialised programs and positions set up for 'disadvantaged groups' (Fellows & Razack, 1998) such as Aboriginal people. They do not favour affirmative action policies or positive discrimination as the policies are not seen to favour White people (Pease, 2010). There is certainly this debate within the Australian discourse. Some people seem to have difficulty in accepting the involvement of whiteness in the day-to-day oppression of Aboriginal people and in the continuation of colonisation and the colonising mind. These individuals do not see the many benefits they receive that have been derived by the subordination of others and instead use arguments such as 'I worked hard for this' or 'I got lucky' (Rasmussen, Klinenberg, Nexica, & Wray, 2001). It is social work's role to critically appraise one's position in society and to be accountable for this role.

It is important to understand Whiteness theory and development in Australia, because it sets the context that each organisation and governmental body has been developed with a white lens. It also sets the context of how rifts in privilege have been developed and even nurtured in Australian society. White people in general have had more opportunities to wealth, education and success.

Privilege and light-skinned Aboriginal people

It is vital to note that the difference that is emerging is light-skinned Aboriginal people, who look physically White and therefore Whiteness theory may not be the most appropriate theory to fit their circumstances. Although many light-skinned Aboriginal people look White, they are often not born within the same privilege as White people (for example they may still fall behind the average in health, education, and financial status). For this reason it may be more helpful to understand light-skinned Aboriginal people through the lens of privilege.

Bailey (1998) describes privilege as 'systematically conferred advantages individuals enjoy by virtue of their membership in dominant groups with access to resources and institutional power that are beyond the common advantages of marginalised citizens' (p. 109). Peggy McIntosh (1992) was the first to distinguish between privilege and special benefits. An example of special benefits in government payments available for all individuals for issues such as disabilities, aged care or financial hardship. The main privileges that are acknowledged in Australian society include a large share of the position of social value, material and symbolic things for which people strive towards, political authority, good and plentiful food, home ownership and free or affordable health care (Pease, 2010).

Rosenblum and Travis (1996) state that members of a privileged group have 'unmarked status' in that they do not require any special comments and are much more likely to be privileged due to belonging to this group than due to any individual abilities.

There are three theories around the development of privilege. The first is 'single cause' theory which stemmed from Marx who believed all oppression derived from the working class oppression (Pease, 2010). The second is 'parallel theory' which suggests that different kinds of oppression run on distinct and parallel tracks from one another (Pease, 2010). Diverse forms of

oppression are comparable but they are different due to political, economic, cultural and social factors that have had a major effect on how the oppression has been embedded in cultural norms, bureaucratic institutions and even in the unconscious behaviours of individuals (Harvey, 1999). For example, a white person can be disabled and thus not as privileged as someone who is white and male (Pease, 2010). Intersectional theory recognises that within a privileged group there are complexities.

Pheterson (1986) discusses the incorporation and acceptance of individuals of dominance and prejudice called internalisation. The dominant privilege can be socially and cognitively constructed by the individual who accepts these prejudices internally. Bourdieu (1977) takes this concept further when suggesting that dominant ideologies are incorporated into the individuals body and therefore influences behaviour at an unconscious level. This is why the oppressed also take on the same concepts. It also explains why changing this behaviour is more complex than encouraging people to think differently. In fact, privilege needs to be addressed at the institutional levels and it the task of the individual to reframe and reformat their assumptions (Bourdieu, 1977).

In Australian society, the norm of White (European based) privilege has become the norm and the basis for measuring success and failure (Pease, 2010). It has also been the assumption that this also meant supremacy and a sense of entitlement over Aboriginal people who were not white, privileged or normal (Pease, 2010; Tillner, 1997). This illusion of dominance can invalidate the identity of others (Tillner, 1997). This is the crux of the argument around light-skinned Aboriginal people. Due to the colour of their skin they have been assumed by wider society have been given the same privilege and entitlement as a white person. This will be explored with participants in the study.

Chapter conclusion

Early colonisation set a pattern in regards to policy and treatment of Aboriginal people and this has influenced how others have conceptualised Aboriginal identity. Trying to understand the needs of urban Aboriginal communities is important. More so, it is essential to begin to find out

the answers to some of the questions around future Aboriginal identity for those who have light skin, lack of kin and lack of ability to connect with an Aboriginal community.

Colonisation, assimilation and the specific experiences of the Stolen Generations have all impacted on Aboriginal culture in that they have negatively affected spoken languages, tribal groupings and participation in Aboriginal cultural ceremonies. These policies have diminished opportunities to be part of Aboriginal cultural identity by separating people from kin and community. Aboriginal society is structured around the community (Dudgeon et al., 2002). Individual identity is linked to a sense of belonging to something larger than oneself. Forced removal from land, families and peoples has had an impact on culture and an individual's ability to learn culture, become part of it and have it impact positively in their lives.

This chapter has provided an overview of the colonial history of Australia which is imperative to understand the issues relevant to current Aboriginal identity construction. The identity of Aboriginal people today cannot be separated from experiences of colonisation, racism, disadvantage, oppression and attempted genocide. It has also explored the issues of lateral violence, trans-generational trauma, Whiteness and privilege in relation to forming an Aboriginal identity as a light-skinned Aboriginal person.

Chapter 3 will discuss some of the key concepts important to this study including culture, cultural identity, racial identity, Aboriginal cultural identity; identity formation for adolescents will be examined in relation to the concept of forming identity.

Chapter 3: Key concepts

A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots. Marcus Garvey 13

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter provided a historical overview of the events and policies that have impacted on Aboriginal people and the development of Aboriginal identity. It aimed to give an understanding of the policies and processes that have occurred to Aboriginal people and why this might mean they have difficulties forming their Aboriginal identity, particularly if they are light-skinned and/or lack kinship and/or community links. In the brief overview of history provided it is clear that colonisation processes and subsequent government policies have affected and still define the concept of 'Aboriginality' and its meaning today.

To better understand how and why identity and in particular cultural identity is important, this chapter explores a number of key concepts that are important to understand and they include; culture, cultural identity, racial identity, Aboriginal cultural identity and identity formation. This chapter explores how Aboriginal people experience the formation of an Aboriginal cultural identity given that they may not have any kinship ties or community ties to assist them. This process is the focus of the research.

Identity formation

The literature has focused on the identity formation occurring before the end of adolescence (eighteen years of age). The major theorists in this area are Erikson (1963, 1968), Marcia (1966) and Brofenbrenner (1977).

Erikson (1968), states that the establishment of identity (who am I?) is a major task for adolescents. As a psychosocial task, identity serves to give an individual a sense of unification,

¹³ URL accessed 1 March 2013

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/culture.html#4j6jtW28EIEBuZde.99>

cohesiveness, provide meaning, direction and purpose in their lives (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Identity needs to be viewed as a process with an outcome of a clear self-definition which encompasses goals, values and beliefs to which the individual is committed (Waterman, 1985).

Erikson (1968; 1963) spoke about identity being components of what is called the self-system. These components are self-development, self-perception, self-recognition, self-awareness, self-esteem and locus of control (Harter, 1983). Erikson (1968) states:

Identity in its vaguest sense suggests, of course, much of what has been called the self by a variety of workers, be it in the form of a self-concept, a self-system, or in that of a fluctuating self-experience (p. 208-209).

Components of the self-system, in particular self-esteem and self-concept are needed prior to ego-identity formation. The ego has functions to unconsciously process and reprocess information and to integrate this into the self (Erikson, 1963). Erikson proposed a process in adolescents where they experienced a 'crisis' and worked through this to have a clear sense of their identity.

Erikson presented a theoretical framework (Erikson, 1959) with five psychological stages between birth and adolescence that need to be resolved in a positive manner and incorporated into the psyche. The development of identity using Erikson's theory has been minimally researched among minorities (Robinson, 2007).

Marcia's (Marcia, 1993; 1966) identity status model has been used to refine Erikson's original theory. Marcia agreed with Erikson in stating that the adolescent moves through four ego identity statuses in order to explore and understand their identity. An adolescent who has a diffused identity has not committed to any roles in this process. The moratorium identity shows an individual struggling with their identity and represents a normal developmental process. Failure to move forward from this struggle is seen as maladaptive. The adolescent with a foreclosed identity has an identity based on clearly defined values and goals. The commitment of the foreclosed adolescent tends to be based on the perspectives of parents or other authority figures and not necessarily through their own exploration process. In this way it is

viewed as maladaptive and not reflective of the individual's self-generated perspective. Finally an individual who has identity commitments has reached the ideal stage of identity. This adolescent is said to have struggled and experimented with different roles, ideologies and ideas and has now found what best represents them and what they now want to commit themselves to (Marcia 1966, 1993).

Another important perspective is Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) which examines the interaction between the individual and various levels of the environment. He argues that the environment contributes to and shapes identity formation (for example through school, peers and sport). This theory is more inclusive of outside influences and takes a broader look at the development of a young person. The ecology of human development was defined as involving:

... the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between those settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p.21).

Bronfenbrenner divided the ecological environment into four levels, the microsystem, the mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem. The microsystem represents interactions between the individual and their immediate environment (e.g.: family). Mesosystem is the interactions between two or more settings (e.g.: home and school). Exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 22). For example, the link between home and the extended family. The macrosystem is the overarching influence of our social structure and subcultures. This includes the influence of belief systems, social interchange and social issues such as poverty (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

These models have formed the basis of understanding how identity is formulated by adolescents and give an idea of how the young person may be interacting in the world.

Ecological systems theory resonates with knowing, doing and being and the importance of a holistic view of an individual, including their spirituality (Westerman, 1997).

As outlined in the previous chapter there have been many cumulative effects from both external and internal colonisation on Aboriginal identity. This complicates efforts of Aboriginal people to forge cultural identity due to intergenerational trauma and added complications such as low socio-economic status, poverty and lack of opportunities within society. Identity construction today may be complicated by long standing colonisation and a relentless pressure to assimilate (Markstrom, 2010). There can also be complications due to a lack of family connection or elders that can play a role in socialising adolescents due to the history of massacres, Stolen Generations and colonising policies. This can be particularly difficult for young people in urban settings as their role in Aboriginal and broader society has changed.

Pre colonisation young people played a vital role within the community. The notion of adolescence as we know it today was much less distinct. Instead, the life cycle was that children moved into functioning adults in their mid-teens and took on roles such as raising children, seeking food and learning culture (various elders, Personal Communication)¹⁴. The role/s of a young person now are not as clearly defined and can leave young people without a clear direction to head in. There have also been limited real opportunities available to some Aboriginal communities in terms of education and employment. Added to this is the continued trauma that young people witness all around them including death, poverty, drug and alcohol issues and other legacies of colonisation that all impact on their identity formation. While young people had clear roles and responsibilities and a say in decisions both for themselves and the community in the past, this is less so now.

In urban settings, identity can be formed by knowing where one's roots are from, having connection to family and family commitments, having an understanding of family history, mixing with other Aboriginal people, going to social gatherings where other Aboriginal people congregate, working in jobs that service Aboriginal people, studying at Aboriginal colleges, knowing some if not all of the stories from where one's family originates, and involvement in

¹⁴ Elder input has occurred at various times in my life over the last 21 years at cultural camps, meetings and conversations. It is therefore impossible to date this information.

Aboriginal art and music (Clark, 2000, p. 155). Culture made available to Aboriginal people from a young age is a key resource for constructing their identities for later in life (Bolt, 2009).

Modern child development has confirmed that fostering cultural identity is in the best interests of the child (Bambllett & Lewis, 2006). Denying cultural identity is detrimental to children's attachment needs, their emotional development, their education and their health (Bambllett & Lewis, 2006). Identification with any culture is a source of personal and social strength; and, conversely, lack of identification with any culture is a source of weakness and anomie (Weaver, 2001).

Any intervention or practice based on strong Aboriginal cultural practices is more likely to succeed (Bambllett & Lewis, 2006). Some have suggested that those working with Aboriginal youth need to identify the young person's totems, traditional languages, tribal group, link the person into cultural activities, cultural camps, smoking ceremonies, storytelling by elders, boomerang painting and other art activities, traditional music and dancing and basically provide cultural input as examples of a holistic healing approach (Bambllett & Lewis, 2006, p.45).

Developing a strong Aboriginal cultural identity is more than just cultural classes or teaching dance to young people. By providing these classes to children who have had no context for them, they are no more meaningful to them than other cultural experiences (Weber-Pillwax, 2001b). There seems a need to learn about Aboriginal cultural identity from a larger, richer and more intensely personal framework both by other Aboriginal people but by any available resource (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). The questions still unanswered are who can do this, where can it be done, and at what ages is it necessary to improve wellbeing?

Identity and links to wellbeing

Research internationally has found a link between a strong ethnic identity and indicators of self-esteem and personal adjustment, indicating improved wellbeing. For example, Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Withow and Fuligni (2006) used a daily diary design to study whether ethnic identity (regard for own ethnic group) predicted wellbeing for Mexican and Chinese adolescents. They found that if the adolescent had a stronger ethnic identity, then they had

more daily happiness and less anxiety. Yip and Fuligni (2002) used a similar design to link ethnic identity and wellbeing to Chinese adolescents. Roberts et al (1999) found from their research with young adolescents (N=5,423) that there were strong positive links between a strong ethnic identity and improved self-esteem, optimism and coping abilities. Theorists have interpreted these consistent findings as being evidence that a positive ethnic identity will act as a buffer against negative circumstances in life (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007).

Overseas studies around young people have mostly focused on the experiences of high school students (Dejud, 2007; Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005) and American University students (Zubrzycki & Bennett, 2006). In several studies it was found that adolescents with an achieved sense of ethnic identity achieve better psychological adjustment, such as improved wellbeing and self-esteem (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). In her thesis, Pere (2006) investigated cultural identity and how it impacted on mental health outcomes for Maori young people in New Zealand. She found that Maori young people who did not have knowledge of their cultural identity had poorer outcomes to those who did. She concluded that Maori young people may not lead as full and meaningful lives as they might if they possess a sounder knowledge of their culture and cultural identity (Pere, 2006). She argues strongly that cultural identity and the knowledge of identity is an issue for Maori and that increased cultural identity and cultural activities would be a protective factor for wellbeing (Pere, 2006). Pere's thesis explains that the loss of identity impacts negatively on the crime rate, health and education statistics for Maori youth (Pere, 2006, p. 16).

Studies conducted primarily with North American populations of Canadian youth and Native American adolescents have demonstrated that identity is a protective factor against mental health issues such as suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler et al., 2003; Markstrom & Iborra, 2003). Northern Scandinavian researchers also documented this with Sami adolescents when exploring the connection between racial identity and improved health and wellbeing, including identity being a protective factor against suicide (Kvernmo, 1998; Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 1996; Silviken & Kvernmo, 2007).

Dockery's (2010) discussion on culture and wellbeing in the case of Aboriginal Australians asks the question 'Does the loss of culture reduce their wellbeing, and by how much?' He reports that individuals with less cultural identity show worse health outcomes, more alcohol consumption and are more likely to be involved in 'risky' behaviour. He then argues that individuals with strong cultural identity are more likely to be employed, attain education, are less likely to be arrested and have better health outcomes. He concludes that a strong attachment to culture shows better socio-economic outcomes and indicates a strong association between strong cultural attachment and wellbeing.

Kickett-Tucker's (2009) research explored the racial identity of Aboriginal young people aged between 8 and 12. She found that a strong racial identity protected youth from serious mental health issues, including suicide (Kickett-Tucker, 2009). She proposed that a strong racial identity is important to be able to develop a sense of cultural safety and security and provides the base with coping with issues such as discrimination, stereotyping and racial prejudice (such as that found in lateral violence)(Kickett-Tucker, 2009). It has also been found that a positive racial identity increased the chances of successful school outcomes such as attendance, retention and academic grades (Purdie, Tripcony, Boulton-Lewis, Gunstone, & Fanshawe, 2000).

Identity formulation and adults

Due to some of the participants finding out about their Aboriginal identity in adulthood, it is important to ask how and if an identity, particularly a cultural one can be formulated in the adult stage of life. Identity formulation neither begins nor ends with adolescence (Erikson, 1959).The basic hypothesis of identity development is that it begins in adolescence and involves the transition to adulthood through progressive stages (Erikson, 1959, 1963, 1968).However, identity construction is a lifelong process and an individual has the ability and choice to change aspects of their identity. It has now been suggested that as an adult identity changes to accompany an individual's life circumstances (Waterman, 1993).

Erikson speaks about the crisis that adolescent go through to formulate their identity, but in some ways, adults may go through this as well; in fact, many call it a 'mid-life crisis'. Erikson postulates that once someone has begun their identity crisis it will end in two ways. Firstly, by

entering a personally meaningful commitment (e.g.: the Identity Achievement status) or by deciding that the task was unresolvable (e.g.: Identity Diffuse) (Erikson, 1959; Marcia, 1966). A person who has ended the identity crisis well can expect that they will gain answers to their identity questions and therefore establish a more meaningful identity. Erikson argues that an individual is more likely to gain success if they have adult role models in either their family or community on which to base their own development. These role models may provide ways of coping with various identity concerns, may suggest alternatives and may offer the hope of eventual resolution (Erikson, 1959; Waterman, 1993). This seems to indicate that those young people and adults formulating an Aboriginal identity would be more successful if they had other role models to base their journey on.

It seems that adults finding out about their Aboriginal heritage would need to develop their cultural identity rather than re-enter the crisis period Erikson speaks about. In this way, the adult has an opinion of their identity but needs to learn about a particular set of beliefs, practices and way of life specific to Aboriginal people (de Souza & Rymarz, 2007). Individuals seeking a new aspect of identity need to be open, energetic, curious and self-aware (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In this way they can help shape any new social roles and re-structure values, priorities and a conception of potential (Baumeister, 1986).

There has been little study into this area but it is clear that identity can be re-developed in adulthood, particularly when looking at cultural identity. This can be accomplished through an imitation process or through the self-awareness process as discussed above. It needs to be constructed in a relational context based on individuality, self-determination and a sense of belonging (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

Culture

It is important to have an understanding of what culture is and how it is defined and formed in order to understand the difference between a broad Australian culture and Aboriginal culture. Defining culture and identity has been complex and multifaceted for all humans (Hall, 1990). Culture includes integrated patterns of learned beliefs and behaviours that are shared among groups which include thoughts, communication styles, ways of interacting, views of roles and

relationships, values, practices and customs which are communicated from one generation to the next (Hofstede, 1980; Matsumoto, 1996; Mead, 1955; Vaughn, 2010).

Culture distinguishes us from one another (Hofstede & McCrae, 2007). Being part of a culture indicates collectivity (Dockery, 2010; Hofstede & McCrae, 2007) as cultures contain beliefs and values within them that gives us a worldview (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). For Aboriginal people this worldview has included beliefs such as the Dreamtime, Ceremony, Law and an affiliation with all things animate and inanimate within the cosmos (Martin, 2002; Wilson, 2008). Culture acts as a filter when we are perceiving things, thinking about things, understanding and explaining things and interpreting the world around us (Matsumoto, 1996).

Further to this, culture is a set of behavioural norms and cognitions that are shared by individuals within a definable population that are distinct from those shared within other populations (Hofstede, 1980; Mead, 1955). These norms and behaviours provide the resources for achieving both individual and collective goals. Humans develop the means to pass these beliefs, values and behaviours on to new members of the culture for sustainability.

Culture does not rigidly determine an individual response but provides a way to make sense of the world and to form a reality. It shows that people can follow different cultural paradigms in different contexts. The speed of global and technological advancement has greatly influenced the intensity of multicultural contacts. Added to this, Aboriginal culture has extensively been exposed to other cultures since colonisation.

There is some debate as to why and how culture has come about. Although there are many theories about culture, for the purposes of this research the main theories presented in the literature are evolutionary adaption, the Terror Management Theory, the epistemic perspective and the dynamic social impact theory (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1992; Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Harton & Bourgeois, 1992; Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004). These theories give an insight and explanation into why culture may have developed. They help to contribute to an understanding of culture.

Culture was an 'evolutionary adaption' that allowed humans to survive and sexually reproduce more efficiently due to cultural norms and shared beliefs providing a structure to hold communities together and to provide successful mating and rearing of children (Barkow et al., 1992; Lehman et al., 2004).

'Terror Management Theory' argues that culture emerged to serve as a psychological buffer against anxiety that arises from the knowledge of our own mortality (Greenberg et al., 1997; Solomon, Greenberg, Schimel, Arndt, & Pyszczynski, 2004). This theory argues that culture acts as a buffer due to specific beliefs that offer immortality (such as life after death). Culture provides norms and values upon which an individual can judge and be judged as worthwhile and socially acceptable. The goal for an individual is to feel they are a valued member of a meaningful society and culture. Feelings of self-worth help to buffer knowledge of our eventual mortality. Knowledge of our mortality also gives us the impetus to protect and defend our worldview and culture.

The 'epistemic view' is that culture arose from the need for certainty and confidence in the way we gain knowledge about the world around us. This shared reality with a common set of beliefs, expectations and rules for interpreting the world gives us validation of ourselves and our communities (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Richter & Kruglanski, 2004). This research suggests that Aboriginal people will develop a shared reality and a common set of beliefs and expectations. However, this needs socialisation from other Aboriginal people who model expectations and rules for interpreting the world. This is important to understand due to pan- Aboriginality (as discussed in chapter 2) which does argue this exact view versus the reality of many Aboriginal people being separated from this way of developing their culture due to Stolen Generations.

'Dynamic Social Impact theory' states that culture can arise as a consequence of interpersonal interaction. By communicating with each other, we influence each other in a variety of beliefs and behaviours. This theory has been supported through longitudinal studies of populations and laboratory studies (Harton & Bourgeois, 1992; Latane, 1996). These theories all help develop a framework for understanding and conceptualising culture.

Theorists agree that socialisation is the process by which we learn and internalise rules and patterns of behavior accepted by our culture (Matsumoto, 1996; Bolt, 2009, Vaughn, 2010). This extends over time to other institutions of socialisation such as our siblings, families, friends and peers, communities, schools, faith, sporting teams and the like. Theorists agree that culture reflects our lives in various ways including our food, housing and technology. This is critical to the research. The argument is that unless you have either a specific person to socialise you into a culture or a kinship network or community group, the chances that you have been able to develop a strong Aboriginal cultural identity must be reduced dramatically.

Cultural/ethnic/racial identity formation

The literature uses the terms cultural, ethnic and racial to indicate those people who have aligned with a particular group in society (for example Aboriginal) (T. Smith & Silva, 2011). Culture, race and ethnicity are used interchangeably in the literature and it is difficult to say which one comes first. Although sociology literature suggests that race and ethnicity are different concepts, the terms are also used interchangeably. For this reason, all of these terms will be used in the thesis to explain Aboriginal cultural identity formation.

Culture is so diverse that ethnicity and race have been used to distinguish cultural groups. Indigenous people have searched for understandings about culture and cultural identity that fit with their values and world views. The result has been the development of models that stress fluid, situational, volitional and dynamic characteristics of ethnicity/ race/culture (Nagel, 1994).

For the purposes of this thesis, a social identity is the perception of “oneness with a group of persons” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). This feeling of belonging leads to activities that are in agreement with this identity. This can include a stereotypical perception of oneself and others if this reinforces the pre-existing views of the identity. A definition of cultural identity is discussed and presented below.

Identity formation has been considered a crucial aspect of individual development for some time (Erikson, 1959; Rogers, 1961). The literature has focused on how it is viewed as a collective and socially (A. Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001) and then how it is developed and formed by differing racial or ethnic groups (Phinney, 1989; Ruiz, 1990). Identity raises questions

such as 'Who are you?' and 'How would you describe yourself?' Berry states that identity is that part of the self that comes from the knowledge of an individual's membership in a social group (or groups), together with the amount of value and emotional significance an individual attaches to that membership (1999).

The notion of identity is the way in which one identifies oneself with use of statements such as 'I am Aboriginal'(Berry, 1999). There are innumerable types of identity which may also overlap including race, gender, age, class and profession to name a few. These identities are based on socio-historical constructs 'through public self-representation, private accountings of oneself or through the experience of being named by others' (Jenkins as cited in Paradies, 2006a, p.356).

Identity can give us structure and help us understand where we fit within the society in which we live (Woodward, 1997). Identities help us to form an idea of who we are, how we relate to others and how we relate to society. Identities show us how we are similar and also how we differ. In this way, each culture has its own way of understanding the world and develops methods to share these meanings (Woodward, 1997). Identity links an individual to a culture or ethnic group. This identity formation is important for Aboriginal young people today, particularly in the urban setting.

Early sociological discussions in British literature (Banton, 1967; Rex, 1971) emphasised that 'race' was a category that was useful in terms of organising social conduct but not useful to be seen in terms of a biological component. In fact, a sociologist by the name of Miles (1982) argued that the patterns of oppression that were called 'race relations' were in fact variants of the classically class-based forms of exploitation (this was firmly rooted in Marxist theories) and not based on race. In a shared interest to understand the complexity of race, other authors challenged the class based theories (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Gilroy, 1987). In Britain at least, race was not seen as something that could easily be defined.

A further complication arises from the fact that the races have been busily interbreeding for thousands of years so nearly all racial groups are considerably intermixed (Horton & Hunt, 1980, p. 352).

In comparison to Britain, the United States of America was very clear about the divisions of race based on ethnicity (and the difference between Black and White). This could be explained due to the different political histories in the two countries (Mason, 1996) and the racial divisions that occurred in America. The concept of ethnicity became more discussed in Britain politically and academically due to the response in dissatisfaction with the concept of race (Mason, 1992).

Ethnicity is self-classified, in that it is the way you position yourself within social, economic and political processes (Hall, 1991; Nagel, 1994). Ethnicity is based on self-identification and physical characteristics such as skin colour, ancestral origin, language, traditions, religion and region (Vaughn, 2010). Ethnicity is created and recreated within society. Research has shown that ethnicity is made up of people's conceptions of themselves as well as the labelling and perception of society around them, therefore ethnicity is situational, dynamic and changeable (Barth, 1969; Waters, 1990). While an individual can choose an ethnic identity, this selection is limited and the categories are socially and politically defined with varying degrees of stigma or advantage (Nagel, 1994). For example an Aboriginal person can choose to be Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal or a mixture of the two and these labels have differing stigma attached to them by society. Ethnic boundaries shift and reshape due to conflict arising out of competition, resources and politics (Barth, 1969). Culture itself dictates the content of a particular ethnicity through language, belief systems, art, music, dress, traditions and lifestyle (Nagel, 1994).

Research in the area of the development of cultural identity has primarily been conducted in the disciplines of sociology, education, anthropology, history and psychology (Ang, 2001; Boladeras, 2002; Bolt, 2009; Dockery, 2010; Gorringer et al., 2011; Hollinsworth, 1992; Kickett-Tucker, 2009; Paradies 2006; M. Tonkinson, 1990; Weaver 2001; Yamanouchi, 2010). Research has primarily aimed to understand formation of identity based on the work of social identity theory, particularly psychologist Eric Erikson's (1959) model of ego identity development. Erikson's model was then further developed by psychologist James Marcia (1993). Ethnic identity was first researched by Jean Phinney, an American psychologist (1990) although there has been work by other researchers in the area, particularly William E Cross, a psychologist who examined self-identification among African Americans (Cross, 1971). Cross was informed in particular by the writings of W.E. B. Du Bois (Du Bois, 1964) and Franz Fanon (Fanon, 1967).

Hall (1990), a sociologist, states there are two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first is to define cultural identity as a shared collective culture where people with a shared history and ancestry hold much in common and the person's 'true self' is part of many others (Hall, 1990). This argument sees 'one people' with a stable, unchanging and continuous worldview. This is the sort of identity that played a key role in post-colonial struggles of pan-Aboriginality. This way of presenting identity can impose an imaginary cohesion and sense of 'sameness' instead of highlighting diversity and change. Some call this primordial identity and it is argued to be set apart from history, politics and morals (Gilroy, 1997).

The second view of cultural identity recognises that as well as having many points of similarity there are also crucial differences in who and what we really are (Hall, 1990). In this sense it is a matter of becoming as well as being, an identity that belongs as much to the present and future as to the past (Hall, 1990). Cultural identity is not a fixed essence but is constructed in the discourses of history and politics (Hall, 1990). In this definition, difference can exist alongside continuity (Hall, 1990). This identity is individual, which is being negotiated and changed by power, wealth and economics (Gilroy, 1997). This perspective resonates strongly with my research. This is because diversity in Aboriginal society is extensive. The Aboriginal Country that you are from, languages you might have spoken, which school you go to and who is in your family all influence identity. This view gives credence to how people have had different occurrences in history, experiences of colonisation and the differing focuses and energy of politics.

According to Berry (1999) to identify a cultural identity requires four components. Firstly, an individual needs to have the perception or belief that they are from a culture, for example they are Aboriginal. Secondly, the individual needs to have a sense of whether there is importance or attachment to being part of that particular group/s and if it is an important part of their social identity. Thirdly, it involves the individual experiencing positive or negative feelings around being part of that cultural identity. This leads to whether the individual then gains a positive or negative feeling of self-worth by seeing themselves as, for example Aboriginal. Fourthly an individual needs to decide what degree of identity maintenance they desire. For example: how much will they want to display their Aboriginal identity or how much will they want to change or

hide it. Berry argues that these four concepts are independent of each other and exist in a logical psychological sequence due to the fact that unless an individual perceives themselves as Aboriginal, then the following three sequences do not apply to them (Berry, 1999). Aboriginal cultural identity would then be about perception (do I see myself as Aboriginal?), importance (is it important or not to be Aboriginal?), esteem (do I like being Aboriginal?), maintenance (do I want to remain Aboriginal) and behavioural expression (do I express my Aboriginality through my behaviour?) (Berry, 1999).

Individuals with two or more cultures may have multiple identities and can be considered bicultural or multicultural. Multicultural individuals normally develop several concepts of who they are and may use these concepts in different circumstances (Vaughn, 2010). Theorists have argued that people can actually shift from one set of cultural behaviours to another. Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000) conducted research with Chinese American students which showed that people could switch between cultural frames as they moved between cultural settings. For example, when a Chinese American bicultural individual enters a traditional Chinese setting, then the images they encounter will be more accessible under a Chinese construct. When that same individual enters a mainstream American setting then the American social constructs will be more accessible to them. This allows individuals to move in and out of the dominant culture and is called cultural frame switching (Hong, Benet-Martinez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Lehman et al., 2004). This shows that multi-cultural identities are fluid (Lee, Subal and Frongillo as cited in Vaughn, 2010; Sparrow as cited in Vaughn, 2010).

The issue of cultural identity is part of the identity formation process (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993). Individuals from a minority ethnicity will seek to establish or secure a cultural identity (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). As individuals explore these issues they also face conflict between alternative cultural frames of reference, minority status and discrimination. This indicates that the people who may be part of this research may have recently experienced the process of identity formation and may be looking to form a stable identity as an Aboriginal person. This research seeks to find out how they are managing to do this.

Racial/ethnic/minority identity development models

There has been limited attention in the Australian context as to how people develop cultural identity. Most of the models of Black racial identity development and transformation were developed in the United States in the early 1970s (Robinson, 2007). These theories are characterised by sequential stages that are influenced by an individual's reaction to social and environmental pressures and circumstances (Cross, 1971, 1978).

Martin's Aboriginal model of child development (SNAICC, 2005, p. 38) juxtaposes linear models such as Erikson's (Erikson, 1959) which proposes a continuum from pre-conception to death in a circular manner. The circle as a metaphor for describing identity development has been used often by Aboriginal people (Moss, 2009). This circle of identity starts with the individual but is extended out to place and things beyond the physical individual and is inclusive of the Dreamtime (Myers, 1991). In other words, identity has a cyclical life-death-life notion (Myers, 1991). The other differences of Martin's model in comparison to the existing Western ones are that the child is seen as a capable, autonomous and active contributor in the community. They are expected to regulate their own behaviour and to build reciprocal relationships with others in their community but also with elements such as land, animals and spirit (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005).

One of the most influential models has been Cross's (1971, 1991) model of psychological 'nigrescence', Phinney's (1989, 1990) conceptualisation of ethnic development and Parham and Helms's (1981) presentation of the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale. In fact, Cross's (1971) work has seen the subsequent development of at least 22 models of racial, biracial, multiracial, ethnic, feminist and gay/lesbian identity models (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005).

Cross, with the help of some other key psychologists developed a model that he called psychological nigrescence (Cross, 1971, 1978, 1980). This model looked at the development of a racial identity as being more than just about the colour of skin. Cross developed five stages to discuss his theory. Cross explained that the theme nigrescence came from African American descriptions and themes he had found in history books. 1971 marked the first time psychologists had come together to codify the theme of nigrescence. Cross states that he

codified nigrasce into stages due to his training as a therapist where he would talk about a client after a first session as entering the first stage. The theory was then further developed by Parham and Helms, who by wanting to measure the theory developed a scale that tried to separate and distinguish each stage (Cross, 2004). This model was the first framework which tried to understand the formation of a Black racial or cultural identity and therefore is potentially significant for the research.

Cross's first stage is pre-encounter where an individual is likely to view themselves from a non-Indigenous frame of reference (Eurocentric). The black person accepts the white view of themselves and other black people. They can develop attitudes that are anti-Black. This person will deny that racism exists. Cross argues that this stage has a mentality of assimilationist philosophy and is motivated by a need to be placed in the socio-economic mainstream.

The second phase is called encounter. This is where a shocking personal or social event causes the person to be receptive to new thinking, views and opinions about Black people and therefore their racial prejudice is challenged. Encounter experiences usually involve emotional traumas, a social event or a shocking event (for example after reading an article or seeing a television documentary) that help to breakdown preconceived identity and help the individual to become aware of new views of being Black. The person begins to realise that their old frame of reference does not fit or may be inappropriate and begins to explore new aspects of their Black identity, called the testing phase (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). After the individual has absorbed enough information in the encounter stage they will begin to become very motivated to begin their search for their new Black identity. While seeking their new identity the person is likely to be vulnerable as they have to examine their beliefs and values about race. If they have social and family support and have managed to be less defensive in this process then they will be able to challenge and change their Eurocentric beliefs and attitudes.

Immersion-emersion phase is where the person struggles with the old perspectives and simultaneously tries to clarify and begin their new identity (Cross, 1978). In this phase a person may glorify anything that is Black and romanticise, simplify and speculate about what their new self will be like (Cross et al., 1991). The person immerses themselves in what they think

Blackness will be like. They may begin to withdraw from Eurocentric culture and exhibit an anti-white attitude. Cross states 'since the new black identity is something yet to be achieved, the Stage 3 person is generally anxious about how to demonstrate to others that he/she is becoming the right kind of black person' (Cross, et al., 1991, p. 325). This means the person may begin to attend Black functions, read Black literature and dress in what is perceived to be a Black style. The latter part of this stage requires the person's emotions and actions to level off and be replaced by cognitive openness. The person begins to gain control over their identity and there is less of the either/or behaviour and thought.

Internalisation is a stage where the person focuses on things other than themselves, their ethnicity or their racial group. Within this stage the individual gains an inner security and self-confidence with their Blackness. They may ask themselves if others see them as Black enough but they generally become less hostile and have a pro-Black attitude (Cross, 1971).

The last stage is internalisation-commitment. This is characterised by positive self-esteem, flexibility in views and openness about Blackness. The person now commits to their new identity and finds activities to express it. The individual has to continue to be involved in the group in order to make the change lasting and to have political significance (Cross, 1985).

Cross states there are five ways identity operates in our daily lives. They include buffering, bonding, bridging, code-switching and individualism (Cross et al., 1991). The buffering function refers to attitudes, ideas, feelings and behaviours that help to protect against everyday racism. The bonding function refers to the degree a person gets meaning and support from black people or culture and therefore the affiliation and attachment to black people and culture. The bridging function refers to the competencies, attitudes and behaviours that make it possible for a black person to be involved in another group that is non-black. The person can then move from their black culture to a foreign culture and can use ways of knowing, acting, thinking and feeling that allow them to fit into that cultural frame of reference (some may call this bi-cultural or multi-cultural). The code-switching function allows a person to temporarily accommodate to the norms and regulations of a group, school or workplace. Individualism is the expression of a person's unique personality (Cross, 1995; Cross et al., 1991). Cross recently developed a holistic

model of racial, ethnic and cultural identity (Cross & Cross, 2008) but it is his early work which has become quoted and used in the psychology literature.

From reading Reuben Bolt's (2009) work on urban Aboriginal identity, it appears that the adults interviewed go through some similar phases to Cross's model. However, there may be differences for Aboriginal people who are not perceived by others as 'Black' at first glance due to the lightness of their skin. It could be argued that with the changes in education over the past twenty years young Aboriginal people may be more educated about colonisation and assimilation and may not necessarily hold a Eurocentric view of their own people and culture. These theories provide insights into what the participants may be experiencing. This will be examined in the analysis section.

Parham adds to Cross's model by proposing that identity development may continue throughout the life cycle (Parham, 1989). He also argues that a person's racial identity does not have to begin with a pro-white/anti-Black viewpoints (pre-encounter stage). He argues that if an adolescent is exposed to pro-black messages from parents or society, they may also be pro-black (Parham, 1989). He poses three ways people deal with their racial identity: stagnation (maintaining your race attitude), stage-wise linear progression (moving from stage to stage over the lifetime) and recycling (going through the stages again due to a crisis).

Not all Black individuals place their race or Black culture at the centre of their identity (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1996). For some individuals, orientation may be grounded in religious ideas, gender orientation or their other ethnicity. Some people may then withdraw from the black community or black issues as they perceive they have more important issues in their life.

Phinney's model (1989) of ethnic identity development in adolescence is made up of three stages. The first stage is unexamined ethnic identity. This is where the individual is not interested or concerned with their ethnic identity (diffusion). Foreclosure is when an adolescent's attitude about their identity may be formed by others around them depending on their socialisation or the majority culture's values and attitudes (for example a family who may be vocal about Black people being successful will think they as a Black person will be successful) (Phinney, 1989).

In the ethnic identity search (moratorium), the individual begins exploring and actively seeking an understanding and relevance around their ethnicity. Phinney (1989) states this exploration may be triggered by an event and is often followed by an 'intense process of immersion in one's own culture through activities such as reading, talking to people, going to ethnic museums, and participating actively in cultural events' (pp. 502-503). It is through this process that the individual comes to a deeper understanding of what their ethnicity means to them.

The third stage is the achievement or internalisation of ethnic identity. A person at this stage will have a clear and confident sense and understanding of their own ethnicity. If an individual has reached this stage, they have worked through stereotypes and conflicting values and beliefs (Phinney, 1989).

Following this period of cultural and political consciousness...individuals develop a deeper sense of belonging to the group...When the person finally comes to feel at one with the group, the internalization process has been completed, and ethnic identity established (Arce, 1981, p. 186).

Phinney states that 'the concepts of ethnic identity is meaningful for young adolescents, and that it is related in theoretically meaningful ways to other dimensions of the adolescents' experience' (Phinney, 1992, p. 8).

The models appear to be very linear. The theories can be summarised to contain some key elements. The first is the act of self-categorisation or labelling. Members of an ethnic/cultural group must self-identify (Phinney, 1992). They then must have a commitment or sense of belonging to that ethnic identity (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). By commitment, this means a strong personal investment in their identity with a variety of meaning gained from this. Exploration of a person's identity includes activities such as reading and talking to people, attending cultural events and learning cultural practices and is seen to be an important stage that continues on throughout a person's life (Phinney, 2006). Exploration is a key process because it leads to commitment and to ethnic behaviours (such as eating food and attending cultural events). Evaluation of your ethnic group with either a positive or a negative result is a distinct component of ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bamaca-Gomez, 2004). An ethnic identity also requires the development of values and beliefs specific to that group (Felix-

Ortiz, Newcomb, & Myers, 1994) and may indicate a person's feeling closer to that group as they adopt these.

Racial and ethnic identity exploration is normal during adolescence and may not need the 'crisis' as indicated by theorists such as Erikson (1968) and Cross (1971) (Quintana, 2007). It has been found that adolescents who focus on perceived positive aspects of their ethnic identity report higher psychological wellbeing and ways to manage stress (Quintana, 2007).

All of the models present stages that are worked through to gain meaning towards forming an individual's identity. This is important when considering Aboriginal identity because they indicate that there are processes that an individual may experience as they acquire an Aboriginal identity. Understanding how different cultures develop identity post-colonisation is important for Australia, particularly since we do not have a specific Aboriginal model.

The issue with these models is the inconsistent and interchangeable use of ethnicity, race and identity that makes it difficult to distinguish the constructs from each other and makes understanding these issues very confusing (Cokley, 2007; Trimble, 2007). There is also confusion around the terms due to them being written about across a variety of intellectual disciplines (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007). Many of the theories and definitions lack uniformity, validity and reliability (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007) and therefore lack precision in measurement.

Any individual that is living in settings that are different from their culture of origin is faced with questions and choices. Are they bicultural or multicultural? Will they accept their parental culture or will they become part of a larger societal culture? The task of distinguishing an ethnic identity formation involves sorting out and resolving the positive and negative feelings that are presented to the adolescent by parents, peers and wider society. From there, the adolescent begins to decide their place in relation to their own ethnicity (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990).

Acculturation

Acculturation explains the process of cultural and psychological change that results following the meeting between cultures (Berry, 1997). Examples of this are colonisation or immigration.

Due to the fact that Australia was colonised and that Aboriginal people were impacted gravely by colonisation, this theory is vital to understand and use throughout the research.

The effects of acculturation can be seen at multiple levels within the interacting cultures. A key writer in the area, psychologist John Berry referred to acculturation as the new behaviours and strategies that individuals use after cultural contact with another cultural group (Berry, 1999). Acculturation theory is interested in the extent to which ethnic identity is maintained when an ethnic group is in continuous contact with a dominant culture which is why it is an important theory to consider when understanding the Australian context (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936).

The concept of acculturation has been studied since 1918 (Rudmin, 2003). Contemporary research of acculturation has grown out of the concern for the effects of European domination of Indigenous peoples (Berry, 2005). Psychologists have found from research that the findings about acculturation cannot be generalised across geographical areas (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation has been approached at different times from the fields of psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Numerous theories and definitions have emerged to describe elements of the acculturative process. Despite definitions and evidence that acculturation entails a two-way process of change, research and theory have primarily focused on the adjustments and adaptations made by minorities such as immigrants, refugees, and Indigenous peoples in response to their contact with the dominant majority. As a result of groups of individuals who have different cultures coming into contact with each other, subsequently, changes in the original culture occur (Redfield et al., 1936). At the group level, acculturation often results in changes to culture, customs and social institutions, changes in food, clothing, and language. At the individual level, differences in the way individuals acculturate have been shown to be associated not just with changes in daily behaviour, but with numerous measures of psychological and physical wellbeing.

Contemporary research has primarily focused on different strategies of acculturation and how variations in acculturation affect how well individuals adapt to their society. Acculturation is

different from assimilation in that it provides a number of alternative courses and goals that a person may take (Berry, 2005).

Analyses of research on acculturation have shown pronounced disagreement in the categorisation of different strategies of acculturation. Theoretical perspectives range from linear, unidirectional models which suggest a gaining of one culture and a shedding of another to orthogonal and categorical models which suggest a unique contribution from each culture to the identity of the individual (Ward, 1999).

The majority of these models have divided the ways in which individuals approach acculturation into four categories (Rudmin, 2003). The four categories of acculturation strategies are along two dimensions. The first dimension concerns the retention or rejection of an individual's minority culture. The second dimension concerns the adoption or rejection of the dominant culture (Berry, 1997).

From this, four acculturation strategies emerge.

Assimilation – Assimilation occurs when individuals reject their minority culture and adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture.

Separation – Separation is when individuals reject the dominant or host culture in favor of preserving their culture of origin.

Integration – Integration is when individuals are able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture while maintaining their culture of origin. Integration leads to, and is often synonymous with biculturalism.

Marginalisation – Marginalisation occurs when individuals reject both their culture of origin and the dominant host culture (Berry, 1997).

Berry (1997) found that individual people deal with acculturation differently but there are three aspects to acculturation strategies. The first is the individual preferences or how they would like to acculturate. Secondly, how much change they actually undergo and thirdly how much of a problem these changes are for them (Berry & Kim, 1988).

Berry (1999) states that two issues usually occur for individuals who are acculturating. The first is the ability to maintain and develop one’s own cultural distinctiveness in society and within this deciding whether to retain cultural identity, values and customs. The second issue is the desire to have inter-cultural contact and whether the values, customs and identity of the other custom should be sought.

Berry states that if the first issue is answered no and the second yes then the person takes an assimilation option. The individual relinquishes their cultural identity and moves into the larger society. If an individual has a yes towards the maintenance of their cultural identity as well as the larger society, they become bicultural. If the person has no ties to the larger society but maintains their cultural identity this is called segregation. Finally if the person is confused or anxious about their feelings and think they have lost cultural identity then they are seen as marginalised (Berry, 1999).

Table 1: Acculturation matrix

| | Cultural Maintenance= YES | Cultural Maintenance= NO |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Contact Participation= YES | Integration | Assimilation |
| Contact Participation= NO | Separation/ Segregation | Marginalisation |

Substantial evidence shows that people who have pursued the integration option have the most positive adaption and those who are marginalised are the least well adapted (Berry & Sam, 1997; Ward, 2001).

This theory helps us to understand how individuals may view acculturation and respond to it. There is little current research on how Aboriginal people respond to and understand

acculturation. The theory of acculturation assisted when developing the questions asked of the participants in the interviews.

Aboriginal cultural identity

This colour of our skins will disappear through inter-marriage because, unlike other dark races, there are no throwbacks with the Aboriginal. It'll just disappear eventually. I told an old full-blood black tracker this once. He thought for a while, then looked at me and said 'How will the white man find his way then?' (Simon, as cited in Boledaras, 2002, p 27).

Aboriginal cultural identity has been examined, discussed, researched and analysed by almost every professional discipline including sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists. Since the initial act of colonisation, researchers and the broader government have tried to legislate, define and identify what is an Aboriginal. For example in an analysis conducted in Australia by McCorquodale, sixty seven different definitions of Indigeneity were found in seven hundred pieces of legislation from British settlement to the time of his publication (McCorquodale, 1986). There are many reasons for this scrutiny. Firstly, the Aboriginal population needed to be defined if it were to be assimilated. Secondly, the Aboriginal community needed to be defined if it were to be placed under various policies designed to 'help' and thirdly, Aboriginal people need to be defined currently as money and positions are awarded to them due to the inequalities brought about by colonisation. Until very recently, it was rare for Aboriginal people themselves to discuss their Aboriginality especially in regards to the formation of Aboriginal cultural identity outside of their own communities, let alone in academic forums (Dodson, 1994).

Dodson (1994) and Dudgeon and Oxenham (1990) argue that one legacy of colonisation has been the scrutiny placed on Aboriginal culture to define itself. Like everything that is historical, culture changes over time (Dudgeon and Fielder, 2006). Anthropologist writings saw Aboriginal culture as closed and homogenous. The danger of this view is that there is the temptation to see Aboriginal culture as static when in fact it has always been changing. Creating limiting definitions of Aboriginality has been seen by some as a method adapted by colonists to control Aboriginal people (Dodson 1994; Gilbert, 1995; Paradies 2006a).

The very action of defining Aboriginality creates issues. Firstly, it creates the concept that Aboriginal people are homogenous and have a singular identity rather than being disparate and distinct. Secondly, it creates 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and has a profound impact on how Aboriginal people understand themselves and are understood by others. Thirdly, it is and of itself a colonising, controlling, dominating and assimilating act to be defined by those not of your own culture (Dodson, 1994). Lastly, it makes identifying as Aboriginal exclusive of certain Aboriginal people and this can cause inequities, suffering and dissention among Aboriginal people. Defining or identifying the 'culture' of a collective is challenging, as there is often considerable difference between the 'ideal': that is what people say are their values and behaviours and what is 'real': the actual values and behaviours they display (Gorringer, Ross and Fforde, 2011, p. 13).

Paradies (2006a) argues that the stereotypical Aboriginal identity is not helpful anymore because for many Aboriginal people it does not exist. In other words, some Aboriginal people live without values of reciprocity, connection to the land or extended family. Paradies (2006a) suggests an Aboriginal identity is fluid and contextual and may include varied aspects (such as gender, age or profession). In this regard he agrees with Cowlshaw (as cited in Paradies, 2006a), that individuals do not experience the world only as Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Therefore an Aboriginal identity in Australia can be multi-racial and, as such, is both complex and 'hybrid', as suggested by Russell (2002).

The assumption of this thesis is that Aboriginal cultural identity is developed in the same way as presented by the research findings overseas, which is through socialisation. For Aboriginal people this includes knowing and experiencing Aboriginal culture, traditions, family and people (Kickett-Tucker, 2009). Being accepted into the Aboriginal community is more based on the community's willingness to admit or embrace that person rather than the person's desire to be part of that community (Boledaras, 2002). Therefore Aboriginal people unable to fit into a community or family today are at a disadvantage when forming cultural identity.

International Indigenous identity studies

In contrast to the lack of research in the Australian context there have been international studies completed on or with Indigenous cultures that look at the historical contextualisation of identity complicated by long standing colonial practices (Markstrom, 2010). These studies have focused on issues such as self-conception and identity, trauma especially around the area of child removal and erosion of culture and traditional aspects of life such as language, livelihood and roles forced upon Indigenous people by Western societies (Horse, 2001, Markstrom, 2010).

Although the peoples of Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia are different in their cultures, they have faced very similar socio-historical factors that have affected their identity. These factors have included issues such as subversion of existing religion, oppression through forced assimilation into Anglo-European cultures, disintegration of families and communities through war and policies, and loss of land (Kirmayer et al, 2003).

Kirmayer et al (2003) write about how the Aboriginal peoples in Canada (First nation, Inuit and Metis) have also faced cultural oppression through policies of assimilation since European contact. Canadian Aboriginal people were also viewed as uncivilised and were sent to residential schools¹⁵. The Indian Act¹⁶ has been the focus of a great amount of conflict and contestation in many communities as it only recognised patrilineal descent of children and also resulted in the removal of many Aboriginal women and children from their communities in the 20th Century (Kirmayer et al, 2003).

Kirmayer et al found that the colonisation of Canadian Aboriginal people has led to effects on cultural identity, in particular for Aboriginal youth (2003). The authors argue that this is due to the community context for socialisation having changed dramatically with colonisation and

¹⁵ The Indian residential schools of Canada were a network of 'residential' (boarding) schools for Aboriginal peoples of Canada (First Nations ['Indians'], Métis, and Inuit [formerly 'Eskimos']) funded by the Canadian government's Department of Indian Affairs, and administered by Christian churches, most notably the Catholic Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada (Miller, 2012).

¹⁶ The Indian Act is a Canadian statute that concerns registered Indians, their bands, and the system of Indian reserves. The Indian Act was a continuation in 1876 from an earlier act of the colonial government in 1859 by the Parliament of Canada under the provisions of Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867, which provides Canada's federal government exclusive authority to govern in relation to 'Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians' (Leslie, 2002).

moving from a time where everyone was important and had a role to a time when many youth lack defined direction (Kirmayer et al, 2003). This study also states that individual Indigenous identity increases self-esteem, health and wellbeing (Kirmayer et al, 2003). Canadian Indigenous adolescents no longer form their cultural identity from socialisation and traditional culture alone but also from a wide range of outside sources such as sport, school, internet and peers (Jensen, 2003).

Boledaras in a study exploring light-skinned Aboriginal identity found that light-skinned Aboriginal people highly valued their Aboriginal identity (2002) however also doubted themselves and their Aboriginal identity and thought it would be easier for them if they had darker skin. Participants stated that they felt they had the choice to remain anonymous and live white but actively chose to identify as Aboriginal. They were acutely sensitive about other people's judgment of their Aboriginality and had all been through various forms of racism and disbelief in regards to this identity. They also felt they were taken less seriously in terms of being able to speak about their cultural knowledge due to their light skin. The happiest and most satisfied of participants who were light-skinned had been raised from birth as Aboriginal people and had been able to retain strong links and family supports (Boledaras, 2002, pp. 145-147).

Some of the Aboriginal participants in Boledaras' study did not have or were unable to find family but they still identified as an Aboriginal person and claimed this identity, despite not having either family or community support to corroborate their identity (Boledaras, 2002). In a situation where a fair Aboriginal person does not appear to achieve being linked or accepted into the Aboriginal community, then the maintenance of an Aboriginal identity becomes very difficult (Boledaras, 2002).

Andersen (2014) writes about the Metis situation in Canada, stating they have been reduced to a position of "an in-between, incomplete, 'not-quite-people'" (p.6), seen as not quite Indian but not quite white. He also argues that describing Metis as mixed peoples reproduces the racialization central to Canada's colonialism (p. 6). In this respect, the Metis are tackling similar issues to light skinned Aboriginal people in Australia, discussing what it means to self-identify

and defining who is and who is not Metis. Andersen (2014) argues that “Metis are understood as mixed, diluted mixture of a deeper and more legitimate indigeneity, namely, that of our First Nation ancestors” (p.36). There is also an increasing desire for individuals in Canada to self-identify as Metis, although this seems to mean different (and in some cases opposing) things to different people (Andersen, 2014). Metis are different, however, to lighter skinned Aboriginal peoples in that they claim their own unique culture, language, historical origins and collective actions and often try to separate this uniqueness from the First Nations peoples (Andersen, 2014). Despite this, Witgen, 2012 (in Andersen, 2014) argues Metis identity is “a situational identity that existed within a larger indigenous social formation” (p.120) which therefore gives Metis political legitimacy and authenticity as Indigenous people.

As Metge (1995) observed, the Maori people of Aotearoa, New Zealand were seen as socially backward in previous generations. Although Maori were able to negotiate a treaty, they needed to fight to be taken seriously and for their culture to be respected. Maori still remain at a socio-economic disadvantage compared to non-Maori as well as being subject to racism and discrimination (Walker, 2002).

Durie (1994) and Williams (2000) describe three Maori subgroups. These are Maori people who understand their genealogy (whakapapa) and are familiar with their language (te reo Maori) and customs (tikanga Maori). The second are identified as bicultural who identify as Maori but also speak English and are familiar with dominant customs. The third are seen as marginalised or unconnected. These individuals often do not know their Maori heritage or culture and are seen to be culturally indistinguishable from Pakeha (Whites). New Zealand studies have also shown that psychological components of a strong Maori identity are relevant to an increased sense of wellbeing (Houkamau & Sibley, 2010).

Native American identity models are similar to those developed by theorists such as Phinney & Ong (2007). They include self-identification with Indigenous culture (Horse, 2001), connection to kinship/clan/genealogy/ancestors/land and place (Fogelson, 1998) and a worldview that is embedded in Indian ways and traditions (Horse, 2001). Acculturation and bicultural identities and behaviour are discussed in the American literature (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990-1991; Phinney

& Ong, 2007), with some even suggesting that those who identify with more than one culture are better adapted with more self-esteem (Weaver & Brave Heart, 1999).

It is noted in the literature that the subject of Aboriginal identity at a global level has barely been addressed (Markstrom, 2010). There is a lack of literature from overseas addressing Indigenous people and lack of community or kinship ties in regards to identity formation. Some research speaks about light skin African American blacks (Boladeras, 2002; Cunningham, 1997). The topic of light skin has not been addressed in Canada or New Zealand. The limited research that exists points to a different process of identity development for light-skin African American Blacks compared to Whites and darker-skin Blacks (Cunningham, 1997). This American research also points to racism and difficulties for light skin Blacks.

The problem for mulattos used to be 'not White enough' to be accepted in the White world, now the problem, sometimes, is 'too White' to be accepted in the Black world. Very light mulattos who could pass for White, frequently suffer from an extreme discrimination within the Negro world (Williamson, as cited in Cunningham, 1997, p.380).

Research states that these individuals have felt aware that they have been protected from the baser forms of racism and some have been embarrassed by what they perceive as a White privilege (Cunningham, 1997). Piper states that it is painful for African-American Blacks to tolerate White ancestry in the community due to the experience of enslavement, disinheritance and exploitation (1992). Cunningham suggests White people have an issue with acknowledging light skin Black people because if these people look White but are Black it might mean that they too have a Black ancestry, which may make them uncomfortable or ashamed (1997).

Light skin Blacks may have specific needs in therapy due to their identity being continually challenged by both Black and White. Light skin Blacks may encounter feelings of exclusion, rejection and isolation despite their choice to identify as Black. However, light skin Blacks bring many strengths to therapy with social workers, in that they have had to form loyalty, resiliency, courage and a strong commitment to their identity to continue to identify in their communities (Cunningham, 1997).

Chapter conclusion

For all young people, it is normal to question who am I? ; What am I doing here? Where am I going? For Aboriginal young people, the extra complications include having to ask how do I identify as an Aboriginal person? How will others see me as an Aboriginal person?

This chapter has reviewed the key literature in the areas of culture, cultural identity, racial identity, and Aboriginal cultural identity, identity formation for adolescents and adults. The core argument has been that culture and cultural identity are socially constructed. However, in Australia this has been impacted on by colonisation processes and policies.

Research has indicated that a strong cultural identity leads to better socio-economic outcomes, more success and a greater wellbeing. The gaps in the literature in Australia are great. There is not very much literature on either the development of a cultural identity and whether this has been proven to be a positive factor for Aboriginal people.

The following chapter will focus on the methodology, theoretical framework and methods of research. This will include examining the Indigenous Research Paradigm and include ways of privileging Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being.

Chapter 4: The research design

If research doesn't change you as people, then you haven't done it right (Wilson, 2008 p.135).

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter introduced key concepts that underpin the thesis such as identity, cultural identity and Aboriginal cultural identity. The core argument presented is that culture and cultural identity are socially constructed. In Australia it is important to recognise the extent to which Aboriginal cultural identity has been impacted by colonisation and introduced arguments about 'authentic' Aboriginal people. Colonisation and resulting policies have influenced the ability of some Aboriginal people to develop and forge their cultural identity, particularly if they have light skin, little or no community and/ or kinships ties. This chapter presents the Indigenous paradigm in which the research is located and outlines how Aboriginal knowing, doing and being have been developed (Martin, 2002). It explores how this framework can help to understand current identity formation for Aboriginal people, and presents the concept of decolonisation. The theories, methodology and methods which guided the research are presented in detail.

What is an Indigenous research paradigm?

That which the trees exhale, I inhale. That which I exhale, the tree inhales (Wilson, 2008 p. 57).

Australia's colonial history has disrupted the oral and organic transmission of Aboriginal cultural knowledge (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As Indigenous ways of knowing are predominantly internal, personal and experiential, some difficulties occur in adhering to the requirements of writing research such as a doctoral study, which reflect a Western paradigm. The key qualities of Indigenous research include: a holistic view of research; use of oral traditions such as stories, dreams and narrative stories; use of ethics that protect the participating community; use of cultural ways to gain and understand knowledge (e.g. learning circles); and an overall consideration of the ongoing impact of colonisation on the researcher, participants and University (Kovach, 2009). The use of an Aboriginal paradigm ;locates this research within a

cultural context, focused on change and empowerment for Aboriginal people, and aims to be flexible, portable, critical and user friendly (G. Smith, 1997). An Indigenous paradigm is commonly anti-colonial, promoting resistance, political integrity, and the privileging of Indigenous voices (Rigney, 1999).

The Indigenous¹⁷ paradigm is the overall framework in which I situated the present study. It impacts the ontology (world view), epistemology (how we know) methodology, and methods guiding the research. Within the thesis, the principles of an Indigenous paradigm reflect the unique nature of the Indigenous perspective on the world (knowing, doing and being) and the interconnectedness and inter-relational manner in which many Aboriginal people are brought up (discussed in greater depth below).

The Indigenous paradigm encourages a methodology that incorporates Indigenous voices and perspectives. It aims to achieve a positive outcome for Indigenous peoples. This paradigm has been developed by Indigenous academics and scholars worldwide who see a need for research that reflects Aboriginal ethics, worldviews, ideas, knowledges¹⁸ and systems. It is argued that only through the use of this paradigm can research be meaningful to, and for, Aboriginal people. The foundation of the Indigenous paradigm in research focuses on lived experiences grounded in knowledge, community and culture. This means this research is positioned within my own lived experience and knowledge of my community and culture.

Research paradigms usually incorporate four key concepts. The first is ethics (axiology) – that is how I act as a moral person; epistemology which is the nature of knowledge or how I know the world; ontology which is the nature of my reality, essentially what I see as authentic and the fundamental elements of my world; and finally methodology where I decide the best way for me to learn about my world (D. Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Sarantakos, 2005).

Wilson (2008) argues that an Indigenous paradigm is made up of an Indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Wilson, 2008). Each Indigenous person who becomes an Indigenous researcher brings with them a shared worldview, but also their own worldview

¹⁷ Indigenous is used to represent First Nations peoples from around the world.

¹⁸ The term knowledges is used to indicate that Indigenous people have varying and layered knowledge. There is also diversity of knowledge across areas, gender and ages.

(ontology), with their own understanding of knowledge and how they know what they know (epistemology or knowing), and an Indigenous axiology which is built on relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). Relational accountability means people who have relationships with each other (either as communities or within society), either informally or formally, hold each other to account (Warah, 2004). Deep and meaningful relationships are achieved through relational accountability and being authentic to oneself and others (Warah, 2004). Aboriginal people are accountable to each other, their ancestors, spirits, the environment and the community. The Indigenous paradigm involves cultural, spiritual, secular, intellectual, political, personal and public dimensions (Martin, 2002; K. Martin, 2011). It promotes learning and is both personal and holistic, incorporating spirits, the environment and the wider communities in which we live.

My way of proceeding within an Indigenous paradigm is to follow Australian Aboriginal scholar Karen Martin's (2002) framework that incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Karen Martin is the first Aboriginal scholar to take these concepts and explain them to researchers, academics and other readers. She has related the ways that many Aboriginal people have been taught and socialised and put these concepts into a framework that can be understood within research. These concepts fit into the Aboriginal worldview and many Aboriginal people seek to understand these ways within their Aboriginal identities. Later in the chapter, her framework is outlined, as well as the ways these concepts are adopted within the present study.

The research will be informed by the participants and the researcher's Aboriginal networks. Battiste (2002) states that Aboriginal epistemology is found in Indigenous philosophies, histories and ceremonies. It comes from the stories told to people about ways of knowing. An element of Aboriginal epistemology is Aboriginal talking circles, experiential learning, meditation, prayer, story-telling and other ways of expressing knowing and being (Battiste, 2002). The use of these different ways of knowing and being and the subsequent methods used to conduct qualitative research, set research conducted within an Indigenous paradigm apart from other approaches to qualitative research.

There is no one method or a set of guidelines that forms the Indigenous paradigm when doing research (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009). Researchers need to centre themselves and their world views and then come to know and understand differing theories and research from their own personal and community perspectives. After this they can use this knowledge for community and individual purposes (L. T. Smith, 2006). Often in the past, research has been carried out in Aboriginal communities by people that do not share Indigenous worldviews, values or concepts. Being reflective and aware of Aboriginal histories and diversity enables the Indigenous researcher to contribute to the decolonisation of research with Indigenous people (Nakata in Rigney, 1999). Rigney (1999) argues that using Indigenous philosophies, ideas and imagery in research is fundamental to 'Indigenism' emerging. Indigenism is a theory and practice which places the struggle for human rights for indigenous peoples at the center of its work (Niezen, 2003). A major idea of Indigenism is that until these rights are addressed adequately, society will remain colonised and oppressive towards Indigenous peoples.

It is critical to respect the many ways of knowing, doing and being that emerge in Indigenous research. Indigenous research is diverse, centrally grounded, and based on Indigenous experiences of everyday life (Walter, 2010). In this way, Indigenous research can: be seen as a process for examining experiences of colonisation; add to or inform the dialogue of self-determination; and work towards addressing racism and marginalisation by focusing on intergenerational trauma and building community confidence (Rigney, 1997). Indigenous people bring their own perspectives to the research by having Indigenous philosophies, values and beliefs (Wilson, 2011). Indigenous people are best situated to judge how the research will be conducted, analysed and presented and what methods and forms of expression will be most valid (Wilson, 2008). Standard academic writing may not be able to express Indigenous ideas in a way that is respectful of their intent. This thesis will tackle this difficulty and incorporate Indigenous ideas in an academically acceptable way.

Wilson (2008) argues that the researcher must interpret knowledge respectfully and aim to continue building on relationships that have been established. He argues that Indigenous researchers will have a vested interest in the integrity of the methodology and the usefulness of the results if they wish their research to be used in the Indigenous community.

Aboriginal people are always accountable to those with whom they have relationships and fulfilling your role and obligations to those relationships, within the research context, is fundamental. In addition, being accountable to those relationships is not only part of the ethical worldview that fits Aboriginal researchers; it also makes the researcher part of the research (Wilson, 2008). It is also important that the results of the research improve policy and services for Aboriginal peoples. Pedagogy must be developed to make this way of knowing accessible and transferable to the researcher, community and readers of the research, so that it can be fully appreciated.

Fundamentally, Indigenous research is a dynamic system that is continually responding to the researcher, the research, the participants, land and spiritual essence around us (Barnhardt, 2005). It embodies a web of relationships and teaches those involved in it respect, knowledge, responsibility and the value of each relationship. There is no other paradigm that can regard activities such as ceremony, meditation and prayer as useful and valid research processes. The unique way the Indigenous paradigm values all forms of Aboriginal knowing, doing and being, makes it an important foundation for this research.

In responding to the development of an Indigenous research paradigm the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) propose six key themes to underpin the research process in Aboriginal communities. These are: reciprocity, respect, equality, survival and protection, and responsibility (which are encompassed) by spirit and integrity (NHMRC, 2003, 2006). The NHMRC guidelines highlight the need for mutual obligation, which includes the involvement of the Aboriginal community in all aspects of the research process, and the identification of the proposed benefits of the research for the Aboriginal community that is going to be involved (NHMRC, 2003). These guidelines were used in designing and undertaking the research.

Aboriginal knowing, being and doing

The time of learning in the Aboriginal world never stops. It goes on and on (K. Martin, 2011, p. 9).

Scholar Karen Martin (2008) discusses core concepts taught in Aboriginal socialisation which she names as ways of knowing, doing and being. If a person chooses to engage in their identity and

culture as an Aboriginal person, then they will be expected to understand, know and act in these ways; making this framework core to the present study.

Ways of knowing

Ways of knowing encompass what Aboriginal people believe is real in the world and how they know about their beliefs. Ways of knowing include entities that can be thought of as spirits of Baiame¹⁹, and include all forms of life of the land which include animals, plants, waterways, skies, climate and spiritual places (Martin, 2011; Martin, 2008). There is strong relatedness to ancestors, creators and spirits. These ways of knowing relate to ancestral systems and all entities of Country (Martin, 2002). Aboriginal people teach their ways of knowing through listening, sensing, viewing, reviewing, watching, waiting, observing, exchanging, sharing, conceptualising, assessing, modelling, engaging, and applying, in individual, group, community and spiritual levels (K. Martin, 2011; Martin, 2008). It is more than just teaching information or facts, it broadens into learning in context (or in certain ways at certain times and ages).

In Aboriginal learning, no one person is taught everything. There are people who have specific roles. For example, men and women have different 'knowledges'. There are varying types of knowledge that have different levels. For example, what you would teach young children about the Law differs from what an adult would learn. This knowledge helps determine roles in the world, who we are, how we look after our country, bring up our children, work in our communities, and relate to each other (Ways of Being) (Martin, 2002 ; Martin, 2008).

The core conditions of ways of knowing, are to know as fully as possible, who your people are, where your country is, and how you are related to these entities (Martin, 2002). This means to know your story and how it is related to other's stories, both the individual and the communal. Through these stories your identity unfolds (Martin, 2002). A condition of Ways of Knowing is to know the stories of the present and how these are related to the past and equally to the future (Martin, 2002). Stories can be based on people, land or animals, and can just be stories or can be deeper lessons about human behaviour.

¹⁹ Baiame (Baayami or Baayama) is the Creator God and Sky Father in the dreaming of several language groups (e.g. Kamilaroi, Eora, Darkinjung, and Wiradjuri), of south-east Australia.

Stories maybe for and about teaching, entertainment, praying, personal expression, history and power. They are to be listened to, remembered, thought about, meditated on. Stories are not frivolous or meaningless; no one tells a story without intent or purpose. A person's word is closely bound up with the story that she or he tells. A person's word belongs to that person and in some instances can be viewed as being that person (Weber Pillwax in Battiste 2002, p.25).

Way of Knowing are a lifetime learning process but has points of emphasis, including childhood, young adulthood and adulthood (Martin, 2002). Since relatedness is embedded in our worldview, Ways of Knowing help access the underlying meanings in our stories and understand our relatedness to the Creators and Ancestors, the spirits and other entities (Martin, 2002).

Relatedness is sustained across great distances through Story lines, ceremony lines, trade, and marriage amongst Aboriginal groups (Martin, 2002). An individual experiences the self as part of others and these others are also part of the self; this is learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, cooperation and social memory (Martin, 2002). The sense of relatedness that has been sustained by past colonial practices can be found in the questions: Who are your people? Where are you from? (Martin, 2002; Martin, 2008). These questions are essential to relatedness as they form connectedness, kindredness (Dudgeon et al., 2002), define relationships, and shape how we do business in the world; named and regarded as our Ways of Being. Relatedness is key to this research and its efforts to understand if Aboriginal people form this type of relatedness and kindredness when they have lighter skin and little kinship or community connections.

For the purposes of my research, it will be important to find out whether and how individual participants have integrated Ways of knowing, in terms of Aboriginal values, stories and relatedness, into their identity.

Ways of being

All living things, be they mammals, birds, reptiles, insects are our sisters and brothers and therefore we must protect them. We are their custodians. We not only share with them, we also guard them (Martin, 2002, p. 76).

Martin (2008) states Aboriginal people believe we are as much a part of the world and everything within it as it is a part of us. In this way reciprocal relationships exist with all entities (Martin, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Within this relationship, Aboriginal people were taught roles and responsibilities to care for each and every entity, capturing what is meant by ways of being.

Once an individual knows and accepts they are part of the world and it is a part of them, deeper meanings of relatedness develop. Ways of being teach how to be respectful, responsible and accountable (Martin, 2002; Martin, 2008). Individuals are taught to show respect for self and also for all living and non-living things. For example, respect the sea and she will respond by giving her many foods (Martin, 2002; Wilson, 2008). By staying in relation, harmony and balance with all things, survival is ensured. Accountability encompasses the consequences of doing or not doing actions which uphold relatedness.

An individual, then, is taught responsibilities and how to uphold and fulfil these responsibilities. There is more to life than ourselves, wealth, commodities or even careers. Individuals are taught that without fulfilling responsibilities to self, families and mother earth they have nothing and are no-one. This is echoed through the teaching of the Law (Uncle Stan Grant, Personal Communication). By being accountable, Aboriginal people protect and maintain relatedness to the self and the entities, which makes the culture sustainable. Aboriginal people therefore become accountable in their actions, thoughts, non-actions and non-thoughts to ensure relatedness is not damaged (Martin, 2002, p. 78).

Ways of being can evolve and change as people and entities move from one life stage to another. What is expected from children develops and grows for adults. Even though our ways of being have been disrupted by colonisation, Aboriginal people immediately set up interrelated connection to each other when we meet. This has been referred to as kindredness or connectedness (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006).

Ways of being are there to make sure that what we have learned and know is applied with respect, responsibility and accountability in a range of contexts and situations (Martin, 2002). They are the realization that “ritual, myth, vision, art, and learning the art of relationships in particular environments all facilitate the health and wholeness of individuals, families and

communities” (Battiste, 2002, p.30). This applies not only to the Country you come from but across Countries. This then becomes Ways of Doing.

Being raised and taking up socialized roles and responsibilities makes Ways of Doing clear, with the person involved knowing they are accountable to everyone else. How then do individuals who have not necessarily been taught these roles and responsibilities learn them? Do they understand the depth of the accountability and relatedness and how do they make sense of this? These are some of the questions that I wish to address in my research.

Ways of doing

Ways of Doing are a way of expressing our Ways of Knowing and Ways of Being. They are expressed through languages, art, imagery, technology, traditions, ceremonies, land management practices, social organization and social control (Martin, 2002; Martin, 2008).

The Ways of Doing also have different expectations and roles depending on age and gender. For example, before colonization women were seen as having responsibility as nurturers of children and men had responsibilities as protectors and food gatherers. Ways of Doing express individual, group and community identities and give us roles and actions in the world. They involve performing cultural practices such as ceremony, fishing, camping, talking, walking, dancing and singing. Ways of Doing encourages interrelation to each and the spirit of the land. By doing these activities it is easier to incorporate the ways of being and knowing (Martin, 2002).

In everything we do (physical, social, economic and intellectual) there is an interaction with the Dreamtime stories and the entities. A good example of this is Aboriginal people interacting with the weather or an animal to interpret things or learn things (e.g. those ants moving their eggs means the rain is coming, that Willy Wag tail bird is bringing a message). It is about immersing oneself in the knowing and being and then interpreting it into the doing (applying it into context). This is done both consciously and unconsciously on a daily basis. Aboriginal people are often taught to observe and reflect on culture. These processes are regarded as ways of doing. Ways of Doing serve to maintain respect and protect relatedness (Martin, 2002, p.80). I adopt

the theory of knowing, doing and being because it has been my lens and experience growing up, as well as being relevant for, and adding depth of understanding to, the research topic.

Using an Indigenous paradigm, with the ways of knowing, being and doing, makes space in the Western world of academia and research for Indigenous cultural knowledge systems (Rigney, 2011). An Indigenous paradigm stresses an Indigenous point of view and understanding of the world. Using Indigenous methodologies allows Indigenous scholars to understand research differently, to present research in an Indigenous friendly manner (a way that Indigenous people can understand and make useful), and to promote our knowledges to Western peoples and systems (Nakata, 1998). As a result, Indigenous methodologies often focus on community and relational knowledge (Wilson, 2011).

This research will use the Indigenous research paradigm, drawing on the general principles of respect, reciprocity, protection, responsibility, accountability, equality and dissemination (NHMRC, 2006). Research needs to be real; researchers need to be present by listening deeply, privileging lived experience and engaging in the relationships that develop on a number of complex levels. Porsanger (2004) states that the researcher must allow methodologies to grow from the ethics and metaphors that evolve in the process or journey. The Indigenous paradigm used in the present study was conceptualised to suit my cultural set of circumstances, interests, experiences, location and vocation (my standpoint).

There is currently no Western model of research that fits exactly with the Indigenous research paradigm (Rigney, 2011). I have therefore adapted the learnings of several approaches and theories to help me understand how to approach the research and the participants within this paradigm. This included the use of a qualitative methodology and a narrative approach for the interviews and data analysis. In addition, a multi-theoretical approach - framed by the Aboriginal knowing, doing and being (an Indigenous world view), as well as social work and identity theories - was adopted to frame the analysis. The use of multiple theories assist researchers to understand the multiple dimensions of the research topic. The theories used in this thesis allowed for an Indigenous research paradigm to frame the whole project, alongside

the use of social work and identity theories to generate the research approach, sensitise the analysis and broaden the study's findings.

Decolonisation

Colonization has impacted Aboriginal lives. Chapter 2 highlighted events in Australia's history that have impacted deeply upon identity formation for Aboriginal people due to this process of colonization. Poka Laenui outlines five stages of colonization and six stages of decolonization (P. H. Laenui & Burgess, 2007). These stages help us to understand what colonization is, how it came about and how to begin to unpack and dismantle it.

There are five proposed stages of colonization. The first is denial and withdrawal (P. H. Laenui & Burgess, 2007). This is where Indigenous people's cultural and moral values are denied. For example in Australia, Aboriginal people were deemed to be flora and fauna and seen as a people that were destined to die out (Tatz, 1979). The second stage is destruction and eradication (P. H. Laenui & Burgess, 2007). This is evident in Australia through murder, massacres and other atrocities aimed to eradicate Aboriginal people. Dispossession of land, movement onto missions and reserves, the destruction of families and forced assimilation policies, were also used in Australia in this stage (W. Anderson, 2005; Attwood & Foster, 2003).

The third stage is denigration/belittlement and insult (P. H. Laenui & Burgess, 2007). Identity issues are particularly prevalent today due to the destruction of specific knowledges, language and practices. These practices have made Aboriginal culture seem without value, to be replaced with the colonizer's values, languages and practices. The fourth stage is surface accommodation/tokenism (P. H. Laenui & Burgess, 2007). This is where the remnants of the surviving culture are given tokenistic regard by the other. For example, certain aspects of Aboriginal culture are showcased such as their art or dance. The last stage is transformation/exploitation (P. H. Laenui & Burgess, 2007). This is where the surviving culture is exploited by the dominant colonial society. The largest form of exploitation has come from violating, denying and changing individual and collective identities. This has impacted on wellbeing in a negative way and leads to disempowered and dispirited peoples (Robertson 2000).

While it can be argued that Aboriginal people are no longer being actively colonized, the relationships, mindsets, values and ripple effects of colonization still continue in the present. These relationships impact our lives daily. Colonisation has become part of our collective history (Personal Communications, Sue Green²⁰). Colonisation is a historically layered event that intersects profoundly on the personal and the political, and creates conflict as Aboriginal people navigate between two very distinctive worlds.

While colonisation has come to affect every aspect of Aboriginal people's lives, Western science, in particular, first subjugated and then discredited Aboriginal peoples and their knowledge systems (Kovach, 2009). Darwin's evolutionary theory proposed that life evolved slowly and incrementally, with the superior forms of life prevailing and the inferior dying out (Darwin, 2001). Survival of the fittest, a Darwinian concept, became a means for justifying racist policies and acts (Deloria, 2002); including the genocidal policy of Stolen Generations (as discussed in chapter 2). Science was used as a weapon to enforce a colonialist agenda and to force Aboriginal people to capitulate.

Within European-oriented philosophy and knowledge, in particular science, principles based on logic were seen as most legitimate, with this 'more legitimate' knowledge used to enforce the ideas of the colonisers. Aboriginal people were excluded from this process of knowledge construction. Western knowledge emphasised evidence, testing and generalisations, contradicting the Aboriginal emphasis on integrated, holistic approaches. As discussed in chapter 2, researchers have begun to unravel the influence of White privilege over alternate, and often marginalised, ways of knowing (Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009).

As Rigney (1997) argues, researchers who use an Indigenous paradigm are paving the way for decolonized research. What does decolonisation mean and how does an individual embark on this process? This is important to understand when undertaking Indigenous research. This section outlines the meaning of decolonisation and how it can be linked to research and individuals. It is argued that the researcher, the research participants, the university, and the very process of writing a thesis, are part of colonisation and have been colonised. For the

²⁰ Personal communication with Sue Green occurred over last 16 years and is therefore hard to date

purposes of decolonising future generations of people, academics, and communities, the researcher needs to understand colonisation, the processes of colonisation, and how this may affect the research, the participants, and the world the research is situated in. From here, a critique of where the research sits can be established and theories of decolonisation applied.

The five stages of decolonisation as outlined by Laenui (2000) are as follows. The first is rediscovery and recovery. This stage involves Indigenous people actively reconnecting with their history and practices. In this way an individual can reconnect with a renewed sense of their identity. It is argued that knowledge rediscovered in this phase can add to the decolonisation of the self. The second stage is mourning, where an individual experiences feelings of anger and injustice in order for healing to begin. This is followed by a dreaming phase. This phase is inclusive and involves true consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal peoples. It is a time to evaluate what has occurred and to explore options for the future. This phase cannot be rushed as building connections of trust and respect are crucial. Following dreaming comes commitment to change. This requires a personal commitment to the process of decolonisation, followed through by social action and participation. In the final action phase, proactive steps take place (P. Laenui & Burgess, 2000). Muller (2010) has suggested a sixth stage be added to this framework - the healing/forgiveness stage - where Aboriginal people can reclaim their wellbeing and self-care, and emerge healed. She places this phase after mourning and before Dreaming.

Decolonisation of processes and knowledge is personally embodied within the lives of Indigenous researchers. Graham Smith (1997, 2003) speaks extensively about the decolonising approach, built on critical theory's analyses of power differences between groups (such as between Aboriginal people and White people), and its role in structural change. He argues that decolonisation must be at the forefront of the Indigenous researcher's mind due to the persisting colonial influences on Indigenous representation and voice.

Decolonisation then gives Indigenous people back their voices and advocates their representation within research at every level. Such an approach, gives research back to the community in a way that will be meaningful for them. Use of Indigenous ways of knowledge

such as storying, life history and unstructured interviews all aim to give power and control back to the participants and their communities.

Decolonizing research then, is not simply about challenging or making refinements to qualitative research. It is a much broader but still purposeful agenda for transforming the institution of research, the deep underlying structures and taken for granted ways of organizing, conducting, and disseminating research and knowledge (Smith, 2006, p. 88).

For the Indigenous researcher, decolonisation requires a critical self-reflection with a hyper-consciousness about issues such as racism, power, Whiteness, and the valuing of Aboriginal worldviews. It comes with a heightened sense of responsibility associated with the wider political nature of the work, but also a personal responsibility to your own people within the research.

As Kovach argues 'the purpose of decolonisation is to create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed' (Kovach, 2009, p. 85). Decolonisation is more than simply placing an Indigenous person into a position previously held by colonisers. It is about a personal re-evaluation followed by political, social, economic and judicial changes at a structural level. New structures need to be formed to house and value both philosophies and peoples.

The stages of colonisation and decolonisation, and the differences between them, are important to understand when speaking to any individual, particularly an Aboriginal person. Many people are unable to name how they are feeling because they have not been educated about these stages. The research participants may have been feeling and sensing this as well and a decolonisation framework provided me with a language to help name what they may be experiencing and understand it at a deeper level. In this study, some participants were aware of the decolonisation process whilst others had started to articulate it in their own way without the framework surrounding it. This may provide some important insights for social work and help to build knowledge in the social work field. The process of uncovering, identifying and naming previously hidden social practices surrounding Aboriginal identity, as achieved in this research, will help in the work of decolonisation.

Acculturation theory

Acculturation theory, discussed in detail in Chapter 2, explains the process of cultural and psychological change that results from meeting a different culture. A key writer in the area, psychologist John Berry, referred to acculturation as the new behaviors and strategies that individuals use after cultural contact with another cultural group (Berry, 1999). Acculturation theory was used to inform the present study, as it helped to understand how individuals view and respond to acculturation. It was important to try to understand where the participants sat in relation to acculturation (for example had they assimilated due to skin colour), and to have a framework with which to analyse the responses. This theoretical lens was of further value within the present study as there is little current research on how Aboriginal people respond to and understand acculturation.

Methodology

This section outlines the qualitative nature of the research and why this approach was best suited to the study. The extent to which I am an insider/outsider within the research is discussed, as well as the recruitment of participants. In addition, I provide a reflection on this process in order to be transparent and reinforce the sensitive nature of this topic.

Qualitative research

‘Kangk nanam, nyiing inam’ the idea of a common ground or interface between the old and new way that keeps cultures alive and in motion (Wal Wal Ngallametta in Yunkaporta 2009, p.27).

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) speak about the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied. The researcher can only benefit from ongoing relationships with the participants in order to encourage complex and varied responses (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Qualitative research is concerned with exploring the meanings people attach to their experiences (Alston & Bowles, 2003). It emphasises description of data and aims to build new explanations or theories. Qualitative research is naturalistic, draws on multiple methods that

respect the humanity of the participants in the study, focuses on the context provided by participants and is fundamentally interpretive (Bolt, 2009).

The strength of qualitative research is that it allows people to be studied in their natural and social settings and therefore allows naturally occurring data to be collected (Pere, 2006). This form of research allows the researcher to be more experientially and actively involved with the research. Qualitative research is often used when there is little pre-existing knowledge about a topic and a researcher is trying to gain an understanding of the sensitive or complex issues which may arise (Bolt, 2009; Durie inPere, 2006). As there is little known about how Aboriginal people develop and understand their cultural identity, qualitative research is appropriate to explore this complex and possibly sensitive area.

The literature suggests that social work research should use human tools including the researcher's personal experiences as a research instrument (Van Heugten, 2004). In fact, the literature 'rejects the concept of knowledge that cannot be attributed to the experience of the individual' (Van Heugten, 2004, p.7) and proposes a methodology containing passion and commitment. In this respect it is impossible to remove oneself and one's influence as the researcher on the study; instead one must acknowledge and be conscious of their impact.

Qualitative research then is intricately linked to the Indigenous paradigm and to the Ways of knowing, doing and being. It is also a methodology which facilitates the gathering of people's voices and their experiences of identity formation, making it a valuable approach to gathering data for this research.

An Indigenous narrative approach

Within qualitative research there is an accepted narrative approach for data analysis (discussed later in the chapter). An Indigenous narrative approach is different, however, to the narrative therapy proposed by White and Epston (1990) as it uses Aboriginal ways of doing such as yarning (Bacon, 2013) and storytelling, but is not undertaken to provide therapy to the person telling the story.

Aboriginal people have transmitted knowledge about land, history, kinship, Law and many other aspects of their culture through oral traditions such as storytelling (or Narrative). This form of oral dialogue was used to pass on important information. From an early age, storytelling can be used to educate children, explain how the land came to be the way it is, give roles to animals, objects and people, show where to find food and drink and tell people how they are expected to behave and why (Wilson, 2008).

Human beings are immersed in narrative; telling, listening to, and recognising their stories in others. Stories or narratives are a part of living and contribute to what make humans sociable. When speaking about how narratives are structured, sociologists introduce the concepts of 'who, when, where and what of the story'. This is followed by the sequence named the 'then-what-happened' followed by a 'so what?' Finally there is a resolution to the story or a 'what-finally-happened', a signal the story is over for now (Sandelowski, 1991).

Within research, narrative perspectives mean information is gathered in consultation with the research participant who determines what information is used and how (Gorman & Toombs, 2009). A collaborative approach between participants and researchers is pivotal to the Indigenous research paradigm. This approach allows the participant to decide what is most important to them and how they will represent themselves in the research (Elliott, 2005).

Wilson (2008) defines an Indigenous narrative inquiry as a way of connecting events, actions, and experiences. While there is no one way to carry out the narrative framework, Wilson identifies three main strategies to increase validity. These strategies are: to use multiple sources of evidence; to establish evidence; and to draft a case study to be reviewed and discussed by the participants in the study (Wilson, 2008). To increase the validity of the present study, two sources of data - media analysis as well as participants experiences – were used.

In line with a narrative approach participants were encouraged to tell their story in their own time and in their own way. As a result, some interviews took two to three meetings and ranged in time from one to five hours. The participants were asked to label their own theme about the formation of their Aboriginal identity, allowing them the opportunity to have a say in the

analysis conducted later. The research interview was viewed as a conversation where shifts and themes could easily be explored or returned to.

Stories or Narrative are central to an Indigenous methodology. They are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, practices and knowledge that will assist the collective. They function as an intergenerational knowledge transfer (Cruikshank, 2003), making them a natural and valuable approach within this thesis. My aim was for individual interviews to focus on the participant's narrative around cultural identity and tease out the positive and negative influences on the formation of cultural identity.

Insider/outsider research

An insider researcher is someone who is seen to belong to the community they are researching (Pere, 2006). The Indigenous paradigm takes the position that the Indigenous researcher not only cannot, but should not, be separate to their research. This is because humans take cultural, social and political values into the research, and failure to acknowledge their presence allows them to unknowingly impact the research. It is of note that I am a fair-skinned Aboriginal woman. Within my research I needed to consider my background, linkages, age, gender, status, political connections and base, organisational connections, work (both paid and unpaid) and whether I respected Aboriginal protocol and process (Fredericks, 2008). I am both researcher and researched (subject and object) (Paradies 2006a).

Using cultural supervision, participant's feedback and feedback from my supervisor, my intention was to be reflexive and critical within my research, considering the impact I was having on the study. Having set up supportive systems and mentoring, I kept a reflective journal to explore insights and issues and discussed these regularly with supervisors and significant community members.

Insider research has to be as ethical, respectful, reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community, but has a different set of roles and relationships, status and position (Smith, 2006). My approach to this was to be transparent, to prioritise the participant and to listen to them with humility and curiosity. Most of all, I tried to be respectful to the participants at all points of the research.

Discussions in the literature, mainly by anthropologists and sociologists, around the topic of insider/outsider research have assumed that the researcher was either an insider or an outsider and each status carried certain advantages and disadvantages (Merriam et al., 2001). More recent discussions have shown that this area is complex and multifaceted and needs to take into account an individual's race, class and gender when understanding the dynamics of researching one's culture.

Some assumptions of being an insider researcher have been that the insider researcher will have easy access to participants, the ability to ask more meaningful questions, to read non-verbal cues, have a deeper understanding of shared responses and lived experience, and have a deeper understanding of similar cultures (Merriam et al., 2001). On the other hand, being an insider can also be regarded as compromising the integrity of the research by being too close to the subject, having biases about what answers might be found, and not being able to ask provocative questions (Merriam et al., 2001). Recent research has shown that these debates around the potential downsides of insider research are limited. In manage these concerns insider researchers must take into account their pre-understanding, role duality, positionality and power (Merriam et al., 2001).

An important question to answer is what am I an insider of? As discussed, culture can and does change. Although I am an insider because I identify as Aboriginal there are also a set of variables that are outside of my control such as my gender, age and current social class. The amount of contact I have had with the Aboriginal community will also influence the amount of 'insiderness' I have with each participant (Narayan, 1993). For example, some women may see me as an insider because we share the same gender while male participants may on the same basis regard me as an outsider. This is referred to in the literature as positionality. In reality any number of factors can and will affect how much of an insider I am with each participant and therefore how much I perceive and am perceived to be given insider or outsider status.

The insider/ outsider literature speaks about inequalities in research. When working with arguably the most disadvantaged group in Australia, where will power exist based between the researcher and researched? Power is often subtly negotiated (Merriam et al., 2001). Issues such

as where and when interviews were held could be negotiated but what information was shared was up to each participant. Age was also a factor in this research as in the Aboriginal community people who are older are often placed in a position where they are portrayed as more experienced and more deserving of status than younger people. In this way the power dynamics between me and the younger people I interviewed may have had a cultural element. To counteract some of these issues, it was important to focus on how I encouraged people to tell their stories.

In the past, it was thought that the insider had better access to the meanings and experiences of their cultural group (Merton, 1978). It was argued that the outsider could not understand or reflectively analyse meanings in the same way. The pre-understanding of inside researchers provides them with knowledge, insights and experience before they engage in the research (Gummesson, 2000). In this instance it would mean the knowledge of everyday life experiences both forming my Aboriginal identity and once formed. It would include knowledge of Aboriginal jargon and language (or lingo), what topics are considered legitimate, sensitive and even taboo to talk about and who to turn to if I needed information of any kind (Coghlan, 2007). I drew on previous literature, Aboriginal community members, and my own experiences when formulating interview questions. I was also confident that I was able to explore these areas of inquiry with Aboriginal people sensitively, freely, and without making them suspicious or wary of me and my motives for doing this research. This suspicion of researchers reflects Aboriginal people being one of the most researched peoples in the world (McCorquodale, 1986), mostly by non-Aboriginal people. Researchers often came into communities and did not engage in a respectful, collaborative process, causing research and researchers to gain a negative reputation within Aboriginal communities (Gilbert, 2001).

There are, however, some disadvantages to having insider knowledge which must be managed. Firstly, I had to ensure I remained open and curious and make sure I probed as much as an outsider would, rather than presuming I knew the answers to any of the questions I asked. Secondly, I had to be reflective, rigorous and introspective about all phases of the research to make sure I was exposing my pre-formed thoughts, assumptions and understandings of the issues to scrutiny (Kanuha, 2000).

There are documented strategies to address being an insider researcher. They include planning, evaluation, reflecting, and continually inquiring about the research itself, and the processes around the research (Coghlan, 2007). An insider researcher needs to have rigor of method and data (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). It is important to make sure the researcher is aware of themselves and the process, through reflexivity and reflecting on responses in all phases of the process. This is an area for supervision, peer discussion and deconstructing comments (what resonates with me and why? did I ask all of the probing questions?). It is also important that the process of data analysis involves using a good coding process, reviewed with a measure of transparency. In the end, good qualitative research is about making sure that what is occurring for participants is communicated in a way that is appropriate and understood by the reader (Ely et al 1997).

Ethical issues

It is necessary for this research to be ethical and to follow clear ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of Aboriginal people and to respect their past histories of misuse of power on all levels.

The best one can do is to consider the ethical and political issues in asking a particular research question, determine the areas of concern prior to the research, take into account professional standards that have been established and then consider the ethics of the entire research process as an individual case with its own social and political ramifications (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewall, & Alexander, 1995, pp. 245-246).

Due to a long history of misrepresentation and harm done to Aboriginal people through research from various professions and peoples, ethical guidelines have been developed to protect them in any further research activities. McAullay, Griew and Anderson (2002, p. 9) note that 'guidelines tend to cover ... consultation, community involvement, cultural appropriateness ... data and information ownership ... collaboration, consent, involvement and feedback' as vital parts of any research with Aboriginal people. Added to these suggestions are the broad ethical concerns informed by Social Work practice such as confidentiality, duty of care and informed consent. As the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies guidelines state:

It is essential that Indigenous people be participants in any research project that concerns them, sharing an understanding of the aims and methods of the research, and sharing the results of this work...founded on respect for Indigenous peoples' inherent right to self-determination, and to control and maintain their culture and heritage (AIATSIS, 2000, p. 2).

These guidelines were adhered to through the use of a cultural supervisor, thesis supervisor and the use of the Australian Catholic University ethics committee.

One ethical issue arose around wanting to speak to people who self-identify as having light skin, little community or kinship ties. Participation in such a research project that explores Aboriginal identity may be shameful, painful or awkward. This required me to be sensitive and respectful of participants and to be aware of their right to confidentiality. I also had a referral system in place for counselling for individuals if they became distressed during interviews due to the sensitivity of the issues discussed. None of the participants took up this offer.

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics (2010) outlines specific responsibilities for social workers undertaking research. It states that social workers will honour Aboriginal knowledge and conduct their research within community protocols (AASW, 2010). In line with the Indigenous Research Paradigm, the AASW promotes individual and community participation. The AASW discusses the importance of respect, consent and privacy in research and expects social workers to think through any possible consequences before they begin to engage participants. This reflexive practice is a strength of social workers and ensures that the social worker remains professional throughout the research.

The AASW (2010) supports the Indigenous research paradigm by recommending dissemination of all research findings to the participants, communities and applicable bodies. In this way the researcher demonstrates their attention to social justice and inequities and acknowledges the participants and contributors to the research, allowing them to critique and comment on the researcher's analysis before final publication. Lastly, it is important to disclose any issues that may influence the researcher or the findings in any way, a process strongly supported by having regular supervision throughout the research.

Participants and sampling

During original research planning it was anticipated that research participants would be young people aged between 18 and 25. This was due to my thinking (resulting from my learning about identity development at university through theorists such as Erikson) that identity and identity formation would occur in young people and this process could then be vocalised in early adulthood. Once the research was advertised, however, people over this age contacted me to ask if they could be involved. Thinking about this and talking it through with the governance group and my cultural supervisor, I decided that I was in no position to deny anyone the opportunity to talk about this subject and their feelings or ideas and consequently applied for ethics clearance to cover anyone aged over 18. The participants had originally come from across NSW and Queensland and had lived in both rural and urban situations. Fifteen participants were interviewed; ten women aged from their early twenties to forties and five men from their early twenties to forties participated. An additional two participants choose not to go forwards with interviews after expressing initial interest. After the twelfth interview it was clear that there was much overlap in the themes emerging from the interviews and new ideas were not emerging. A final three interviews were conducted to check that saturation had been reached. After the fifteenth interview it was determined that subsequent interviews were not required.

Recruitment

To begin recruitment three Universities (The Australian Catholic University, Wollongong University and Newcastle University) were contacted and asked to distribute an email to all identified Aboriginal students within their Universities. These universities were chosen for convenience as they were accessible to the researcher, and I had community ties (knowing Aboriginal workers and employees) within each of the universities to vouch for my research. These students would have had to identify themselves as Aboriginal to be known as such to the University. The Aboriginal centre at each university was also contacted and the research was discussed. All centres supported the research and could also talk to students about the research as required. An advertisement was placed in the *Koori Mail* and *National Indigenous Times* asking for participants who identified as Aboriginal and light skin with little or no community or family links to contact the researcher if interested in participating. These two recruitment

strategies meant those who contacted me to be part of the research were likely to have an understanding and ability to articulate aspects of their Aboriginal identity.

Interview questions

The broad interview questions were developed from reading and thinking about acculturation theory (Berry, 1997) and identity formulation models. I then formulated questions focusing on how I could get answers as to how participants had been able to formulate their Aboriginal identity. The way I formulated and asked the questions was influenced by a discussion with a colleague who was utilising the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) by Wengraf and Chamberlain (2006) to consider what a “narrative” approach might mean for Aboriginal academics and researchers. Guided by the BNIM model I tried to be non-directive in my first two interviews. This did not lead to meaningful or focused discussion and I subsequently decided the participants needed some direction. From then on I used the research questions as a guide but was much more interactive with participants, leading to participants being more open and responsive. The success of this approach was evidenced by the third interview taking more than three hours and all subsequent interviews taking more time than the first two. All interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the participants. Some interviews were carried out in person, if I could travel to them, and others were carried out over the telephone. I asked permission to reinterview participants once I had completed the media analysis to discuss how this related to them and to their experiences. Five participants contributed to this. The information from these secondary interviews is discussed in the section in Chapter 6 about sensitivity of the research.

The questions asked in interviews were broad and open to allow for the participants’ narrative to develop, as well as some more specific areas of questioning that were seen to be important processes in the identity literature. These more directed areas of questioning included : how does identity develop?, what helps or hinders the development of identity?, how do the research participants think, feel and act while involved in the identity formulation process?, and what consequences are there for participants once they have or have not identified with an Aboriginal identity? (Charmaz, 2003;Charmaz, 2006, pp46-55).

Recruitment of participants ceased when the findings/themes reached saturation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that theoretical saturation occurs when the researcher sees similar instances (themes or topics) repeatedly in the data. From this, the researcher concludes it seems likely that no new data will be found.

Data analysis

Within this qualitative study (using an Indigenous paradigm), data was both inductively and deductively analysed. Because there has been limited attention to understanding how light skinned Aboriginal people develop and define their inductive approach to the analysis was used to answer the research questions. Patton (2005) defines inductive analysis as one where the patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data rather than categories or previous understanding be imposed on the analysis (p. 306). This process allowed for categories and concepts to develop to answer the research questions. The coding and the generation (and interpretation) of broader patterns in the data was an appropriate approach that enabled a substantive description of how participants developed their Aboriginal identity.

The second stage of the data analysis was more deductive in that the key ideas of the previous identity research were tested with these data and used to sensitive the analysis to compare this sample to other research findings on identity development. These analytic processes could therefore both allow for the voices of participants to be heard as well as provide insights into the explanatory power of existing elements of identity development theory.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in the data. In this case, how people developed their cultural identity. Themes were developed both deductively, through knowledge gained from the literature review, the media analysis and by using the interview schedule as a reference point, and inductively, as themes and common experiences were identified from the interview transcripts (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005).

Both the interview transcripts and the media stories were analysed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis of free flowing text can focus on words or large blocks of text (G. Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This kind of analysis can be supported through the use of NVIVO

software to consider and sort key themes, patterns, ideas, concepts, questions and even images (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). The thematic analysis in this research involved applying codes and then sorting interview and media text into those codes. At first, my initial analysis generated numerous broad codes such as Aboriginal identity, Aboriginal culture, light skin, lack of community ties and lack of family ties. During further analysis these codes became more focused (e.g. why bother and racism was divided into non-Indigenous, Aboriginal and no experiences of racism). Media themes were identified through a google search and drawing on articles that were current in the media.

Media Analysis

This thesis took a critical discursive lens to the media discussion about light-skinned Aboriginal people and was undertaken on the assumption that media discourse affects if, how and when light skinned Aboriginal people begin to formulate their Aboriginal identity. The media analysis examined the political, social and personal issues surrounding the media articles. It is not a pure discourse analysis, rather an examination of the discursive elements of the topic, in line with the narrative qualitative methodology discussed above.

When conducting any discourse analysis it is important to recognise discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into consideration.

Discourses are always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). As a result, discourse must be examined in a historical and social context as this can show how discourses have evolved over time according to circumstances such as political events and other contexts.

Discourse analysis, like all qualitative approaches, looks to examine the meaningfulness of social life. It explores how socially produced ideas populate the world and how they are maintained and held in place over time (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Critical discourse analysis focuses on the discourse activity that is sustaining unequal power (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Language can give power and privilege to ideas as Foucault's work has shown. Foucault (1965) encouraged an unmasking of the privileges inherent in particular discourses and any

constraining effects they are having. This thesis postulates that conversations around light-skinned Aboriginals sustains colonialistic thinking around Aboriginality and Aboriginal identity, and thus, are part of a power abuse toward Aboriginal people. This abuse is reproduced and legitimised by the talk and text of the dominant media within Australia.

The media analysis explored the dominant discourses in the Australian media from 2009–13 on the perceived issues surrounding the subject of light-skinned Aboriginal people. Discourse can affect wider debates in society and individual and group ideas. The way light-skinned Aboriginal people develop their identity will be impacted by these social discourses as well as broader society that accepts the discourse. The analysis examined several sources of Australian social media and their recent discussions on light-skinned Aboriginal people including newspapers, blogs, internet sites, television programs and radio interviews.

The media analysis situated the social context within which the participants live and provided important background to their lives. The articles were found using the internet search engine 'Google', searching libraries and also newspaper websites, using the key words 'light-skinned Aboriginal people'. Once a source had been found, for example: Andrew Bolt, the topic of that source was also searched for, using the same sources as above, to try and find similar articles. From this, twenty articles and seven other media sources were identified and provided the media data to analyse for the thesis²¹.

There are three incidences in particular discussed in the media analysis. The first is Andrew Bolt's writings for the SUN Herald which were very contentious. Bolt was subsequently taken to court for his articles under the Anti-discrimination Act by people he wrote about. This set precedence for Australian media and is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The second example highlights the views of Tony Abbott, the then Liberal Opposition Leader (now Prime Minister). This is important given the media reported Mr Abbott's views on who he regards as a real and cultural Aboriginal person and who he does not.

²¹ Please see appendix 5 and 6 for full list.

The last case is that of an Aboriginal man (Anthony Mundine) making racist and ignorant comments about another light-skinned Aboriginal person. I deliberately use the word another light-skinned person because I am sure there are some people who would perceive Mr Mundine as having fair skin himself. This was a significant event as the racist, ignorant slur (and incidence of lateral violence) was done so publicly, and thus became a public debate instead of the usual private and more secretive one.

The final aspect of the analysis discusses the general themes that emerged in a range of recent media debates about light-skinned Aboriginal people. The next chapter identifies and discusses the emergent themes from the media analysis and the implications and relevance they have to the thesis and the participant's experiences

Interview analysis

Riessman (1993) suggests interview material will undergo several phases in analysis and interpretation. These levels are attending, telling, transcribing, analysing and reading (Riessman, 1993). Each interview represented the participant's view of their identity at that point in time in their life. Attending was understood to occur when the researcher interviewed the participants and listened to their stories. At the time of telling, participants gave their stories and discussed their identity formation. These stories were taped on a digital recorder and transcribed in full. These transcripts became the predominant source of analysis.

During the analysis the transcripts were coded using NVIVO. Some of this coding was done as words or paragraphs and themes began to emerge. Through a thorough reading of the transcripts the process of Aboriginal identity construction began to emerge. Two types of analyses of the content (thematic and narrative), discussed in more detail below, were used to incorporate different ways of 'seeing' and 'knowing' (Riessman, 1993).

Seale (1999) has likened the idea of using multiple approaches to Geertz's notion of 'thick' description (Geertz, 1993). Thick description comes from anthropological research in which the author provides a rich and multi-layered interpretation to the data.

The interviews were analysed by looking at four broad areas. Firstly, reading for the story. At this point themes were selected from how the participants stated they had formed their identity, who and what had helped them to do this, and what had prevented them from doing this. Secondly how the individual saw themselves. In other words, how did they see that they were Aboriginal, what made them feel and think they were Aboriginal, and how did they see their own Aboriginal identity. Thirdly, reading for relationships. This was looking at who was helping the participants to form their identity and what relationships did the participant have with the Aboriginal community, other Aboriginal people and their own identity. Lastly looking at the social, political and broader cultural issues raised by the participants (for example experiences of racism). This way of thematically analysing the data was adapted from Wengraf and Chamberlayne's (2006) Biographic-Narrative Interpretive method (BNIM) and conversations with Stephanie Gilbert (2012) about how she had applied this method in her research. In the present study it provided a thorough and holistic approach for analysis.

Limitations

While this process generated important findings, the technique still had limitations. Firstly, there is the potential for researchers to use their own values and thoughts to decide what is important and what can be edited out. To avoid this, the material was reflected on and discussed with my supervisor. Participants were also approached for feedback at various intervals throughout the study. They were sent the transcripts of their interview, the quotes I was intending to use, and the common themes I had identified in the analysis. This process of participant checking allowed me to check the validity of the conclusions I was reaching. However in the end it is the researcher who decides what to eliminate and what to highlight (Riessman, 1993). For the media analysis it was unfortunate not to make use of Factiva as a specific media finder database, but I was unaware of its existence until after marker feedback. Although using Google for finding media articles might have had limitations, the thesis extensively examined mainstream media articles and, as such, there is confidence that enough material was sourced to support the analysis presented.

Reflections on the process

Where to begin?

This study was aiming to recruit from a hidden population with an extensive trauma history, some of whom may have been tentatively trying to enter the Aboriginal community without being noticed. Before I began to find participants I did several things. Firstly I took my idea to members of the community in the form of organised community meetings, organised conferences such as the Indigenous methodologies conference in Brisbane 2011, and to my own network of Aboriginal people that I have developed over my life. During this consultation it was suggested to me that I was 'brave, courageous or stupid' to take on such a sensitive and contentious subject in the community. All of the people I consulted thought it was a topic that needed to be discussed, however, they were all nervous that I would not get any participants willing to talk about their lack of kinship or community connections as admitting this can put a person's standing in the community at risk.

Aboriginal participation in the research design from the onset is considered crucial. Research has shown that the more involvement young people have in the design, delivery, analysis and distribution of the research, the more appropriate and responsive that research will be (Moore, Saunders, & McArthur, 2011). Therefore I attempted to create a governance group. This group was meant to oversee the research, to provide direction and advice (such as how to approach the questions, where I could find participants and in general be a kind of 'sounding board' for me). I approached two males and two females under the age of thirty to create this group with the idea that I could bounce ideas off them, such as what questions to ask, how to ask them and where to get participants from. Despite initial interest, life circumstances of the members meant the group never really eventuated, although the two males became participants of the research and, like all participants, have had a say in various aspects of the study and given ideas and advice (for example to make the age of participants open). These two males contributed a large amount of time and energy to the structure of the research and both remained very active in their participation and contributions.

One way of obtaining participants was to send out an open email to various universities that agreed to distribute the email. This email was then sent out to all Aboriginal students currently enrolled. This was somewhat problematic, as some students felt they were being targeted by staff as having 'light skin'. One student rang me to say that at first they had found this email insulting as they had presumed that their University had made a decision as to who was light-skinned and who was not and had then forwarded the email based on this conclusion. When the student found out that the email had been sent to all Aboriginal students attending the University, they had no issue with it. I did not have a high number of responses using this method. This may have been due to being fairly removed from the recruitment process and possible participants having no real idea of who I was or having any personal connection or trust in me to encourage their participation.

Another strategy to get participants was by having people vouch²² for me. This took several forms including a person I knew contacting potential participants, participants I had interviewed contacting others they knew in similar positions, and either giving them my contact details or giving me their contact details so that I could approach them (snowball sampling). I am not sure what was said about me or the study. Perhaps they talked about the research but also stated that I was ok, I wouldn't hurt them. They may have discussed what being interviewed was like for them and what questions I asked. Each person contacted received the same participant letter about the study and a consent form. Still, I did not have a high number of responses by adding this method.

In desperation, I took out an advertisement and placed it in both the *Koori Times*²³ and the *National Indigenous Times*²⁴. These newspapers are widely read by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies and they are distributed Australia wide on a regular basis. Many organisations subscribe to the newspapers and they are often easily obtainable (for example within Aboriginal University units, and Aboriginal health and Government agencies (such as the Department of Social Services). This, however, also proved problematic. The advertisement

²² To vouch is to say someone is safe, approachable and considered 'ok' in your opinion- like recommending a massage therapist or counsellor to someone- but in this case with a culturally sensitive approval stamp attached.

²³ <http://koorimail.com/>

²⁴ <http://nit.com.au/>

itself had to have the University logo on it, as well as my faculty information, as part of both the university and ethics procedures. As a result, it looked quite formal. Participant feedback was that the advertisement looked like the 'government' and that many would not contact due to fear of what may happen for them due to this. The formality made the research look like someone was seeking answers from the community. A participant remarked 'I grew up in housing commission so I know that if anyone is asking you a question it's probably not a good question and you probably don't want to be answering without your legal aid present'. Some of the participants had been unaware of the existence of the *Koori Times* or *National Indigenous Times* and so advertising in there was ineffective. I made the assumption that someone who read them would either be light-skinned or know someone light-skinned, but many people I spoke to were so on the periphery of the community they did not know anyone or did not know about 'Black media'. Although I went and met with two groups about the research from these advertisements and they wanted to talk about their story, they did not feel comfortable (or safe) enough to be involved in the thesis. I had minimal response to the advertisements.

In 2013, two people talked at length with me about the study but decided not to consent to a formal interview. Their reasons given for this decision were due to the sensitive nature of the topic. When they rang me to talk about the study they discussed how they were worried they would be recognised by others and voiced their concern about what would happen if someone found out it was them speaking. I began to think about confidentiality. It started to hit home how sensitive this topic actually was and how honoured I was to have any participants at all.

Lastly I contacted an Aboriginal community member with some standing to ask if they knew anyone that they could refer me to for the research. This process of being vouched for resulted in the recruitment of three participants. Using all of these different approaches I was able to develop a viable sample. The majority were sourced from being vouched for.

To ensure confidentiality I took out all participants names from transcripts and was also deliberately vague about gender referring to participants as them or their. I was also vague about where they came from (for example, NSW which is a large area). In consultation with participants, I altered stories or situations that might be recognisable. Some participants wanted

their story to remain, even though there was a risk of being identified as they felt so passionate about sharing it for others to learn and grow from it.

Usually when doing Aboriginal research in the community participants are recruited because the researcher is vouched for. In this case, many participants did not know anyone else Aboriginal so they couldn't really vouch for me. The people I wanted to interview were on the periphery of the community and I was asking them to speak about a topic which may keep them on the outskirts. In the end most participants came from a personal contact that was able to vouch for me. Four contacted me without vouching in place. While people may generally be reluctant to participate in research, for this topic in the Aboriginal community, due to the stigma attached to it, many were very reluctant to participate. On reflection I tried multiple strategies for recruitment although there may be other places where I could have advertised and perhaps been more successful. As a result, there were inherent difficulties in recruitment which are worth documenting to highlight both potential difficulties and pathways for other researchers, and some of the tensions implicit when researching such a sensitive and complex area.

Reciprocity as a key value

Bramen (1988) suggests the researcher should allow the topic and associated theoretical and methodological strategy to emerge gradually. In order to do this, I tried not to label or too tightly define the topic. I allowed the participants to discuss their issues and journey in their own words. In following Martin's theoretical framework (2002), I had decided to develop a relationship of reciprocity where I could. In this way I tried to give each participant help with cultural resources, knowledge, or introductions into their local community. Giving back acknowledged the value of what had been shared by participants. Wilson (2008) states that reciprocity is a key value in Indigenous research and part of an ethical approach.

I also self-disclosed during the research on certain topics, such as my own light skin and some of my experiences of this. It has been suggested that sharing personal stories can assist researchers in the process of interviewing on sensitive topics (Liamputtong, 2007), further reinforced by my theoretical framework. By being prepared to invest my own personal identity into the relationship with the participant I tried to create a 'level playing field' (Dickson-Swift,

James, & Liamputtong, 2008). I found that self-disclosure enhanced rapport and at times validated the participant's own experiences. I also thought it was important to be as transparent as I could be and accountable to the participants (Wilson, 2008). I achieved this by sending participants updates on any published articles, discussing their quotes and sections or information based on them, and being open to them changing any aspect of their input to the research.

I also started having the conversations about light-skinned Aboriginal people's identity formation, especially with participants who lacked community and or kinship networks. This was done in the spirit of inquiry rather than judgment. It was important to me to reinforce to people that light-skinned Aboriginal people came about due to colonisation and assimilation policies and practices. The naivety and judgment surrounding this topic suggests the legacy of colonisation practices still exist within Australia and there continues to be adverse consequences as a result of it, such as racism and lateral violence. This is concerning as a social worker and an Aboriginal person in Australia.

To be true to the Indigenous paradigm, I also thought it was important to be helpful to the participants if I could. With this reciprocal relationship in mind (Wilson, 2008), I did a number of things. Where I could I gave participants information about the community that they had come from, and linked them to language books or resources about their area. In one case, I physically took the individual to the Aboriginal university unit and introduced them to key staff members (and in some ways vouched for their Aboriginality). For one of the older participants, I gave some of my spare Wiradjuri language books to them (as this loss of language was highlighted as a source of pain and distress for them and they had stated they would love to learn their language). Some participants have kept in contact and had various inputs into the thesis and articles. Many have just emailed a thank you for letting them know. Some have not replied. However, my commitment was to make sure they had the choice and opportunity should they want it as this was their story. One of the participants did want a story removed due to feeling that it was too personal. The overall theme captured in this story did remain however, as other participants had expressed similar experiences, thoughts and emotions that I was able to use.

Other than this instance, participants did not want to change how I was writing the thesis; they were more interested in supporting my process.

No one can predict how the researcher or the participants will be affected by being part of research. 'Sensitive research often has potential effects on the personal life, and sometimes on the personal security, of the researcher' (R. Lee, 1993, p. 1). Taking into account my own emotions and reactions (such as anger, distress, and sadness) to the participant's stories was an important part of the collection and interpretation of the data. It is still unknown how the research will be received by others, including the Aboriginal community. I do not think I am ready for the potential backlash and in some ways do not know how to prepare for it. I am just very aware that I am protective of the participants and any potential consequences or implications that may directly or indirectly involve them.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has discussed the Indigenous research paradigm in which this thesis was situated. It integrates the knowing, doing and being of Aboriginal culture and allows the researcher to approach the issue in a holistic and relational way. Aboriginal research that follows this decolonising approach gives Aboriginal people privilege and power in the research process.

This chapter has discussed the methodology of the research, including the narrative qualitative approach. It has discussed the analysis of theories when considering the data as well as the researcher's insider/outsider status. It has ended with an examination of ethical issues as well as the participants and sampling, and a reflection on this process.

The next chapter explores the discourse in the Australian media from 2009-2013 on the perceived issues surrounding the subject of light-skinned Aboriginal people. The chapter will examine several sources of Australian social media and their recent discussions on light-skinned Aboriginal people including newspapers, blogs, internet sites, TV programs and radio interviews. The way light-skinned Aboriginal people develop their identity may be impacted by these social discourses as well as any broader social acceptance of this discourse.

Chapter 5: Social media and light-skinned Aboriginals

Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture. Allen Ginsberg²⁵

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter discussed the Indigenous paradigm, Ways of knowing, doing and being, the theoretical frameworks underpinning the thesis such as decolonisation and critical theories. It discussed insider and outsider research and the ethical issues surrounding the research. It also discussed the methods including the use of discourse analysis.

This chapter explores the dominant discourse in the Australian media from 2009–13 on the perceived issues surrounding the subject of light-skinned Aboriginal people. Discourse can affect wider debates in society and individual and group ideas. The way light-skinned Aboriginal people develop their identity will be impacted by these social discourses as well as broader society that accepts the discourse. The chapter will examine several sources of Australian social media and their recent discussions on light-skinned Aboriginal people including newspapers, blogs, internet sites, TV programs and radio interviews.

Although this chapter cannot study all aspects of discourse around light-skinned Aboriginal people, a selected subset of texts for the purpose of manageability will be used to explore the media representation of the topic light-skinned Aboriginal people and identity in Australia and the potential impacts this may have on light-skinned Aboriginal people. This analysis situates the social context within which the participants live and will provide important background to their lives. The articles were chosen by using the internet search engine 'Google', searching libraries and also newspaper websites using the key words 'light-skinned Aboriginal people'. Once a topic had been found, such as the Andrew Bolt example, this topic was also searched for using the

²⁵ URL accessed 1 March 2013

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/controls.html#xSJKSBQoFUWOSVi7.99>

same sources as above to try to find similar articles. From this, all of the articles found were used in this thesis.

There are three highlighted incidences that will be discussed. The first instance, that of Andrew Bolt's writings for the SUN Herald was very contentious in that Bolt was subsequently taken to court for his writings. This set precedence for Australian media.

The second instance highlights the views of Tony Abbott, the then Liberal Opposition Leader (now Prime Minister). This is important given that the media reported Mr Abbott's views on who is a real and cultural Aboriginal person versus one who is not. These comments show the lack of understanding of the diversity and nature of Aboriginal culture and are worrying as they are held at such a high level of Government. One might assume these sorts of limited attitudes also affect policy making and programs for Aboriginal people in general.

The last case is that of an Aboriginal man (Anthony Mundine) making racist and ignorant comments about another light-skinned Aboriginal person. I deliberately use the word another light-skinned person because I am sure there are some people who would perceive Mr Mundine as having fair skin himself. This was a significant event in that the racist, ignorant slur (and incidence of lateral violence) was done so publicly and thus became a public debate instead of the usual private and secret one.

All of these media reportings could affect how a light-skinned Aboriginal person is viewed in Australia. It could be argued that this may influence the thinking and feeling of the public and could create gaps in service, racism and more ignorance on the topic. Before the analysis of the media is discussed a brief overview of the role of the media and discourse analysis is provided.

Why media?

Media (including written, internet and television) has evolved into a key source of information for many people. Media is key to how ideas and social problems are framed (McCallun, Waller, & Meadows, 2012). It is an influential mode of communication and has become an attractive, fast way to communicate to people across the world.

Media studies have concluded that news reporting overwhelmingly represents Aboriginal people in Australia as a social risk and as problematic for mainstream Australian society (McCallun, Waller, & Meadows, 2012). In the past, marginalised groups such as Aboriginal people in Australia have had limited access to formal channels of discourse such as media, radio and television. This has been changing with programs such as Living Black, Koori radio and the recent free to air television station, NITV. Not having access to the same amount of media representation has given Aboriginal people less opportunity to build a differing discourse around issues of identity and culture.

The mass media can play a central role in the process of transforming traditional guidelines and criteria for determining group membership (Meadows, 2001). It is in a unique position to create and construct issues. It could be seen as the job of a journalist to collapse important events into easily consumable de-contextualised content for the readers.

The media fulfill a role in providing simplistic, common sense explanations for questions, events, and so on where more complex and contextual answers often seem more appropriate (Meadows, 2001, p. 7).

The media is a powerful institution in terms of representing, reflecting, discussing and developing discourse as it is key to how ideas and social problems are framed (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Meadows, 2001; Phillips & Hardy, 2002) and is a significant source of information for many people; for example it may be a place where a person would source information about their identity.

Stereotypes around the construct of Aboriginality in Australia (such as what an Aboriginal person should look like and where they should live) have not been dispelled by the media (Meadows, 2001). Rather, they have been reinforced and become a source of tension. Instead of challenging popular stereotypes such as 'real' Aboriginal people all being located in rural parts of Australia or being dark-skinned and 'savages', the media has repeated and reinforced these ideas at times (Meadows, 2001). There is a growing need to prove your Aboriginal ancestry due to the fact that money is attached to Aboriginal scholarships, positions and welfare benefits. There is a perception that non-Aboriginal people will pretend to be light-skinned

Aboriginal people to gain these benefits (Gorringe, Ross, & Fforde, 2011). Current media portrayals have fuelled such myths instead of creating debate around the issues.

Current media discussions in Australia may have affected light-skinned Aboriginal people and their identity; perhaps making them feel as if they are fakes, unwanted by 'real' Aboriginal people or that they are greedy and only using their race to gain privilege and success. These debates may have kept individuals and communities silent about the issue, thus adding to the complexities rather than opening the discussion. Some of the discussions could be perceived as racist and could add to feelings of being unsafe and reinforces that this is a sensitive if not taboo topic in Australia.

The Andrew Bolt articles 2009–2013

On 15 April 2009, the Herald and Weekly Times Pty Ltd published in the *Herald Sun* newspaper an article by Australian journalist and social commentator Andrew Bolt under the title 'It's so hip to be black'. The article was also published by the Herald and Weekly Times Pty Ltd on its website, under the title 'White is the new black'.

On 21 August 2009, the Herald and Weekly Times Pty Ltd published a second article by Andrew Bolt in the *Herald Sun* under the title 'White fellas in the black'. On 21 August 2009, that article was also published by the Herald and Weekly Times Pty Ltd on its website, under the title 'White fellas in the black' (hereinafter 'the Newspaper Articles').

In these articles, Bolt alleged that 'fair-skinned' Aboriginals choose to identify as Aboriginal for personal gain. He also insinuated that particular 'fair-skinned' Aboriginal people were not genuinely Aboriginal and were only pretending to be Aboriginal for benefits, gain, money and status. He gave a number of examples of prominent, successful light-skinned Aboriginal people.

He made comments such as

Hear that scuffling at the trough? That's the sound of black people being elbowed out by white people shouting 'But I'm Aboriginal, too' (A. Bolt, 21.8.09)

They are 'white Aborigines' - people who, out of their multi-stranded but largely European genealogy, decide to identify with the thinnest of all those strands, and the one that's contributed least to their looks (A.Bolt, 21.8.09).

The articles were important because they sparked a very public discussion in the media generally about light-skinned Aboriginality. Perhaps they reflected ordinary Australians' opinions, perhaps not, but they shed light on an issue that had not been discussed so openly until then. Aboriginality has been something defined or discussed a great deal by Governments but Aboriginal people themselves have not yet been given space, time or the power to make decisions on who is Aboriginal for themselves as yet.

Bolt argues that light-skinned Aboriginal people (including people he named as examples) have not grown up with being discriminated against in terms of race and socio-economic situations but instead have been raised in an urban lifestyle full of privilege and opportunities the same as any 'white' person.

He argues that light-skinned Aboriginal people are not 'real' Aboriginal people due to the colour of their skin and circumstances and therefore should not be entitled to any benefits.

First, of course, is that the special encouragements and prizes we set aside for Aborigines are actually meant for...well Aborigines. You know, the ones we fear would get nothing, if we didn't offer a bit extra, just for them. So when a privileged white Aborigine then snaffles that extra, odds are that an under privileged black Aborigine misses out on the very things we hoped would help them most (A.Bolt, 21.8.09)

This indicates that Bolt believes that there are no under privileged light-skinned Aboriginal people and that individuals are using their heritage to gain privilege and success. By taking Aboriginal jobs, awards or 'extra's' these light-skinned Aboriginal people are robbing their own disadvantaged under privileged 'real' dark-skinned Aboriginal people.

Take [name removed]'s²⁶ art prize. This white university lecturer, with his nice Canberra studio, has by winning pushed aside real draw-in-the -dirt Aboriginal artists such as [three names

²⁶ The names have been removed out of my respect for and to the individuals referred to.

removed] ... who'd also entered and could really have used that cash and recognition (A.Bolt, 21.8.09`)

Bolt's view seems to be that every Aboriginal artist should be making pictures in the dirt or more importantly that the artists should and would be in poverty and would need a White person's award to give them status or credit and that they would only gain acceptable status and credit in this way from this very award.

What's a black- Aboriginal artist from the bush to think, seeing yet another white man lope back to the city with the goodies? (A.Bolt, 21.8.09).

When a man as white as I, already a lawyer with a job, wins a prize meant to encourage and inspire hard-struggle black students, what must those Aborigines conclude? (A.Bolt, 21.8.09).

This kind of writing and the ideas it is espousing is a good example of encouraging lateral violence in Aboriginal communities (Butler, 2012). It assumes all dark-skinned Aboriginal people immediately perceive light-skinned people as 'white' stealing frauds who have never struggled in any meaningful way. It assumes a dark-skinned person would not think 'good job' or 'they deserved it' or 'I'm glad they are working for their community'. It feeds the perception that the only reason a light-skinned person would bother to identify would be to gain from their identity in the form of money, privilege, status over and instead of their dark-skinned brothers and sisters. In fact, he sums this up by stating

Seeking power and reassurance in a racial identity is not just weak - a surrendering of your individuality, and a borrowing of other people's glories (A.Bolt, 21.8.09).

So the overall message that Bolt is asserting is that to be light-skinned and Aboriginal then means that you deliberately use your identity for political, personal and monetary gain. Light-skinned Aboriginal people are then portrayed as opportunistic, self-obsessed, and selfish and above all the message is that they should be identifying with their European ancestry instead of their Aboriginal heritage.

The court case Eatock v Bolt [2011]

Bolt was sued in the Federal Court by nine of the eighteen light-skinned Aboriginal people whom he referred to in his 2009 articles (Bromberg, 2011). These nine included former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission chairman Geoff Clark, academic Professor Larissa Behrendt, activist Pat Eatock, photographer Bindi Cole, author Anita Heiss, health worker Leeanne Enoch, native title expert Graham Atkinson, academic Wayne Atkinson, and lawyer Mark McMillan. The applicants claimed Bolt's posts breached the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. They sought an apology, legal costs, a gag on republishing the articles and blogs, and other relief as the court saw fit. They did not seek damages. Barrister Ron Merkel QC, appearing for the applicants, said the articles took a 'eugenics approach' that was frozen in history (Ritchie, 29.11.11). By this Mr Merkel is alluding to the history of eugenics (the theory and practice of improving the genetics of the human population) which believed that desirable traits were biological. Its racist views included the perfect White race and the belief of elimination of 'less-fit' races. As such these beliefs led to policies that encouraged segregation and genocide in many countries, including Australia (Galton, 2002).

The Racial Discrimination Act 1975 aims to ensure that people of all backgrounds are treated equally and have the same opportunities. The Act also makes discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful (http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/index.html). Under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* the plaintiffs needed to prove that at least some fair-skinned Aboriginal people were offended or insulted by Bolt's comments. They also had to prove that Bolt made those offensive comments because the plaintiffs were of a particular race, colour or ethnic origin (Bromberg, 2011). Given that Bolt's entire argument was about the colour of skin and ethnic origin, this seemed easy to prove.

The *Herald Sun*, however, claimed the articles were not offensive and that race had nothing to do with the motivation for writing the stories. The *Herald Sun* also argued that even if someone could find the articles offensive, it was irrelevant because Bolt wrote his piece in good faith and was therefore entitled to an exemption under the Act, in the name of freedom of expression.

Justice Bromberg, hearing the case, found that the people named by Bolt genuinely identified themselves as Aboriginal. He found that none of them had used their identity inappropriately to advance their careers (Bromberg, 2011).

Bolt's lawyers tried to argue that because he didn't incite racial hatred, he was entitled to a measure of protection under the law. The judge found that the *Racial Discrimination Act* is actually about promoting racial tolerance, human dignity and equality. In essence Bolt's case was lost on this point - the belief by the judge that 'people should be free to fully identify with their race without fear of public disdain or loss of esteem for so identifying' (Dodd, 28.11.11).

The writing of the Newspaper Articles for publication by Andrew Bolt and the publication of them by the Herald and Weekly Times Pty Ltd contravened s 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) and was unlawful in that:

(a) the articles were reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate some Aboriginal persons of mixed descent who have a fairer, rather than darker, skin and who by a combination of descent, self-identification and communal recognition are and are recognised as Aboriginal persons, because the articles conveyed imputations to those Aboriginal persons that:

(i) there are fair-skinned people in Australia with essentially European ancestry but with some Aboriginal descent, of which the individuals identified in the articles are examples, who are not genuinely Aboriginal persons but who, motivated by career opportunities available to Aboriginal people or by political activism, have chosen to falsely identify as Aboriginal; and

(ii) fair skin colour indicates a person who is not sufficiently Aboriginal to be genuinely identifying as an Aboriginal person.

(b) the Newspaper Articles were written and published, including because of the race, ethnic origin or colour of those Aboriginal persons described by the articles; and

(c) that conduct was not exempted from being unlawful by s 18D of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) because the Newspaper Articles were not written or published reasonably and in good faith:

(i) in the making or publishing of a fair comment on any event or matter of public interest; or

(ii) in the course of any statement, publication or discussion, made or held for a genuine purpose in the public interest (A. Bolt, 21.8.09; Bromberg, 2011).

Bolt's lawyer, Neil Young, had argued the articles represented his client's genuinely held views on matters of public interest. The articles, it was argued, were a form of free speech and a discussion of multiculturalism and how people identify themselves. Bolt was quoted as saying

I argued then and I argue now that we should not insist on differences between us but focus instead on what unites us as human beings (Ritchie, 29.11.11).

It can be argued, however, that these articles were divisive. They were inflammatory, insulting and had deeply offended at least nine of the people being discussed, without their permission or any verification of some of the 'facts' Bolt was espousing.

After the verdict, the then Liberal opposition Leader Tony Abbott warned against restricting the principle of free speech. He stated:

The article for which Andrew Bolt was prosecuted under this legislation was almost certainly not his finest. There may have been some factual errors. Still, if free speech is to mean anything, it's others' right to say what you don't like, not just what you do. It's the freedom to write badly and rudely. It's the freedom to be obnoxious and objectionable. Free speech is not bland speech. Often, it's pretty rough speech because people are entitled to be passionate when they are arguing for what they believe to be important and necessary (Abbott, 2012).

Technically, there is free speech operating in Australia but we also have laws that are in place to protect a person's good name and to prevent the intentional spreading of false information. In short, it can be linked to the social work ethic of 'do no harm' and cannot be used as an excuse to do exactly that. The legal decision arrived at in response to the Bolt case has implications for journalists in Australia. It shows that true racial tolerance requires respectful, dignified and robust discussions that are well researched, educated and informed and that racism on any level, no matter how veiled it is behind humour or 'common thinking', will not be tolerated.

A spokesman for the then Attorney-General Nicola Roxon said that section 18C had provided protection for many vulnerable people. 'This legislation also helps to protect the community against those who advocate violence on the basis of race' (M. Gratton, 2012).

Labor MP Michael Danby, who is Jewish, warned that Mr Abbott's promise might give the green light to bigoted groups ... 'Will this be the kind of Australia we might expect under Tony Abbott where laws are varied to suit mates, whether they be Clive Palmer, Gina Rinehart or Andrew Bolt?' (M. Gratton, 7.8.12).

The Bolt case opened a can of worms. Whose place is it to discuss Aboriginal identity and how it is formed? In some ways Bolt was challenging light-skinned people by saying you aren't real, you are exploiting your ancestry and we white people have the right to discuss how you should identify.

I spoke subsequently with another Aboriginal academic on this topic. They observed:

I call Bolt a half-caste Dutch. Is he even a real Dutch? Does he speak the language? Does he wear traditional clothes? He certainly doesn't have a drop of real Australian blood in him (Private conversation 1.4.13).²⁷

The author is pointing out that no one questions whether Bolt's Australian heritage is legitimate. Many Australians have no real blood ties to Australia, yet they reap the benefits of being in Australia. What of the original inhabitants of the land, the Aboriginal people? This discussion is really about the questioning of privilege and belonging. If you can take away, or take the power from, Aboriginal people's identity and sense of belonging, you can keep them in an underprivileged and marginalised state to the benefit of non-Indigenous members of society (for example being classed as fauna and fauna to colonise land, or not being given the right to vote until 1965 or still not being part of the Australian constitution).

²⁷ This person agrees to me using this conversation but does not want to be identified.

At the end of the legal hearing, the question that remains is what business is it of anyone other than Aboriginal peoples themselves as to how they choose to identify and be identified²⁸? Bolt says it succinctly: 'What business is it of anyone how we identify ourselves?' (A. Bolt, 2009).

Changes to the *Racial Discrimination Act*

In 2013 as part of his election, Tony Abbott promised changes to the Racial Discrimination Act. In March 2014, a draft amendment bill was tabled. The Government decided to put the bill online for consultation until the 30th April 2014 (Australian Government, 2014).

As it currently stands, 18C makes it unlawful for someone to act in a manner that is likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate someone because of their race or ethnicity. The changes which are currently being tabled would repeal this section, taking away this wording and replacing them with vilify (Hartcher & Massola, 2014). A passage in the new draft changes also exempts the words and images 'in public discussion of any political, social, cultural, religious, artistic, academic or scientific matter' (Australian Government, 2014) This wording has been criticised for being too broad and for weakening the current protection of the law (Hartcher & Massola, 2014). Section 18D, which currently provides protections for freedom of speech, would also be removed and replaced by a new section with content unknown.

The changes have brought both support and challenge from all members of society. However, Aboriginal MP Ken Wyatt threatened to cross the floor in recent debate unless there was consultation about the changes and further development of the legislation (Hartcher & Massola, 2014). The implications of these changes are the concerns that they will allow Australians to make racist, humiliating, insulting and offending comments based on race with no legal ramifications. The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) has

²⁸ There are two definitions of what an Aboriginal person is in Australia. One, predominating in legislation, defines an Aboriginal as 'a person who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia'. The other, predominating in program administration but also used in some legislation and court judgments, defines an Aboriginal as someone 'who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, identifies as an Aboriginal and is accepted by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal' (Gardiner-Garden, 2003, p. 1).

warned the Australian Government that more racism to Aboriginal people will lead to poor health outcomes. More than this, the law would no longer protect the 'ordinary' or 'marginalised' non-privileged person in Australia but perhaps protect more powerful people from the dominant culture (M. Young, 2014).

At this time (2015) the government appear to have abandoned any attempts to repeal or modify the Racial Discrimination Act.

Quotes in media from Tony Abbott, 2012

The then Liberal opposition leader, Mr. Tony Abbot attracted media attention in late 2012 for his comments towards another member of his party who identifies as Aboriginal, Western Australian Liberal Ken Wyatt. The quotes in contention were his reference to the member as an 'urban Aboriginal'. This was followed the by the statement:

I think it would be terrific if, as well as having an urban Aboriginal in our parliament, we had an Aboriginal person from Central Australia, an authentic representative of the ancient cultures of Central Australia in the parliament. I would love to think that a highly traditional Australian Aboriginal, who is nevertheless charismatic and inspirational in modern Australia as well, might enter the Federal Parliament (Abbott as cited in ABC, 13.11.12).

There was also a statement reported in the media that Mr. Abbot had stated Mr. Wyatt was 'not a man of culture' at a dinner event around the same time period (Aikman, 2012). A spokesman for Mr. Abbott confirmed this statement but added it was meant in the context that 'Mr Wyatt was a man of culture, but not in the way Ms Anderson was' (Aikman, 2012).

It was stated at the time that Mr. Abbot was trying to encourage Country Liberal Party member Alison Anderson to stand for the federal seat of Lingiari²⁹ against Labor candidate Warren Snowden. In August 2012, the Northern Territory Liberal Party gained four Aboriginal

²⁹ Northern Territory

candidates, all of whom went on to become MPs³⁰. Was Mr. Abbot trying to offend his own MP or were his statements just evidence of ignorance about Aboriginal identity?

In the six general media articles³¹ analysed, at least eighteen significant individuals were sourced for quotes including the two individuals themselves, the current Prime Minister, the Social Justice Commissioner, senior members of Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal academics and various other MPs.

The 'backlash' that the media reports surrounds notions of 'urban' versus 'traditional' and 'authentic versus 'inauthentic' and also seems to concentrate on light skin versus dark skin.

Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton stated in relation to Mr. Abbot's statements:

... no informed person can avoid concluding that he actually believes there are 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' Aboriginal people (Langton as cited in Robinson, Kelly, & Karvelas, 15.11.12).

Mr. Wyatt himself was quoted as saying:

It is unfortunate that we have got this whole debate going around authentic Aboriginals because all Aboriginal people, no matter where they live, are authentic. All of us are proud of our heritage. It does not matter where we live (Wyatt as cited in Robinson et al., 15.11.12).

In the media, Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda called for an end to the debate about the definition of Aboriginality.

Aboriginality is not defined by the colour of your skin, or whether you live in a remote or urban community. These types of classifications set up tensions in Aboriginal communities, as well as often irreconcilable conflicts for many individuals. Our Aboriginality should be something we can all be proud of, not used as a weapon to divide us (Gooda as cited in Robinson et al., 15.11.12).

³⁰ Members of Parliament

³¹ Please see appendix for a list of all articles and related URL's

To gain a response to Mr. Abbot's statements the media approached the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard who was quoted as saying she would not try to categorise different types of Indigenous Australians.

I do believe that our parliament should represent our nation, including Indigenous Australians. I am not going to engage myself in the kinds of things that have been said in recent days, trying to divide indigenous Australians up into neat little columns and descriptors. People are people (Gillard as cited in Robinson et al., 15.11.12).

One journalist approached a 'senior figure' in a remote Northern Territory community for their view. His view was that s/he believed that all Aboriginal people had the same rights as each other. He called for representatives in parliament that understood rural Aboriginal people's issues and priorities and that Aboriginal people's concerns in rural areas did not seem to be currently reaching debate within Parliament. He did not make a comment in regards to the authenticity of an Aboriginal person who happened to be living in a less remote area of Australia.

Interestingly, the media portrayed the lateral violence occurring around this issue clearly. Author Anita Heiss's tweets were quoted

#itriedtobeauthenticbut I didn't know you weren't supposed to join the dots . . . Just paint them!

#itriedtobeauthenticbut I've thrown more parties than boomerangs! (Heiss as cited in Robinson et al., 15.11.12)

To which academic Marcia Langton's reply was quoted:

Anita Heiss and her followers are at least as off the mark as Abbott with their unwitting denigration of all things traditional in Aboriginal life (Langton as cited in Robinson et al., 15.11.12)

Mr. Abbott was mostly portrayed by the media as ignorant instead of racist for these comments. NSW Liberal backbencher Alex Hawke, who is not Aboriginal, as 'a tiny bit clunky' (Coorey, 15.11.12) and 'he seems to have a penchant for clumsy mis-speaking' (Tonkinson,

18.11.12). 'He is not a racist but doesn't have a grasp of the diversity in the Aboriginal world' stated academic Marcia Langton (Robinson et al., 15.11.12).

In fact, the Western Australian Premier, Colin Barnett stated that Mr. Abbott had been misinterpreted, despite Mr. Abbott himself accepting that this was what he had said.

I'm not quite sure that Tony Abbott was properly interpreted. I didn't hear exactly what he said, but can I just say Ken Wyatt is an outstanding person (Barnett as cited in The West Australian, 14.11.12)

The implications that an Aboriginal person is only authentic if they tick certain boxes such as 'remote, traditional, dark-skinned' seem views belonging with an assimilation approach discussed in Chapter 2 and not with 2012. Mr. Abbott's responses to his original 'slip' remain disconcerting.

Classifying and separating Aboriginal people is unhelpful. It creates the need to justify, prove and fight for heritage and identity. Defining Aboriginality by colour alone is flawed and inaccurate. Cultural difference and diversity exist even in people with dark skin and who belong to 'traditional remote' communities.

The reality that we now have Aboriginal people that could be classed as 'urban middle class' with diverse ethnic heritage reinforces the importance of recognising multi-faceted identities as pointed out by authors such as Paradies (2006a).

Having politicians as reported by the media continuing to reinforce negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people is damaging, not only to light-skinned Aboriginal people but to Australia and Australians in general. Thinking that colour can clarify and identify cultural difference is inevitably flawed and inaccurate argument

Political leaders need to articulate the facts. Identity differs just as much in the Aboriginal community as it does in any community. There is no homogenous, monolithic Aboriginal community or single means either biological or cultural to measure Aboriginal identity or belonging. The third example highlights a different perspective of the debate, which is an event discussing light-skinned Aboriginal people from an Aboriginal man.

Quotes in media from Anthony Mundine

Anthony Mundine (born 21 May 1975) is an Australian professional boxer and former rugby league footballer. He is a former interim World Boxing Association (WBA) Light Middleweight Champion boxer, two-time WBA Super Middleweight Champion, International Boxing Organization Middleweight Champion and a New South Wales State of Origin representative footballer. Before his move to boxing he was the highest paid player in the National Rugby League. He is the son of boxer Tony Mundine and is a member of the Bundjalung³² people. His conversion to Islam in 1999, self-promotion and outspoken opinions have created a love-hate relationship between Anthony Mundine and the Australian public (Pandaram, 2013).

In October 2012 Mundine was interviewed about fellow Tasmanian Aboriginal boxer Daniel Geale the current International Boxing Federation and WBA super-middleweight champion who he was getting ready to meet in a title fight. He was asked what he thought of Geale wearing an Aboriginal flag on his shorts, Mundine said:

I thought they wiped all the Aborigines from Tasmania out. That's all I know (Barton, 21.10.12; Tracker, 19.10.12).

I don't see (Geale) as representing us black people, or coloured people. I don't see him out in the communities doing what I do with people ... he got a white woman, white kids (Shepherd, 19.10.12b).

On some level Mundine was displaying what has been called lateral violence, a minority on minority violence where members of a race strike out at each other, thought to be a repercussion of oppression (Butler, 2012). Mundine was clearly of the view that he believed Geale was not a 'real' Aboriginal person because of the colour of his skin. He also showed his ignorance on the issues of colonisation and their effects, particularly for areas such as Tasmania. It is an indisputable historical fact that there are people of Aboriginal descent that originated from Tasmania (L. Ryan, 2012). In Chapter two this issue was discussed and including the concept of the 'the Black Line' and its consequences and how the remaining descendants from

³² Northern Coastal areas of NSW

this event were moved to Flinders Island (an Island off the mainland of Tasmania). Truganini was not the last Tasmanian Aboriginal person as has been previously documented. Mundine also said:

Saying ain't doing – anyone can wear a flag in the ring. The Aboriginal community is very small, people know people. I asked around, he is a dual world champion and no one sees him in the community. He can't go to Moree and rock the hall like I do when I walk down there because he is not out there doing what he can do (Pandaram, 19.10.12).

It is true that relationships are the core of Aboriginal connections. However, Mundine appears to be making some large assumptions. Firstly, Geale currently lives and trains on the Central Coast, around one hour from Hornsby, an outlying Sydney suburb. It is unlikely he has the same haunts as Sydney local Mundine. It is also unlikely that Mundine is aware of the extent of community interaction Geale has in his own Tasmanian community or that of the local community in which he lives. Mundine is making a statement relating to cultural responsibility and giving back to the Aboriginal community. In this case he has been unable to substantiate his claims.

Tasmanian Aboriginal leader Michael Mansell took offence at Mundine's comments. He stated that Mundine was guilty of 'genocide' as he had openly denied the existence of an entire race. He also stated that denying the existence of a people on the grounds of the colour of their skin relied on racist theories and views similar to the Nazis and Klu Klux Klan in that they attempt to define and erase the existence of a race (Shepherd, 19.10.12a).

They ignore the struggle Aborigines in Tasmania have had to overcome including dispossession, shootings and massacres, imprisonment and isolation; child stealing and assimilation. He's talking about 80 per cent of the population in Australia, including himself. It's hypocritical and it's stupid (Mansell as cited in Shepherd, 19.10.12a).

Mundine was quoted as saying:

There ought to be some sort of 'cut off' for Aboriginal people after which they're presumably declared white (Shepherd, 19.10.12b).

Mr. Mansell compared Mundine's comments with Andrew Bolt's articles, agreeing with the view that light-skinned Aboriginal people are falsely claiming their identity for gain and are not real Aboriginals. He stated that Bolt had been found to have breached racial vilification laws with his comments, suggesting that Mundine had also been racist and should be viewed in a similar light.

Mundine added to his statement by saying he was not against Aboriginal men marrying white women but wanted to see more breeding between people of indigenous heritage.

Our women are the backbone of our community, and the Aboriginal community is weak if our women are weak, we need to bring our women up with us and embrace that. We are a dying species, an endangered species; our mortality rate is far worse than our birth rate. We are probably one of the only races on Earth like that right now. So we need to populate and multiply (Pandaram, 19.10.12)

Mr. Mansell stated that re-education was needed to fix Mundine's ignorance and withdrew his permission for Mundine to be able to visit Tasmania. In fact, he ordered him to stay away from Tasmania until he apologised for his comments about its Aboriginal people. He stated

It says that particularly with black people, if a black person has intermarriage with anyone outside the black community those offspring are not pure, so therefore they are not part of the race. That argument was around in Tasmania right up to the 1960s ... if the kids look lighter, they can't be Aboriginal. It doesn't matter who makes the comment, the comment is racist ... it's really embarrassing that the very people who these race arguments were used against are using it against themselves (Shepherd, 19.10.12a).

A press conference was held in Redfern NSW October 19, 2012 where Mundine was expected to apologise to Geale. Mundine apologised to Tasmanian Aboriginals stating:

I know there are a lot of Aboriginals in Tasmania that are proud of their heritage, just like me (Pandaram, 19.10.12)

Mundine did apologise to Geale's wife, who had according to Geale had taken offence to Mundine's remarks but never apologised directly to Geale himself or for his comments on light skin. In fact, he went further on his thoughts in this area by stating:

My comments weren't directed at anybody but the system that in my opinion doesn't truly reflect the sentiment of first-, second- or third-generation Aboriginals. There are people who get jobs, and are claiming benefits, who claim to be Aboriginal, because they have a great-great-great-great-great grandmother or grandfather; that I think is wrong. I think the system needs to accommodate those Aboriginals that need it most, rather than trying to cater for everybody (Pandaram, 19.10.12).

Mundine used his apology to express his political views on the current Australian flag and the current national anthem. Mundine stated that he thought that Australia's current national anthem was a song from a 'regime' that reflected the White Australia policy.

Mundine also felt that the current Australian flag does not represent Aboriginal people adequately.

We've never had any representation on the flag, yet I see representation of the Union Jack, something that symbolises the invasion, the murder, the pillaging, and on and on. I think we need to address that - it's dividing Australia, rather than uniting Australia . . . At the moment, I can't fly it. And I want to fly the Australian flag. I want to fly it for the Australian people. But let's do it together (Jackson, 19.10.12).

Mundine ended the press conference by stating that he wanted Australia and Australian/s to move forwards as a people.

I think that we need to move forward together, unite together, move forward as people, move forward as Australians, no matter what you are - brown, black, brindle, white - and move forward together (Jackson, 19.10.12).

For his part, Geale never became angry or in any way aggressive in his responses to the press about Mundine. He was and has remained proud of his Aboriginal heritage and identity. This is the reason he gives for wearing the Aboriginal colours on his boxer shorts. We can only assume this is a similar reason Mundine does the same. Geale had been distressed that his wife had been offended but stated he just ignored Mundine's comments because that was who he was and how he acted (Pandaram, 19.10.12). Geale stated he left his comments for the ring. Geale ended up winning the eventual fight.

Racist comments are no less racist when made by an Aboriginal person. It is sad to think that Aboriginal people really feel they are in some way superior to or more 'pure' than someone who identifies the same way they do based purely on skin colour. Not only is this a huge example of the current lateral violence being acted out in Aboriginal communities, but it shows the antiquated attitudes on the behalf of Mundine (and as Mundine points out some others in the Aboriginal community). Racism is truly horrendous and shocking when it comes from within your own identity group and is levelled at each other but might be quite damaging to a young person with light skin contemplating embarking on their identity journey as an Aboriginal person.

Light-skinned Aboriginality as discussed in other media sources

This section will outline the other media that was sourced to gain an insight into how the topic of light-skinned Aboriginal people was being discussed. One television episode, four newspaper articles, one blog and one radio show on the subject were analysed (appendix 2).

Themes from the media

As discussed in Chapter 4, discourse can create social ideas that are held and maintained in society (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Foucault has discussed how language can give power and privilege to ideas (Foucault, 1965). A critical analysis of the discourse in the Australian media can highlight power, privilege and the constraining effects on a population (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). This section will cover the general themes have been discussed in the range of media debates about light-skinned Aboriginal people. It will identify the implications and relevance this has to the thesis and to the participant's experiences.

Who is a 'real' Aboriginal versus 'not real'

A major theme that reoccurs around the topic of light-skinned Aboriginal people is the question of who is a 'real' Aboriginal person. According to current media constructions, a 'real' Aboriginal person is dark-skinned, lives in a remote area of Australia and is in abject poverty. There is a strong argument presented by some (e.g. Bolt, Mundine) that many non-Aboriginal people

pretend to be Aboriginal to gain benefits and that therefore light-skinned Aboriginal people are just white people pretending to be Aboriginal and are not 'real'. There has been debate about how or if the Government should introduce ways of proving Aboriginality so that only 'real' Aboriginal people could have access to benefits.

In 2002, at a Tasmanian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission election some disputants talked about using genetic testing as a means of addressing the practical difficulty of proving their Aboriginal descent through direct documentary evidence. This would mean that individuals could theoretically provide scientific evidence that they are biologically related to an Aboriginal person (Australian Government, 2013). It has since been discussed that there are four major barriers to proving Aboriginality by means of genetics (De Pleuitz & Croft, 2003). Firstly there is no such thing as a genetically differentiated 'race' - we are all one species. Secondly, there would be significant diversity in Aboriginal people as there was some genetic mixing both between Aboriginal 'races' and also other areas of Micronesia (as indicated in chapter two). Thirdly, unless there is access to genetic material of the actual ancestors in question it would be hard to prove Aboriginality and finally against whom could the genetic inheritance be tested? It would need to be DNA from 'full blood' Aboriginal people covering all geographical areas of Australia. Apart from areas where Aboriginal people in that area have been exterminated, some Stolen Generations people have little or no precise information as to where their ancestors are from, making the proving of Aboriginality uncertain (De Pleuitz & Croft, 2003). Therefore proposals on genetic testing as a means to prove Aboriginal heritage were dismissed on the grounds that 'race' and 'ethnicity' are social, cultural and political constructs which cannot be tested objectively. It would also seem from a social work perspective that to introduce such genetic testing would be a contravention of international human rights which hold that one of the most basic human rights is the right to define yourself according to your own customs and laws (De Pleuitz & Croft, 2003). Which leaves the debate open as to who is 'real' and who is not?

The 'real' debate is hypocritical and racist and yet it is being taken up by both Australians and Aboriginal people themselves. In one article, a dark-skinned man who had been raised by white foster parents saw himself as more Aboriginal simply because of skin colour. This same man

appeared on the SBS Insight program and sat near a light-skinned man who had been raised and socialised within an Aboriginal community surrounded by family. Was this man raised in the Aboriginal environment less Aboriginal simply due to his skin colour? Another dark-skinned woman in the SBS Insight program was quick to judge by looks stating to a fair-skinned woman 'you look white to me' (SBS, 7.8.12). Interestingly the same dark-skinned lady was also quick to identify that she became protective of her light-skinned grandchildren and was even prepared to go to the school to advocate their rightful Aboriginal identity and heritage and would do this by the school 'getting a look at me' (SBS, 7.8.12). It seems that somehow having light skin and being Aboriginal is only ok if you have a dark-skinned parent or grandparent available for 'show and tell' for everyone who may doubt you.

There is also the argument that a person is less Aboriginal if they only have one ancestor in their lineage, especially if this ancestor is further back than a grandparent and they have light skin. Apparently Aboriginal heritage seems to 'fade out' and become not as important with time and the addition of other heritage. This perception seems to be at odds with the statement by the Australian government that any Aboriginal heritage an individual has makes them Aboriginal.

What I find interesting about this conversation is if you've got a choice about it. When you grow up in a small country town, we didn't have a choice about identity- we were that Aboriginal family (Mark McMillan as cited in SBS, 7.8.12).

This 'real' debate seems to conveniently forget that there have been active Government policies that created light-skinned Aboriginal people. These policies made it unsafe to identify as Aboriginal for some people for fear of discrimination, retribution and child removal. More recently, people have been able to begin to identify as Aboriginal and be proud of their heritage and this may be in a small part due to less fear of being killed as has happened in the past (Moses, 2004), removed or moved to another State due to your racial identity. Light-skinned Aboriginal people are still being challenged on their Aboriginal heritage despite this history and even though the official definition accepts anyone who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such in their community.

I'm also a Stolen Generation. Last year I got my certificate of Aboriginality and I honestly felt by receiving that I belonged somewhere. And I think that most Stolen Generation would probably feel like that. I love the fact I was in contact with my Aboriginality as a traditional completely dark Aboriginal knowing country land and whatever but I wasn't born that way. But to identify as Aboriginal, when I got my Aboriginality certificate, I actually was elated- it was like receiving my birth certificate. So that's really, at the end of the day, it's what we're about. It's about identifying and knowing where you're from and people that were meant to be your family and reconnecting (Jeanie Bartley as cited in SBS, 7.8.12).

Just because I don't look black, doesn't mean I'm not Aboriginal...and it doesn't mean that I can't be proud of who I am just because I don't have skin colour doesn't make me no different to any of you who have colour...you can't claim Aboriginality, you are Aboriginal or you're not. You don't have a choice. When I was born, I was born Aboriginal. When I die, I will die Aboriginal. Everything in between is Aboriginal (Tarran Betteridge as cited in SBS, 7.8.12).

In some respects, there is an assumption that if someone has their Certificate of Aboriginality, then the 'proof' that they are Aboriginal is now confirmed. This is not necessarily the case. The Certificate of Aboriginality process has its own dilemmas. There seems to be an odd and inconsistent system in place for any Aboriginal person to start seeking their Aboriginal certificate. This certificate is used to gain Aboriginal identified scholarships, jobs or awards and many light-skinned Aboriginal people also seek one to prove to society in general that they are 'real'. Currently the system is that a person can approach their local land council in which they live with the evidence of their Aboriginal identity. It is presumed that the individual is also identifying as Aboriginal and that the local community knows them and can accept them as such.

The issues we've been hearing so far have shown just how ridiculous it is to have a formal set of criteria that someone has to adhere to. Obviously, what we should be looking at is first why were those criteria established? What was the philosophy behind them? And we know those three criteria off the top of our heads, that's ancestry, fair enough, self- recognition as an Aboriginal, self-determination, clear enough. But the third one was originally intended for the community in which you lived. It did not mean only Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal organisations. It meant that your neighbor's knew that you were Aboriginal and if you were going to get some

vague benefit out of declaring yourself Aboriginal, then you weren't doing it in a hidden secretive way but you were quite open and honest about your Aboriginality. And once you are public about your Aboriginality, there's no way you can ever reverse it (Pat Eatock as cited in SBS, 7.8.12).

If a person is not accepted by their local land council as being Aboriginal (whether they can or cannot provide evidence for this) they are asked to go back to their original community of origin to apply for the certificate. However for people who have been part of the Stolen Generation or whose family has been removed or moved from their area of 'country' as their 'home' land council may have no memory of that family and the person may not be known to or familiar in the area. The individual is also not part of the local community as they are no longer living there and may never have lived there. This makes meeting the criteria almost impossible for them.

Academic Mark McMillan had some suggestions to how the current certificate system could be improved.

I think if people take time- subjective yes, in a way but that also underscores that there's actually complexities that Aboriginal people get involved with when they are trying to engage other Aboriginal people- where they are from, who's your mob? It means something and if people spend the time engaging with those people, then I don't think it is a yes/no vote, here's my paperwork. Talking face to face is the way to deal with it and it's not an inquisition, it's actually a conversation so people actually feel comfortable that their history and their experiences, complicated as they are, are actually being listened to (SBS, 7.8.12).

Warren Mundine summed the situation up when he stated:

One of the things I find quite interesting is this discussion about Aboriginality and about skin colour...but it doesn't recognise the wide range of experiences of Aboriginal people. There are people who were taken away, and were forced in to the white system. So they lost their country. They lost their land. They didn't do it by choice, it was forced upon them. Then they had children and they had forced upon them. Then they had children and they had so two or three generations away they discovered that they had Aboriginality in them. Now because they discovered that they had Aboriginality, it's about the pride in it but some people have it forced

upon them and had no choice in the whole matter. Two or three generations later they've discovered they have Aboriginal ancestry and they're proud of it.

We should engage with those people and welcome them back to our country. We should not beat 'em and flog 'em and chase 'em away and treat 'em like some sort of bad disease or something...

I'm very proud of my Aboriginality. It is not a burden on me. It is not a problem for me. I love it. I'm proud of it. This is what we've got to start talking about. Rather than having these silly arguments about you're blacker than me or you're whiter than me and you can't speak language. That's because you were beaten up 100 years ago and were forced not to speak it. You don't do dance anymore because white man beat you up and forced you not to dance anymore.

It's about time we started recognising all these different experiences of our community and start pulling together as people, rather than saying. 'We don't like you'. Or having stupid things like the Aboriginality form where you go to a meeting and have to sit in front of 10 or 5 or 6 people who actually judge your Aboriginality, that is bizarre to me (SBS, 7.8.12).

In many instances, Aboriginal people across Australia have been asked to suppress, ignore and reject their identity and to take up a Westernised culture and identity. This has been done in a number of ways including the impact of the Stolen Generations and the impact of government policy. Aboriginal people may have not made this choice. Many light-skinned Aboriginal people are trying to reconnect by learning all they can about their culture including their place of belonging within it. This can create feelings of feel pride and being integral to the community, despite their skin colour.

But to me it's like saying, why don't you call yourself John? Because I'm not John, I'm Luke. Why would I say I'm not Aboriginal? I am Aboriginal (Luke as cited in Overington, 24.4.12b)

'All those Aboriginal benefits'

As discussed above there is a conclusion repeated in the media is that 'all of these' fair-skinned Aboriginal people are making fraudulent claims to gain benefits. As discussed in the Bolt case there is a perception that light-skinned Aboriginal people are actually white imposters or are light-skinned Aboriginal people but don't deserve benefits allocated for Aboriginal people.

There seems to be a belief that numbers of people identifying as Aboriginal are increasing due to these perceived benefits (SBS, 2013). There are no statistics on the increasing numbers of people stating they are Aboriginal although there has been a rise in the recent 2011 census of 20% of people who identify as Aboriginal. This census rise has been directly linked to the increase of benefits Aboriginal people receive (ABS, 2010; SBS, 2013). The Aboriginal population increase that is reported does not seem to be linked to other possible reasons such as Stolen Generation peoples that may be making their way back to their Aboriginal identity, the increase in safety for people to say that they are Aboriginal or the increase of resources such as Link up, ancestry.com or other means for finding out your family heritage.

Why has Australia chosen to give benefits (or welfare) to any of its citizens? Welfare is not unique to Australia. It has been seen as a way to address adverse life contingencies (such as unemployment, disability or sickness), to redistribute money to individuals at times in their life when they are seen to have a greater need (e.g.: when they have children or at retirement) and as a basic necessity (e.g.: medicare- a free non-means tested national health insurance) (Buckmaster, 2008).

Welfare has been positively associated with social cohesion. Social cohesion can be seen as the process of minimising and avoiding conflict and polarisation in society (Buckmaster, 2008). Welfare can be seen as a way to reduce social inequality, exclusion and therefore reduce social conflict and increase shared identity, status, unity and affinity (Barbalet, 1992). Welfare or benefits were introduced to Aboriginal people to address the fact that they are the most economically and socially disadvantaged members of Australia (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Aboriginal people are not the only people in Australia who have been targeted to gain benefits to assist them. There are also medical and legal benefits for low income earners, carers, pensioners, migrants and refugees (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). What seems to be unique to Australia is the argument surrounding if these benefits are really warranted for Aboriginal people and in particular light-skinned Aboriginal people as highlighted in the Bolt articles.

It is important to briefly discuss the benefits in contention to gain an understanding of what is perceived as at the heart of this debate. The benefits to identifying as Aboriginal include; gaining Abstudy³³ (the payment is the same amount as AUSTUDY), 'prizes' such as art prizes and literary prizes, identified scholarships, identified jobs³⁴ and finally a perception from some media that there would be a feeling of being 'special and being able to make people feel guilty about harming Aboriginal people ' (Overington, 24.4.12b).

The Aboriginal 'benefits' are only available to those people who can prove that they have Aboriginal heritage, that they are accepted as part of an Aboriginal community and that state openly that they are Aboriginal. Despite having an Aboriginal label the individual may not get any additional funds compared to a non-Aboriginal person (e.g.: Abstudy and Austudy).

Although there are some benefits attached to Aboriginality, there is also the concept of cultural responsibility. This means an individual is responsible for being a positive role model and giving back to the community (both small and large) as an Aboriginal person generally and especially if they are successful within an identified position or scholarship. In this way, the individual is increasing both their personal capacity and their communities' capacity. There also needs to be an acknowledgement that there are individuals that are gaining jobs or scholarships because they fit the Aboriginality criteria but also because they have a lot of potential to succeed and to actually do the job.

Due to the fact that the experience of the Aboriginal community is that the amount of money received is actually not very large it is seen that any benefits attached to Aboriginality must be protected from the 'fake' non-Aboriginal people who will claim they are Aboriginal to receive these limited benefits. So there exists an endless circle of doubt, hostility, judgement and reserve around any light-skinned Aboriginal person, especially if they have no family or

³³ Help with costs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are studying or undertaking an Australian apprenticeship.

³⁴ All of these benefits require a certificate of Aboriginality, to have the skill or talent involved and to be able to meet the selection criteria's as applicable.

Aboriginal people to vouch for them or the ability to provide good evidence of their Aboriginality and of their good ethical stance in the matter of benefits.

It seems that the average person in Australian society does not understand why these benefits were created in the first place or the difference between equity and equality. Aboriginal people are entitled to and deserve a set of measures that help to address past wrongs done to them. This includes the targeted delivery of services, identified jobs and Abstudy. These are equity measures that are designed to improve the socio- economic status of Aboriginal people. Are they excessive or generous? No because they have not closed the gap or addressed the original issues as yet. Wider society is operating under the delusion that these Aboriginal specific benefits are hundreds of thousands of dollars or excessively generous when they are not. As one participant tries to explain the negative responses:

Colonisation experiences that have not been explained discussed or figured out- that causes the lateral violence (Mabun).

The perception that darker-skinned Aboriginal people are 'missing out' because lighter-skinned people are taking all the resources remains unproven. On the face of it, this discussion looks as if this is an issue of worry about entitlements and benefits and people masquerading as Aboriginal but it is actually about Aboriginal people occupying a position in Australia, which is incredibly marginal. Helping one Aboriginal despite their skin colour is in fact addressing the disadvantage and marginalisation.

Need versus race

Should everyone who identifies as Aboriginal be entitled to apply for these various identified prizes, scholarships, grants and jobs regardless of their personal circumstances? The issue raised in the media is whether those benefits designed to assist Aboriginal people should be targeted at those perceived to have a genuine need. Journalist Caroline Overington states:

If Aboriginal people in urban communities are now 'very much like' their neighbours, why does Australia still have laws that target them on the basis of their race rather than their needs?

(Overington, 24.4.12a)

Anthony Dillon, an Aboriginal academic at University of Western Sydney stated that in his view, if there was a means test or needs test, then the rate of people identifying as Aboriginal would also go down (SBS, 2013).

Obviously, despite the current statistics and Government responses (such as *Closing the Gap*), light-skinned urban Aboriginal people are perceived as having little to no socioeconomic needs versus the perception of all dark-skinned regional Aboriginal people living in third world standards. Dallas Scott, an Aboriginal man who has been vocal on the subject of Aboriginal identity stated:

Imagine if all those (Aboriginal people) who really shouldn't be eligible (for benefits) made a moral decision and opted out. Imagine if in 2013, we only had disadvantaged, remote indigenous Australians eligible for every Aboriginal art award, scholarship, traineeship, loan, job position. As a nation we would be embarrassed when we saw how few of these roles were able to be filled (Scott, 2013).

There is a diverse range of definitions when it comes to what could be classed as a need for the most marginalised group in Australia. There are many Aboriginal families of all shapes and colours that would be considered in the low socio-economic status that may not live in rural or remote areas of Australia. Extreme disadvantage can be masked, hidden and even denied. For example successful light-skinned Aboriginal Anita Heiss, accused by Bolt of reaping benefits and not having financial need was earning approximately \$40,000 a year in 2012 (Heiss, 2012). This indicates a below average yearly wage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Although there are many rural Aboriginal populations that are indeed living in what could be termed third world conditions, this does not mean that other Aboriginal people are not in some kind of need and this cannot be decided based on the colour of skin.

Professor Shane Houston from the University of Sydney stated:

There are three issues. The first is about identity. The second one is about heritage. And the third one is about needs. Let's go to the first one about identity. I've been working in Aboriginal affairs for almost 40 years. I have seen Aboriginal people of all sorts of colours but who are incredibly proud of their identity- that is a construct of self not of anybody else, it's yourself. Your identity

is a spirit, a set of values, a force which informs your decisions which is a product of story and journey immersed in our identity. That is something the Government can never give you. No organisation can give you that. Your family, your community, yourself gives you that identity.

The second question is about heritage. Now I have had people have conversations with me and say, 'Shane, I am not Aboriginal but I grew up in West Wyalong and I think if I go back far enough, I'm sure I'd be able to find. Why aren't I Aboriginal' and my response to them was, 'That might be part of your heritage and you should be very proud of it just as I am very proud of my mother's English heritage'. They can be proud of their Aboriginal heritage. But it is not their identity. It is not that story and journey which informs their decisions.

The third thing that's collided in to this conversation is the question of need... access to services is something that should be based on need...Let's judge them on what their needs are, we have to reconcile those three issues (SBS, 7.8.12).

This debate is one that attracts a lot of attention in Australian media. There appears to be a lack of understanding of the impact, breadth and depth of continuing colonisation in Australia. This is a complex issue that may have attitudes of greed, fear, entitlement and lack of knowledge surrounding it. What hasn't been worked out yet is who would decide who was needy and who was not. To be able to identify as an Aboriginal person because you have Aboriginal heritage is a right. There is an obvious need for more discussion about need in terms of benefits when identifying as Aboriginal.

It appears to me that the Australian media ask a complex and subtle question- perhaps never asked out loud but alluded to in many ways which is why don't Aboriginal people want to be white? It's a question that has been put to Aboriginal people since 1888 and there hasn't seemed to be much progress to understanding the answer since then.

It seems difficult for non-Aboriginal people to understand why Aboriginal people would not want to assimilate into the dominant culture of Australia. There seems to be a lot of rejection, racism, judging and hardship that do figure into identifying as an Aboriginal person in Australia when you have light skin and so the perception is that it would be easier just to be identified with non-Aboriginal people. The next chapter attempts to answer this question- by

understanding why a group of light-skinned Aboriginal people take on the journey to be Aboriginal with light skin.

Kyle Turner, recipient of the 2012 Charles Perkins award stated:

Any expectation that a person would no longer want or need to identify with their Aboriginal heritage because of their skin colour seems insulting and limited. It is almost like saying, 'you don't have to put up with the burden of being Aboriginal anymore' (Turner, 9.8.12).

It seems ridiculous to think about the fact that there were Government policies set in place to make Aboriginal people look and act less 'Black' as that was unacceptable and yet now there is a discussion in the media that these people are now too 'White'. There is no acknowledgement of the unique cultural experiences of colonisation that have forced people to have this assimilated experience.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has looked at the current media discussions surrounding light-skinned Aboriginal identity in Australia. It has analysed the key themes such as who is considered to be a 'real' Aboriginal and who the perception of added benefits to being Aboriginal is not, and need for benefits versus getting benefits based on race. This gives an insight in to the current perceptions of Aboriginal light-skinned people as they are portrayed in the media.

The next chapter looks at the individual stories and what identifying as a light-skinned Aboriginal person means for them. This chapter gives a background to the participants Aboriginal heritage and journey to identifying as a light-skinned Aboriginal person with little community or family links to the Aboriginal culture and community. It places the participants stories in context to their Aboriginal identity.

Chapter 6: Participants and their stories

Identity is an assemblage of constellations. Anna Deavere Smith³⁵

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the current media discussions surrounding the topic of light-skinned Aboriginal people in Australia. It highlighted three key events and then discussed the broader themes that emerge from these conversations, such as legitimacy and need versus race debates surrounding benefits. This chapter begins to introduce the participants of the research and give some background of their stories and circumstances. By doing this, the chapter attempts to place the participants in context in terms of their Aboriginal identity.

The participants' stories

After lengthy discussion about whether interviewees wanted to have their own name or a pseudonym as part of the research, I made the decision to be incredibly careful about confidentiality. My supervisor was not keen on my first suggestion, which was to just give the participants a number (e.g.: P1). I went back to the participants and asked them what they thought. Some still wanted to go ahead with my number system but the unanimous vote was that they not have their own name. When I suggested an Aboriginal name they were all content with this and so I made the decision to give all of the participants an Aboriginal name.³⁶ I chose Aboriginal names instead of any name because I could and because it represents another layer of culture and cultural knowledge that I can share. These names were deliberately genderless as they represented vague concepts such as fire or sun. Even if they were listed as a male or female name it may not have been ascribed to this gender in reality. I also deliberately used their or them instead of placing he or she in the stories. Areas that the participants came from have also been kept deliberately vague but varied from NSW to Queensland, rural and urban situations. Ten females participated in the research aged from their early twenties' to forties.

³⁵ URL accessed 1 March 2013

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/identity_4.html#UdedfHCfAHLuV7ST.99

³⁶ Aboriginal names were sourced from 'You Name it' (Winter Buck, 1995) and Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, Yuwaalayaay Dictionary (Ash, Giacon, & Lissarrague, 2003) and one participant provided a name.

Four males participated in the research aged from their early twenties' to forties. Two participants withdrew from the study, which will be discussed further.

Kalinda (sun, lookout, view)

Kalinda contacted after receiving the email via the university they were attending. Kalinda was in their early 20s and gave their reason for participating in the research as thinking it was a good topic to discuss as it was interesting.

Kalinda self-identified as having light skin and having little kinship and community ties. Kalinda's family and Aboriginal kinship network were originally based in a rural area of NSW. Kalinda's parents then moved from this area to a coastal region. Once Kalinda's family moved from their immediate kinship network they did not form strong community links. The family participated in community events such as NAIDOC.

Kalinda states that the family identified openly as Aboriginal and raised the children to know and be aware of their Aboriginality. Kalinda describes a difficult time getting their confirmation of Aboriginality from the local community in which they had grown up. This was mainly due to the family not having connected to any members of the local community in this area and so they were relatively unknown. Kalinda thought that their light skin also compounded feelings of disbelief.

Kalinda states the family came from a low socio-economic background and would be considered quite poor. Kalinda had strong family values and connection, including a spiritual connection with the land. Kalinda is currently developing a stronger connection with their current local Aboriginal community.

Due to the fact Kalinda has always identified, particularly at school, this has been a benefit as the community has then been able to identify them due to this participation. Kalinda has two siblings but neither has been able to obtain their confirmation of Aboriginality. One sibling has decided not to pursue gaining a confirmation of Aboriginality, even though this would be helpful for them in terms of their current career in terms of support and employment opportunities. Kalinda reports this sibling not feeling comfortable identifying and this was attributed to their

light skin. Kalinda feels that a certain kind of racism has been internalised by this sibling. This sibling often states things such as 'I'm not really because I don't look it'. The sibling is reported as feeling like they are doing something wrong by identifying with light skin. Kalinda states there is a stigma attached to identifying when you have light skin and an assumption from the community that you are only identifying to get something in particular benefits attached to Aboriginality. Light-skinned people such as Kalinda's sibling are therefore worried that by identifying they will have this stigma attached to them. For this sibling, identifying is fraught and sometimes this individual identifies and at other times does not. Kalinda's other sibling has also not placed any paperwork for a confirmation of Aboriginality but identifies as an Aboriginal person.

Kalinda described themselves as a 'bookworm' growing up and perhaps their shyness and lack of ability to make friends easily also inhibited their networks in the Aboriginal community. Kalinda went to schools with Aboriginal children attending, but was more interested in books than in participating socially.

Kalinda's Aboriginal parent grew up in a time when the family pretended they were not Aboriginal and it was not spoken of (a taboo subject). Kalinda's Aboriginal grandparent felt that they had to move away from their home Country due to the intensity of racial tensions. Kalinda's Aboriginal parent was born in the early 1960's before Aboriginal people were counted in the census. The family was scared to identify (although Kalinda did not discuss the reasons for this fear it can be logically concluded that fear of removal of children, forced living on missions and racial vilification were some possible reasons the family felt unsafe being open with their identity). Kalinda's Aboriginal parent had, however, identified as an Aboriginal person and also identified the children as Aboriginal.

The family is supportive of the children deciding whether or not to identify as Aboriginal. Kalinda's non-Aboriginal parent has stated they had felt uncomfortable (and perhaps awkward) when any of the siblings had been acknowledged in public about their Aboriginality (such as for an award or achievement) as it was obvious that the children had light skin. Once again the stigma, shame and guilt about lack of colour and the feeling of not being authentic has

influenced the family and so Kalinda's parents understand the siblings lack of motivation for wanting to pursue a painful journey into the Aboriginal community but also fully support Kalinda's endeavours to do so.

Kalinda goes to great lengths to discuss the fact that they are not taking any benefits they might be entitled to due to having Aboriginal heritage. There seems to be a fear that the community will assume that this is the only reason for a light-skinned person to want to have a confirmation of Aboriginality. Kalinda is gaining confidence in participating in their local Aboriginal community.

Wiree (bark vessel for water)

Wiree contacted after receiving the email via the university they were attending. Wiree was in their 40's and gave their reason for participating in the research as seeing it as an opportunity to tell their story and their life experiences.

Wiree identified as having light skin and little kinship and community ties. Wiree came from a traumatic family background and I would describe their upbringing as having had a hard life. Wiree was ostracised from their Aboriginal family from a young age due to racism on behalf of Wiree's non-Aboriginal family. This family did not openly talk about Wiree's Aboriginality; however, Wiree did have contact with their Aboriginal family and also Aboriginal friends in their life. Wiree was aware that there was Aboriginal heritage but only became able to confirm this and thus identify late in Wiree's life.

Wiree still finds it hard to enter the Aboriginal community and they have self-taught themselves most of what they know about their Aboriginal identity because of personal circumstances. Wiree has some connections with Aboriginal people but feels their light skin inhibits them from participating fully.

Wiree's family came from a rural NSW area. They then relocated to an urban NSW area and then to a remote part of Australia. Wiree now lives back in the area that the family originated from. Wiree was raised with the worry and anxiety that they may be removed (even though this

was not spelt out as due to Aboriginal identity). Wiree has four siblings, with one who is deceased.

Due to the rural and remote environments Wiree moved to, they were easily able to associate with other Aboriginal children and families. There was, however, quite a deal of racism and stereotyping in the community and even in Wiree's biological family. Due to this one of Wiree's siblings has chosen not to identify as Aboriginal.

Wiree met some of their Aboriginal family when they were an adult and this had a profound effect on their ability to identify as an Aboriginal person. The realisation of the importance of that connection and belonging were significant to Wiree who had grown up without some of these key needs being met.

Wiree had issues gaining a Confirmation of Aboriginality (although they have now held it for ten years) because their Aboriginal parent and grandparent do not have a birth certificate. In fact, Wiree was classed as flora and fauna for at least the first three years of their life due to not being recognised at that time as human. However, Wiree has identified as Aboriginal since their heritage was confirmed by extended family. Wiree is able to link themselves into various parts of the community as they are aware of some of the birthplaces their Aboriginal family came from and also of family names to connect to. There are, however, some pieces of information that are unable to be found due to lack of records and the non-Aboriginal family keeping Wiree disconnected for so long.

Ekalla (lake)

Ekalla contacted after receiving the email from their university. Ekalla is in their early 20's and identifies as having light skin and no kinship or community ties. Ekalla wanted to participate in the research because they thought it was an interesting topic that described them and hoped that they would help both themselves and me by participating. Ekalla was taken to be introduced to local members I knew after the interview and given local resources that I was aware of. Ekalla's Aboriginal family originally came from urban NSW and Ekalla was currently living in a nearby area to this.

It was very difficult for Ekalla to enter the Aboriginal community for many reasons. Firstly Ekalla's family was virtually unknown due to not identifying in the local community, secondly, Ekalla was shy and lastly, Ekalla was unaware of local protocol for entering the community.

Ekalla's Aboriginal grandparent had been removed and placed in an orphanage at a young age. Ekalla thinks that there were other siblings also placed in the orphanage but Ekalla's grandparent had not been able to keep linked to these siblings. Ekalla's grandparent did not talk about their upbringing. It was understood that their life had been painful and difficult. Although this grandparent did not identify as Aboriginal and was not speaking about any information around their childhood, this grandparent did provide Ekalla with all of the necessary documentation for Ekalla to be recognised by the local land council as Aboriginal and to gain their confirmation of Aboriginality.

Most of Ekalla's family does not identify with their Aboriginal heritage due to trauma and a history of child removals. Ekalla is seen by their family as a rebel for identifying and is generally not supported in their attempts to link to community. Ekalla's Aboriginal parent wanted a life away from the stereotypes surrounding Aboriginal people (such as being drunks and being unsuccessful in life) and also from the poverty often associated with Aboriginal families. By raising the children in a white world, Ekalla's parent seemed to think that they had provided a better life and more opportunities for them. Ekalla felt that this parent had racist views towards their own peoples and wanted to separate themselves from the negative racism and stigma attached to being Aboriginal.

Ekalla described themselves as a tolerant and open person. They had suspected early on in their life that there may be some Aboriginal heritage in the family due to their skin colour, which while light was significantly darker in comparison to other peers. Thus, when Aboriginal heritage was confirmed Ekalla had been excited and open to entering the Aboriginal community. Ekalla had sought out a local person who was Aboriginal to help them enter the community but this individual was described as 'a bit strange' and in the end was ultimately unhelpful. In some ways, Ekalla's attempt to connect with someone to help them with the process was stalled by the inability of this mentor to guide them or discuss the appropriate protocols.

Ekalla was very motivated to be part of the community and to belong. Ekalla appeared to be on the peripheral not knowing how to take the steps to be accepted. There was some fear that the community would be suspicious of them, despite their ability to gain a confirmation of Aboriginality. There was an admittance of being unaware of particular rules or protocols that would enable them to be more accepted. Ekalla wanted to learn and be taught and felt that they needed to do some more self-teaching and gain some more confidence around their identity before entering any more into the community.

Kalla (fire)

Kalla contacted due to the email sent to their University but was also known to me through my own community network. Kalla felt passionately about giving back to the community and also to Aboriginal researchers and this was one of the reasons they had chosen to participate.

Kalla's Aboriginal family is from NSW and they were aware and able to name the Country they identified with. Kalla found out later in life about their Aboriginality. There had been an ongoing health issue that had affected Kalla. It was a health issue that is related to Aboriginal peoples and could be described as being common among Aboriginal people. After blood tests the treating physician questioned the likelihood of the family's Aboriginal heritage. This was not a new concept for Kalla's family. They had wondered about Aboriginal heritage in the past and this new situation gave them the impetus to follow this up. From this event, Aboriginal heritage was located and as a result, Kalla was able to gain a Confirmation of Aboriginality. It was also discovered that Kalla's Aboriginal family had been part of the Stolen Generations and much of the Aboriginal heritage had been lost or hidden in this history of trauma and removal. Kalla was in their 40's and identified as having light skin and due to being brought up in a non-Aboriginal world had had little kinship or community networks when they first identified. Kalla has since developed a wider network of community and knowledge of kinship.

Kalla had recently done more research into their family tree. As part of a Stolen Generations family, Kalla had previously found it difficult to locate themselves within a family or cultural network or for other people to be able to easily place them. This meant that the journey to being accepted and legitimised as Aboriginal in their local community had often been difficult

and painful. The ability to now link themselves to an area and in some ways more importantly, a lineage, has made identifying easier. However, there are still those around Kalla who treat them as someone who knows little about their culture and they have had the experience of lateral violence and racism due to the colour of their skin. Kalla had found that people had been less accepting of them when they had been unable to place their family.

Being part of Stolen Generations, finding family is not as easy as some members of the family had no documentation such as birth certificates. Due to the painful nature of entering the community, some of Kalla's family has chosen not to identify as Aboriginal. This was explained as being due to the consistent racism, doubt and necessity of proving Aboriginal heritage that they had experienced leaving them to feel that it was not worth it and that the path was too difficult.

Kalla came from a very multi-cultural area growing up (which may have contributed to the openness and acceptance of their Aboriginal heritage). Kalla states that much of their cultural learning was firstly based from school and then from University. Also, Kalla had learnt cultural knowledge from other Aboriginal people around them since finding out about their heritage and had also participated in a lot of self-learning.

Kalla had always felt that something had been missing and when their Aboriginal heritage was discovered they felt a sense of belonging. They believe their Aboriginal identity has helped them form a sense of who they are and where they belong.

Thoomie (peace or silence)

Thoomie was referred through a vouching network- someone I knew had asked them if they would like to participate. Thoomie was in their 20's and identified as having light skin and having had little community and kinship networks when younger. Thoomie felt they wanted to participate in the research because they related to not being raised within a kinship context.

Thoomie stated they had two conflicting ideas about where they belonged and this had been a confusing road for them to travel on. Thoomie felt this research was valuable for young people,

especially those coming from a rural area into a city area but also for anyone who was having a struggle with their culture and with 'finding a place where they belong'.

Thoomie had now developed both 'adopted' kinship networks and a strong community network that had enabled them to learn more about their Aboriginal heritage and identity. Thoomie had three siblings, each having various skin colours. Thoomie had had what I would call a difficult or hard life and came from poor socio-economic circumstances and a single parent family.

Thoomie's biological Aboriginal father had left the family when Thoomie was very young, so even though the family identified as Aboriginal, Thoomie had no kinship or community contact except through school until they were older. Thoomie's Country of origin had been Queensland but after the family split, Thoomie moved with their parent to an urban area of NSW.

Thoomie had a disrupted childhood with many moves from NSW to areas of Queensland. Due to no contact with Thoomie's Aboriginal parent or Aboriginal family, all of the cultural content Thoomie had been taught came from school. The local primary school that Thoomie attended had an Aboriginal liaison officer and some cultural learning around dances and stories occurred through this officer.

Thoomie discusses the racism directed at them during high school and discussed the social views on Aboriginal people. As a result, Thoomie had a negative understanding of Aboriginality (such as they were all unemployed, all had a drinking problem and were in general unreliable) until Thoomie graduated and met a responsible mentor who guided them in their culture and showed and taught them about their culture and Aboriginal people in general. Thoomie had also visited where they had originally come from, including meeting with the local land council and seeking information and knowledge from various people and areas in the community.

Thoomie describes a strong spiritual connection with the land and their Aboriginal identity. There is pride surrounding their identity. Thoomie has described feeling at home now they have identified and forged their Aboriginal identity. Thoomie has developed a sense of belonging and confidence in their identity and a sense of achievement. Thoomie has been part of self-educating themselves by visiting their Country of origin and speaking to people about the culture and gaining knowledge and insights from this.

Nepo (friend)

Nepo agreed to participate due to vouching by another participant and was in their early 20's. Nepo identified as having light skin and little community networks. Nepo came from a large Aboriginal family that had been a strong part of their identity but this family had 'kept to themselves' and so Nepo was not necessarily known to the local Aboriginal community. Nepo came from a NSW rural environment originally and had then moved to another rural NSW area.

Although Nepo's family all knew they were Aboriginal and often met together, Nepo's family only identified in the local community as Aboriginal when Nepo went to high school. This was due to fear of removal and discrimination, but also because the family was surrounded by kin and had not seen the need to identify outwardly to others before this. The small rural area surroundings may have had something to do with the family not identifying more broadly sooner in terms of possible racism and discrimination that may be present surrounding Aboriginal people of the area.

Nepo participated in the research because I had been vouched for- they had been encouraged by another participant to voice young people's ideas about identifying as Aboriginal in the community, especially when from a rural area. Nepo felt they might make a contribution to young people and raise awareness for young people growing up in remote or rural areas.

Nepo states that they were not fully aware of their heritage until high school. Until this time their Aboriginal identity had been something taken for granted, natural and just a part of their broader family life. The first thing they noticed after identifying was that people's reactions to them changed and they became the target for stereotypes, bullying and racism. Nepo was targeted more so than some other darker-skinned Aboriginal peers and they think this was because they were seen as a novelty. Nepo believed there were a lack of mentors and elders in the town and a lack of cultural understanding in general. This meant that Nepo developed a reluctance to identify to unknown people, concerned at the possible negative and racist response they might receive.

A move to a large city brought an alternative view to the stereotypes of Aboriginal people and enabled Nepo to develop a sense of pride instead of shame and stigma around their Aboriginal identity. Nepo's Aboriginal parent has been trying to reconnect with family members and to regain aspects of the cultural heritage. Nepo's Aboriginal parent has taken an identified position for employment which has increased the family's community networks and relationships.

Nepo has been mentored by an Aboriginal person hired to facilitate Aboriginal people into Universities at the University they attend. At university, there appears to be a greater acceptance of lighter-skinned Aboriginal people for Nepo compared to in the social environment. Nepo feels the negative responses they receive are due to the belief that there are Aboriginal benefits involved and that light-skinned Aboriginal people are perceived as undeserving of these benefits. There is a strong sense that Nepo has struggled with this concept also but has decided that the opportunities provided will help to strengthen Aboriginal culture, their own family and the general Aboriginal community. Nepo had come from an average waged family background and felt less deserving in this sense as although there was not much surplus of money, Nepo's family were not poverty stricken either.

Matong (strong)

Matong contacted after receiving the email from their university. Matong is in their 40's and has always known about their Aboriginal heritage, although parts of the family had denied heritage due to a complex and painful history of having land and property removed. Matong came from a poorer socio-economic background but had worked their way into what could be classed as an upper middle class socio-economic area. Matong's family originated from a rural NSW area but had moved and been raised in a city area.

Matong states that there had been people in their life who had openly commented on the colour of their skin and had questioned (sometimes not so politely) as to whether there was Aboriginal heritage. Matong had felt a desire to know who they were and where they came from, and decided to investigate the family tree, unearthing their Aboriginal heritage and story. Matong describes always having a 'gut instinct' that there was some Aboriginal heritage in the family but had been nervous about this as they were fearful that people would perceive them as

a fraud who was only identifying for the benefits or worse that they would not be accepted as Aboriginal.

Matong was developing community and adopted 'kinship' networks but still felt varying degrees of acceptance about their Aboriginal heritage. For example, Matong was finding it difficult to gain a confirmation of Aboriginality. Matong had approached their local land council that they lived in for a confirmation but they had sent them back to their original Country of origin to seek and gain this. Matong had never lived in their home community where they would be required to go back and seek this acceptance from. Matong did not feel comfortable asking for this from a community in which they were not known and did not live and so had not gained a confirmation. Although this was at some level frustrating, it did not preclude Matong from interacting active in the local community.

Matong had done a vast amount of personal research into their heritage and into Aboriginal culture. Matong had visited the area where they had originally come from, including visiting the local land councils in that area and surrounding areas. Matong had participated in courses on Aboriginal issues and had actively sought guidance and knowledge from all Aboriginal people that they interacted with.

Konol (sky)

Konol was a participant through vouching. A person I knew vouched for me and the research and because of their ties to the individual, Konol agreed to contact me and see if they could 'help'. Konol was in their 20s and described themselves as a light-skinned person with little or no community or kinship ties. Konol's family originally came from a rural area in NSW but moved to an urban city where Konol was raised.

Konol came from a single parent household where their parent is Aboriginal. Konol had gained much of their Aboriginal cultural knowledge from this parent and also some extended family. Konol had worked hard to gain community networks and support. Konol felt that they had developed a strong network of people surrounding them and that they had forged their identity despite a lack of community and kinship networks.

Konol had an active parent in the community who had made it a point to introduce Konol to members of the community. There was also some extended family around that could vouch for Konol when they became old enough to want to participate in the community. This made the initial approach into the Aboriginal community easier for Konol. Konol was also able to relate themselves to Country and kin and link to people in this way.

Konol had been in situations where the Aboriginal community had questioned their Aboriginal heritage and they felt this was in part due to the lack of community connections they had had growing up as a child but also due to the colour of their skin. Konol was very accepting of this though, feeling that if they were not raised within the community that they had to earn their way to being given respect and acceptance.

Konol had made a concerted effort to spend time in the Aboriginal community through volunteering at various organisations. Konol also found a small 'community' of Aboriginal people at the University who were accepting of various diversity and backgrounds. Konol felt that giving back to the community was in part a contract for people with light skin to be able to continue participation and acceptance and with that in mind Konol felt it was an unending journey.

Dhulan (black wattle)

Dhulan was a participant through vouching. A person I knew had vouched for me and because of their ties to this individual, the participant agreed to partake of the research. Dhulan was in their 20s and identified as having light skin and little community networks. Dhulan's family originally came from rural NSW but had relocated to a NSW urban environment.

Dhulan was placed into foster care at various intervals in their life. They came from very poor socio-economic circumstances. Dhulan had known they were Aboriginal from a young age and had been surrounded by extended Aboriginal family, some of whom had acted as kin carers at various stages. Dhulan had been socialised into Aboriginal identity from their Aboriginal grandparent. Dhulan had some members of the extended family that were less outright in their

Aboriginal heritage due to trauma and removal background. Dhulan had developed a wide network of community links and ties and had a strong passion for helping others.

Dhulan spoke about some racism towards them in part due to their light skin. Dhulan felt that they had needed to work hard to make community connections in the area that they lived in and had been aware that they had to be 'useful'. Dhulan had been adopted by other Aboriginal families when in high school and had created their own community and family networks from these families as well as their own extensive family links.

Wanggii (barn owl)

Wanggii was a participant through vouching as a person I know suggested that they might enjoy being part of the research. Wanggii agreed to undertake the research as they had children and grandchildren who had light skin and hoped the research would help young people to be able to find their identity more easily. Wanggii was in their 40s and identified as having light skin and a lack of kinship and community networks when young. Since then, Wanggii had forged their own family and was known in their local community.

Wanggii came from a low socio-economic background. Wanggii's family had originally come from a rural NSW area but had moved to an urban city environment. Wanggii stated that the family always spoke of this move as for employment purposes but had since realised that there had been a fear of possible removal of the children due to fair skin. Wanggii's Aboriginal parent had seen many family members removed as a child and adolescent and this had impacted on the decision.

Wanggii had two siblings. One sibling did not identify as Aboriginal. Wanggii states that it had been 'too hard and painful' for them. This sibling had been taunted and bullied consistently at school for identifying as Aboriginal and Wanggii felt this influenced their decision. Wanggii's other sibling identified as Aboriginal but choose to 'keep to themselves' rather than get involved with the local community. Wanggii identified tension between the siblings for the diversity of paths being undertaken but they all seemed to interact as a family at different times of the year. Wanggii also spoke about a grandchild who 'ticked the boxes' of identifying as Aboriginal but

'did not do anything about it'- in other words did not interact with other Aboriginal people or in the community. Wanggi appeared to be distressed and worried about this but had not found a solution.

Wanggii had gone to a local school where there were many Aboriginal peers and had interacted with these peers and their families at regular intervals. Wanggii had felt that primary and secondary school may not have had official Aboriginal cultural content but that a lot of knowledge was shared between families or was just 'what we did'. Wanggii commented on the differences of cultural knowledge for their children and grandchildren and remarked that they now taught them some cultural information that they had learnt in school.

Wanggii was able to obtain a Confirmation of Aboriginality quite easily as they had documentation available to them but were also related to some of the employees at the local land council. However, Wanggii's family had not entered actively into the community apart from being friends with other Aboriginal people in the area where they lived. This was seen as a barrier for entry into the community and may have been a contributing factor to why one of the siblings identified openly but did not seem to know how to enter the community safely.

Mabun (gully)

Mabun became a participant through vouching. A person I know sent the research information to them and they agreed to participate because they identified as having fair skin and had moved to an area in which they were not known, cutting them off from their usual kinship and community network. Mabun was in their 20s. Mabun's Aboriginal family originally came from a rural NSW area but moved to a rural area of Queensland. Mabun has moved to an urban area of Victoria and their family is in NSW and Queensland.

Mabun had one sibling who identifies as Aboriginal. Mabun was raised by their Aboriginal parent who always identified. Mabun believes that both their Aboriginal parent and sibling have darker skin. Mabun believes that they look like their non-Aboriginal parent and this side of the family as opposed to their sibling and Aboriginal parent who could be identified by 'looks'.

Mabun has not had much contact with their non-Aboriginal side of the family at all growing up or currently. This means that the majority of contact Mabun had as a young person was with their Aboriginal family and network. Even though Mabun's family moved to a different state at a young age, the family still had extended kinship networks in the new area and so the family was accepted by the community easily as Aboriginal.

Mabun was socialised with Aboriginal people but went to schools that did not have large numbers of Aboriginal children. Mabun describes themselves as 'nerdy' and a bit of a bookworm at school. This affected their ability to socialise and make Aboriginal (and other) friends. Mabun also stated they never felt that they fit in with either the Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal children. Mabun discusses the difficulty with Aboriginal children due to their shyness and their difficulty with non-Aboriginal children as not understanding their life experiences and that Mabun themselves did not understand the other non-Aboriginal children's life experiences either. Mabun felt that they came from a different world to the non-Aboriginal children.

Mabun spoke about racism being directed at both themselves and their sibling due to the lightness of their skin, although their sibling was described as a passionate, strong and involved person who persisted in working with and for the community which ultimately gained this sibling acceptance.

Mabun had gained their confirmation of Aboriginality from the area where they grew up but was forging a new network of community links in their new area. Mabun was working for the community in the new area they had moved to and was using opportunities to further Aboriginal people.

Balabalaa (butterfly)

Balabalaa contacted after seeing an advertisement for the research placed in both the Koori Times and National Indigenous Times. Balabalaa was in their early 30's. Balabalaa agreed to participate because they felt it was an interesting topic and that people, in particular researchers had tended to talk around and about Aboriginal people and not to them.

Balabalaa's original country was rural NSW but they had been brought up in a semi-rural NSW area. Balabalaa had been adopted by non-Aboriginal extended family at a young age and was raised by this family unaware of their Aboriginal heritage. In their late 20's, Balabalaa gained access to their original birth certificate and used it as proof of identity with a Government agency. That agency then gave Balabalaa an Aboriginal worker. This was how Balabalaa found out that one of their parents was Aboriginal and that they were consequently Aboriginal.

Balabalaa speaks about how they had always known there was a family secret and perhaps even wondered about their heritage as they were darker than their family and looked quite different. There had also been health issues that could have been identified as particular risks to Aboriginal people. Although Balabalaa's adopted family had never intended to tell them about their adoption, they have been supportive of Balabalaa's decision to identify and to try to find out more about their Aboriginal heritage.

Balabalaa has now found out that their Aboriginal parent has a large extended family from a regional area of NSW. Balabalaa has met parts of this extended family, however there seems to be a sense of shame surrounding the circumstances of Balabalaa's conception and adoption and many of the family have been polite but have not invited Balabalaa into their lives or supplied cultural knowledge and understanding.

Balabalaa states that identifying as Aboriginal has been a huge decision as there are members of their family and extended family who are not open to this. Balabalaa has been taking the journey slowly. Balabalaa states they only decided to pursue the issue when they met another Aboriginal person on the same journey. This person comes from a well-known family and suggested that they go to the land council together to investigate getting a confirmation of Aboriginality. Balabalaa is still in this process.

On first approaching their local Aboriginal community, Balabalaa states that the community was at first suspicious and unwelcoming and wanting to make sure that Balabalaa was not wanting to use their Aboriginal identity for what was perceived to be the wrong reasons (such as abusing the system for money). Balabalaa themselves was surprised to find that going off Newstart onto Abstudy did not provide more economical help but actually took away benefits such as the

Centrelink blue card, pharmaceutical allowance, greenhouse energy supplement and concession travel (on Newstart \$2.50 anywhere in the State, as a student only half price).

Balabalaa was taught the minimal of cultural knowledge through the non-Aboriginal education system they attended. Their perception of Aboriginal people was positive due to an open-minded household. They are starting to educate themselves about Aboriginal culture and are trying to find out what they can from other Aboriginal people. Balabalaa feels like they have forged their identity as a person and being Aboriginal supplies answers to questions but as yet does not radically change who they are. However, they feel that it also something that no-one can deny them, that is rightfully and wholly theirs and is being integrated into who they are and who they want to be.

Kalina (heart) (Participant supplied this name. It is believed to originate from the Victorian area of Australia.)

Kalina agreed to participate after I had been vouched for by a respected member of the community in which they lived. Kalina also met with me briefly to discuss the research and its implications before agreeing to go ahead with the interview. Kalina was in their early 30's.

Kalina's family had originally come from a rural area of NSW. They had then relocated to an urban area of NSW where Kalina was born. Kalina was raised by their Aboriginal and Indigenous parents.

Kalina describes growing up in a NSW housing commission. In their childhood, there were many Aboriginal families in the housing commission and so Kalina grew up surrounded by Aboriginal families but not necessarily as a community. Kalina states that everyone in the surrounding housing commission knew the other Aboriginal families but this was not openly discussed.

Kalina talks about a great sense of shame and fear surrounding being Aboriginal at the time their Aboriginal parent grew up, with their family being part of the Stolen Generations. Kalina's Aboriginal parent had nine siblings and there were at least thirty six cousins. However, Kalina's Aboriginal parent had had a traumatic and abusive childhood and as a result had left home at an early age. The Aboriginal parent had not allowed very much contact with this extended family.

Kalina had known their Aboriginal grandparents and some aunts and uncles but rarely went home to Country and rarely interacted with these family members. In this way, Kalina does not feel they had an understanding of what it meant or what it was to be Aboriginal as a child and adolescent. The family has stories of Kalina's Aboriginal parent hiding under the house if anyone came to visit unexpectedly and even as a child, Kalina was made to leave the house when people came over as the sense of fear of removal was still high. Kalina's Aboriginal parent had the view that because the children had light skin, it would be better to be quiet about their Aboriginal identity and in this way the chances of removal were lessened but also the racism and stigma that they may receive due to their Aboriginal heritage may be reduced also.

Kalina gained a lot of cultural knowledge from their primary and high school education. All of the Aboriginal students would meet on a regular basis at the school and talk about being Aboriginal. Many of the young people had grown up in Aboriginal communities and shared what cultural knowledge they had. Activities such as painting and storytelling were then offered to Kalina in the community from these students' families.

Kalina had worked hard to be accepted in the Aboriginal communities in which they lived. They had learnt the protocols around this but had also had some intimidating experiences where they had to be able to provide verbal proof of their connections to their Aboriginal heritage. Kalina had a child who was identifying as Aboriginal.

Burrin (Moth)

Burrin participated in the research after I had been vouched for by a respected member of the community in which they lived. Burrin was in their early 20s. Burrin's Aboriginal family had come from a rural area of NSW. Burrin's Aboriginal parent had been part of the Stolen Generations. Burrin had been raised in an urban NSW environment.

Burrin had two siblings who both identified as Aboriginal. Burrin was raised by their Aboriginal parent and did not have anything to do with their non-Aboriginal parent. Burrin was not raised in the Aboriginal community as such, but their Aboriginal parent worked closely in the Aboriginal sector and with Aboriginal people and so Burrin was exposed to Aboriginal culture

and people in some way. Burrun's Aboriginal parent was a great advocate for their Aboriginal identity and the family was involved in NAIDOC week, activities and seminars wherever possible.

Barrun was taught about the Aboriginal culture from their Aboriginal parent who had made a great effort to go searching for any knowledge they could find about family and Aboriginal culture. As a result of this searching, Burrun's Aboriginal parent found Burrun's Aboriginal grandparent. Burrun learnt more about the Aboriginal culture and values from this Aboriginal grandparent. Barrun was raising their own children who all identified as Aboriginal.

Gurugan (peaceful dove)

Gurugan participated in the research after I had been vouched for by a respected member of the community in which they lived. Gurugan was in their late 30s. Gurugan's Aboriginal family originally came from rural NSW but had moved to urban NSW before Gurugan was born. Gurugan had children and grandchildren who were all identifying as Aboriginal.

Gurugan was raised by their Aboriginal parent until they were removed to various institutions such as care institutes³⁷ and foster care when they were a child. Gurugan did find a community of other removed Aboriginal children. These children had various backgrounds, skin colour and cultural knowledge but together they created a family and a community. Gurugan remembers that these children all stayed together and tried to look after each other while both in and out of care. In this way, Gurugan was part of an Aboriginal community and family. No one who had been removed was questioned about identity as the children were aware who was Aboriginal as they were either placed in Aboriginal only placements or in an Aboriginal care institute. Gurugan held a firm belief around their Aboriginality and was then shocked to be told by a non-Aboriginal person that they had fair skin and did not look Aboriginal and therefore did not have to tell anyone that they were.

Gurugan found further extended family in their early 20s. This was a significant period because Gurugan was then able to use these connections to enter the Aboriginal community they were then living in. Gurugan learnt their Aboriginal culture from those around them. Gurugan was

³⁷ Some of these were homes or Department of Community Services run homes with workers present for adults.

mentored by a family member with good standing in the community which cemented their ability to interact in the Aboriginal community. Gurugan states that listening, watching and learning from older Aboriginal people around them were key ways of learning.

Gurugan encountered questioning of their Aboriginal heritage by other Aboriginal people once they had a successful career. Gurugan makes sense of this by stating that this was a way to discredit them and to try to fight for the limited resources available in the community. In Gurugan's opinion, there was also a perception as to how Aboriginal people should act in Australia and being successful is not supported in this societal view.

Withdrawn participants

Narran (moon, a river)

Narran contacted after receiving the email from their university. Narran identified as having light skin and no community or kinship networks. Narran wanted to participate in the research as they thought it was something that needed talking about so that there was less stigma involved for light-skinned people choosing to identify as Aboriginal. However, as time went on, Narran felt that participating in the research may further isolate them from the community they were currently trying to gain an Aboriginal certificate from. Narran was concerned that 'someone' would recognise their voice within the research and that this would negatively affect them. There seemed to be a degree of shame surrounding the fact that they had little kinship or community ties and light skin. Narran felt this topic was very worthy but that it was sensitive because there was so much racism surrounding it, both from the wider society and the local community. Narran withdrew consent and is not featured in the thesis. Narran is spoken about here to acknowledge their hard journey in being interviewed and then deciding that this path was just too unsafe for them at this time. Narran contributed some wonderful ideas to the thesis and in some way I hope I have captured their essence in the thesis if not their exact words.

Marron (leaf)

Marron was referred by a previous participant and was in their early 20's. Marron had been brought up to know about their Aboriginal identity. Marron identified as having light skin and no community or kinship networks. Marron wanted to participate in the research to help other young people to be able to know how to enter the community and start the journey of identifying as Aboriginal. Marron indicated that this had been a difficult and painful experience for themselves and that they wanted to try to make it easier for future generations. Marron got a job in another state midway through organising an interview and despite trying to juggle a move with participating, had to withdraw from the research. I include Marron here to acknowledge the fact that they were willing to participate and for the time and energy they spent engaging with me and trying to find a way to do the interview while moving quickly to another state.

Two journeys: one destination

The participants fell into two groups. The first were those that were brought up with someone Aboriginal around them who socialised them into their Aboriginal identity to some extent. This varied from being a single parent to being a large group of extended kin that the participant may have seen periodically. These Aboriginal people gave a sense of identity, passed on values, worldviews and stories to the participants. In some situations, these Aboriginal people also acted as a person to introduce the participant to the local Aboriginal community.

The second group were those that were raised without an Aboriginal person in their life. They may have known they were Aboriginal, but most participants did not know at all until later in life. These individuals had less knowledge about the Aboriginal culture and less opportunity to socialise with anyone Aboriginal until they were made aware of their heritage. They were less likely to have someone to help them enter the Aboriginal community and less likely to be integrated into the community that they were living in.

The similarities between the groups were the limited cultural knowledge- there were various levels of gaps in knowledge of Aboriginal history, family history and Aboriginal culture. Both

groups wanted to be recognised by a community as Aboriginal. The differences were that the first group had more opportunities to have already formed networks and relationships with Aboriginal people as a child and young person. Mostly they also had kin to introduce and vouch for them in the process of entering an Aboriginal community.

Participants' Aboriginal heritage

As stated above, all of the participants that took part in the research identified themselves as being of Aboriginal descent, having light skin, lacking community ties and/or kinship ties.

Participants made comments such as

I am not obviously Aboriginal. I guess it describes me being light skin, no kinship and no community ties. Still trying to identify yourself as being Aboriginal and to be part of the community. (Ekalla).

Apparently I don't look very Aboriginal and I don't have any Aboriginal traits. (Nepo)

It is important to state that this was the participant's perceptions and these were not necessarily the researchers or the broader community's perceptions. In fact as participants themselves stated

A lot of my white friends had no troubles at all knowing that I was Aboriginal. But I seemed to have some difficulties with it. (Matong)

In my family they are all incredibly pale and have blue eyes and blonde hair...I have brown eyes and Brunette hair and I like to think of it as tanned skin. (Balabalaa)

Despite this topic being seen as 'sensitive' in the community and possibly a taboo topic, the participants wanted to talk about their stories. How had they come to know they were Aboriginal? How had they formed their identity given that they had light skin, little or no community and kinship ties? What sense had they made of it? Could they provide a map for others? What messages had they received from society around them about their identity? These were the questions I based the interviews on, and then I would ask specific questions about their story as the interview evolved. Many of the participants noted that this was the first

time someone had asked them their story, or it was the first time they had articulated many of the concepts we spoke about. They all stated how important they thought the research was for upcoming young people to be able to identify with and hopefully seek answers from.

All participants were deeply aware that they had other heritage apart from their Aboriginal heritage. Some acknowledged and integrated their diverse heritage, while others proclaimed and owned Aboriginality over other heritage. As Kalina stated

That's funny because when you tell other people you are Aboriginal first of all they don't believe it, they think you are not. That is how people say you are light-skinned Aboriginal and you just take that on as part of your identity. But if I had to say how I feel, I'm me. I'm Aboriginal, I'm Maori, I'm German. I am a whole bunch of things that makes me who I am. It's how I identify. Why should there be a difference? (Kalina)

A range of factors impacted how participants viewed their Aboriginal identity including whether the person grew up in close proximity to other Aboriginal people, whether a parent who was Aboriginal was active in their life, which historical era they grew up in, if their families had been involved in the local Aboriginal community and whether identity had been encouraged or accepted by those around them.

Eleven participants had always known of their Aboriginal heritage. They had been told of their Aboriginal heritage by close relatives such as mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts and grandparents. Some of these participants had received positive messages about their Aboriginal heritage and their skin colour from their family members. In particular, these relatives had told the participants that being Aboriginal was not about skin colour and this influenced how they saw themselves.

It was often reinforced to me that it doesn't matter what colour you are, you are Aboriginal. (Konol)

I feel that I'm Aboriginal. It's not I am a bit Aboriginal or I am a lot Aboriginal. I feel I'm Aboriginal. (Kalinda)

I say I am Aboriginal. That is how I see it. You either are Aboriginal or you are not. We knew who we were from a young age. I was always taught not to be ashamed of who we were. No matter what other people said. So for me it has always been I am Aboriginal and I don't care what you say. (Barrun)

Participants were told by family members that their Aboriginal identity formed an important part of who they were and that they were part of the Aboriginal culture and history that included a spiritual connection with the land. The participants who had known they were Aboriginal reflected a sense of kinship among families and a passing on of values such as connectedness and belonging. Participants stated

It was something that was really important to my parent bringing us up a long way away from family. They really made a lot of effort to make sure that we knew where we were from and that we knew how important it was to kind of do what we could to stay connected. (Mabun)

Aboriginal culture survived because it has adapted. It has adapted to the environment of the time and the events that are happening. So I think Aboriginal culture really is more about that sense of belonging and that communal sense of being, which is something that I have had all of my life. (Gurugan)

Many of these participants indicated that they were socialised into an Aboriginal identity by their immediate and surrounding families and as a result, family was a key value for them (eg: Thoomie, Ekalla, Kalla, Nepo). Participants also spoke about the influence of those around them such as parents who had encouraged identity, schools that had given opportunities to identify and specific mentors who had shown a way forwards. All of these individuals had contributed to the formation and continuation of Aboriginal identity.

I got encouragement from my family and from my careers adviser and Aboriginal coordinator at the high school; they all gave me a push to go in that direction. (Nepo)

When asked how they had formulated their Aboriginal identity many of the participants replied with what appeared to be simple answers.

I just knew I was Black. That's all you need to know isn't it? (Kalinda)

For me it's not about arguments. It's just you are Aboriginal or you are not. It's about how you self-identify. (Dhulan)

You're Aboriginal. They say it's in your heart but it's not. It's in your life. (Wiree)

I don't know if I ever stopped and thought that it was important but it is just who I am. Because I have no other way of seeing the world or being. To me it would be like the same as someone telling me that I did not have to identify as the gender I am. It's just who I am and I don't know any other way of being. (Gurugan)

From the interactions of family and mentors, participants were able to formulate a positive relationship with their Aboriginal identity from someone in their life encouraging and accepting them for who they were and not what they looked like. These people then instilled in them the values of accepting that being Aboriginal goes beyond skin colour and embraces other complex notions such as spirituality, belonging, connectedness and world views.

Two participants had been advised they were Aboriginal from a young age but had not made sense of this or identified as Aboriginal until later in life. These participants had the member of the family that was Aboriginal estranged or removed from their lives at an early age and so the chance of socialisation into the Aboriginal community or worldviews was extremely limited. Some participants were brought up by non-Aboriginal people who were against them formulating an Aboriginal identity (reasons discussed were racism of the individual, fear of stereotypes towards the young person and fear of racism being directed at the young person). This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8. Not being actively supported or encouraged to embrace their Aboriginal heritage made the path to identity formulation complex for the people interviewed.

Three participants had only found out later in life that they had Aboriginal ancestry. Similarly to Gilbert's discoveries in her research, the main theme from these stories was that identities, bodies, children, land, family and connection were all stolen from members of the family at some point (Gilbert, 2012).

These participants' families had been part of the Stolen Generations, adopted or fostered to either extended Aboriginal families or non-Aboriginal family. For these participants, finding their heritage became difficult due to lack of resources, information and surviving documentation.

For one participant their Aboriginal heritage had been hidden from them as well as the fact that they had been adopted. When asking their birth parent about their Aboriginal parent the participant was given minimal responses. The circumstances were that the participant's birth parent did not know very much about them.

It has been hard especially knowing as much about my Aboriginal parent as I did. i.e.: that my other parent said they were really hot. (Balabalaa)

Stolen Generation children were not always placed with other Aboriginal people, making it harder to keep connected to culture, family and community and this has affected their children and their children's children (both children and grandchildren of Stolen Generations were interviewed in this study). Some participant's families had gone into foster care or government placements (such as group homes) as a result of family circumstances and policies of the time. One participant had been adopted. Placements were with non-Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal family and with extended kin in the Aboriginal community. The common link for these participants was that they had issues being connected to the Aboriginal community due to policies designed to separate them from it or intergenerational trauma issues that had affected the ability of the family to stay united.

Ekalla felt that if their Aboriginal family member had been on a mission rather than placed in foster care than the family would have had more interaction with Aboriginal people and would have developed networks and connection.

I wish my family member was put on a mission rather than fostered. Because what they don't see is that at least they all have each other. (Ekalla)

Dhulan described the trauma Stolen Generation history can have on a family.

If I look at family they live three to four different lifestyles throughout their life until they get to forty five or fifty. They have had drug history, incarceration history and here and there their life and who they are within society shifts and merges multiple times. (Dhulan)

Kalla describes the often long and painful process for Stolen Generation members and family members trying to piece together often horrific and traumatic family histories.

I am able to tell people who I am related to now after many years of searching. This is often confronting for people from Stolen Generations who may not be able to do this. We are advocating for the struggles of Stolen Generation and how hard it is to reconnect with family and kinship and culture yet we are actually undermining the whole process in the community. (Kalla)

Gurugan articulates some of the views they have received from the Aboriginal community.

The thing for them too is they say you are successful because you have been outside of the community. So you have the advantages of being outside here. But what they are not realising is the cost. It is that comparative disadvantage. It is not real, it is constructed. So to say to someone well because you were taken out and you are denied access to your Aboriginality or even knowledge of your Aboriginality that you somehow have all these advantages. They are doing what they actually would decry other people for doing is putting that material stuff above culture. When they do this stuff they are actually saying the material world is worth more than the cultural world rather than going oh you poor bugger we are richer than what you are because we have always known who we are and we have that connection back. (Gurugan)

Another participant's family had been removed off land they had owned and run when the non-Aboriginal person became deceased. Being Aboriginal had caused loss of worldly possessions, income and status so it seems no wonder that the family chose to cease identification on moving in order to protect their children and to survive

My great grandmother, who was the only beneficiary really, received a letter by the public trustee saying as an Aboriginal person you weren't entitled to any of these things and you have to get off the land straight away because the government was going to take over it. Being an Aboriginal person they are not entitled to any fair compensation for that. So my great grandmother with her fourteen children moved to Eastwood, Sydney (a fringe dwelling community) and lived in a life of poverty. (Matong)

Further to this, Matong's grandmother only told one of her children that they were Aboriginal and not the others. Matong gave permission to tell this story. They felt it was important to keep in both the gender of their Aboriginal relative to highlight the patriarchal issues but also to highlight that the family was thus removed from a life of privilege to poverty due to their race. Matong believes after World War 1 this area of Sydney became a fringe dwelling community and not a place to want to go with children.

Some families had survived further removal by denying or not acknowledging Aboriginal heritage. Some participants' families did not know what community or area they had originally come from. These individuals had been physically removed and intentionally cut off from Aboriginal family, community and culture for various lengths of time. Some families carried emotional and spiritual trauma due to this.

They do not know what happened to their father. Their mother died of a miscarriage next to them in the bed (apparently their mother was turned away from the hospital because she was black). Obviously the whole history is something that they do not talk about. They grew up in the orphanage separated from their other siblings. They were all sent to different areas. They had a terrible time there. People there were awful to them. (Ekalla)

For other participants, the Aboriginal parent or grandparent had died, or had been separated from them due to jail, divorce, alcoholism, trauma or foster care (on the behalf of the participant). This affected the establishment of identity, connection to family and local Aboriginal communities.

For me, identity has always been a bit difficult. We separated from my Aboriginal parent at a very early age, so my cultural identity was close to non-existent. (Thoomie)

One participant had accidentally discovered their Aboriginal heritage. Going through a difficult time with an illness, the participant had been given various tests. A doctor at the time had made a particular comment that this disease had a greater risk of occurring in Aboriginal people. The participant's family had apparently had a suspicion that there was some Aboriginal heritage and so had then gone on to investigate and find evidence for this.

So we had already started tracing the family tree. We found out they were part of the Stolen Generation. They were taken from their mum when they were little and they had photos of their mum who has dark skin and they never knew why. So from that as a family we started to find family and chase who we were and started to identify. (Kalla)

For the participants who did not have the full picture of their Aboriginal story, family tree or history, most had come to terms with who they were and who they wanted to be in the world.

I don't think you always get all the answers of your own life anyway so if you are not content with who you were before then that is going to be a problem. (Balabalaa)

Racial identity development requires building a self-consciousness about that identity and developing that sense of a collective identity based on the perception that one shares at least a common heritage with that racial group (Helms, 1990). Some participants have discussed what appears to be at times a dual existence- that of looking non-Aboriginal on the outside but feeling Aboriginal on the inside. There is a real balance with making sure they are not being affiliated with the mainstream dominant culture whilst balancing their own cultural identity. Despite their light skin, the participants do not feel part of the dominant culture or the privileges afforded to it. They are involved in an ongoing process of developing their Aboriginal cultural knowledge and identity that helps them put their experiences and feelings into context and increases their understanding of their connection to their heritage.

Research with sensitive topics

As well as speaking with the participants, I had several meetings with community groups and organisations about my thesis. What I found was that people wanted to talk to me about the topic but did not want to be involved in the research. For example, at one organisation I spoke to employees for two hours about their journeys as light-skinned Aboriginal people who lacked either community or kinship ties. Many of them agreed to be interviewed but after several emails and phone calls I realised that they were politely ignoring me. A few weeks later I saw one of them again at a community event. They wanted to speak further about their own story but again did not want to be taped or included in the research. At each of these meetings I was told how brave I was and how important the study was for the community and in particular for

generations to come. Finally someone suggested that the topic was not only sensitive but perhaps it was seen as taboo. Perhaps I had been naïve at the start of this process. I had found a few articles and even a few thesis discussing this topic and although it was not widely spoken about or written about thought that it would not be a huge deal to research into the topic. I had no idea how hidden this population was.

Socially sensitive research is 'research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it' (R. Lee, 1993, p. 4) and further to this taboo topics are defined as those 'which are laden with emotion or which inspire feelings of awe or dread' (R. Lee, 1993, p. 6). These definitions suggest that sensitive research has the potential to impact on both the researcher themselves as well as the research participants. In this case, the research had the potential to harm both the researcher (reputation, stigma and possible lateral violence) and the participants (stigma, shame and discrimination).

Lee goes on to define the three main ways research can be seen to be sensitive. The first is that it is seen to be an intrusive threat as it deals with areas that are private, stressful or sacred. The second is that it brings the threat of sanction. This means that the research may involve areas of deviance or may reveal information that is stigmatising or incriminating. Lastly the research can be seen as a political threat. In this way the research may challenge the interests of people who may be seen as powerful in society and may also go into areas that involve social conflict (R. Lee, 1993). This research can be seen to have aspects of all three of these areas. Light-skinned Aboriginality has been something that is not spoken about in public and the participants spoke openly about the stress of articulating their thoughts on the issue. The research talks about a topic that has been stigmatising and in some ways identifying issues such as lateral violence could cause others to see the participants as deviant. Lastly, this is obviously a very politically charged issue that has come about due to Government policies. It certainly involves social conflict and in fact could be argued to be bringing into light areas that have formerly been hidden. This is risky for the participants and the researcher.

It is therefore understandable why there may have been a low number of participants, why some participants felt they needed to withdraw and why the remaining participants are very

conscious of their confidentiality being kept. It does place the onus of responsibility on the researcher and more than one participant asked me why I would go ahead with this sensitive research. Firstly I strongly believe in the importance of increasing societies, and in particular how social work, understands this issue. Secondly as Sieber and Stanley state 'sensitive research addresses some of society's most pressing social issues and policy questions...shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial, is also an avoidance of responsibility'(Sieber & Stanley, 1988, p. 55). I have felt a responsibility to and for the research and now feel a sense of accountability to the Aboriginal people who participated, whilst keeping in mind their confidentiality and safety.

Some participants agreed to be interviewed a second time in particular to speak about why they thought the research was a sensitive area. In this section I have included quotes from the participants but have deliberately kept who has said these confidential because I asked the participants why the topic was so sensitive in their view and they trusted me enough to give me answers.

Not wanting to complain

Participants who have light skin reported that there was often a feeling of never really being accepted as a 'real' or 'authentic' Aboriginal person due to the colour of their skin. Some participants' history of disconnection from Country and other Aboriginal people has left them at times vulnerable to being accused of having less legitimacy and authenticity compared with darker-skinned Aboriginal people.

As will be discussed in chapter 8, these participants have often been the victims of lateral violence (which has been discussed in Chapter 2). Given this history, participants did not want to speak negatively about being Aboriginal in case this increased their experiences of lateral violence.

It was also seen as a negative to speak badly of other Aboriginal people. This was because all Aboriginal people were considered part of the family (if only unknown extended family). Participants wanted to join this group and not exclude themselves from it and therefore did not want to be seen as whining or complaining about Aboriginality or the Aboriginal community.

This is especially so for participants who are trying to do the 'right thing' by the Aboriginal community, trying to give back to this community and trying to own who they are as an Aboriginal person. One participant stated:

I can see how people feel like you are making a giant issue out of it. You often get the message that you shouldn't even be Aboriginal let alone complaining about not being Aboriginal enough. The system is built to make you feel guilty for speaking up.

Another participant highlighted the fear surrounding even discussing the issue of having light skin to someone else and having this published within a thesis.

I have psychoanalysed everything- can you tell it is me? Put a name to it and you wouldn't want to be on the research. People would judge you- hard.

As one participant explained:

You get a lot of racism just for the fact you do not have whatever it is that makes skin look darker- why highlight that to others?

One participant named the process as violence:

There is a silencing of it, so people use it to hurt each other. But if you speak out on it, it is like you are a traitor. There is also the stuff around the questioning of people based on their skin colouring. But it's more about pushing people out to get a bigger share of the pie really. It's just another form of violence really. And violence works by silencing people, preventing people from speaking out and discrediting people.

It has been my experience, and it seems the participants' experiences, that the issues of being light-skinned in the Aboriginal community are rarely spoken about honestly or safely in both wider society and the Aboriginal community. Individuals and the Aboriginal community seem to prefer to pretend these issues do not exist which appears to be making space for the problems to grow and continue. Participants regarded this thesis as one way to validate the issues and highlight their existence.

Guilt around the issue

There is a lot of guilt surrounding the issue of light-skinned Aboriginal people. Firstly, there is the guilt of those who feel they have some responsibility for the atrocities faced by Aboriginal people in the first place. Secondly is the guilt of light-skinned Aboriginal people admitting that they may not be as integrated into the Aboriginal community as they would like to be or would be assumed to be. Thirdly is the guilt at possibly being seen as a fake or fraud and only interested in benefits. All of this creates a shame around speaking freely about this issue. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 7 and 8.

Light-skinned racism does not exist

When thinking about racism, it seems easier to understand and acknowledge racism towards people of colour than people with light skin. There seems a lack of belief or empathy for light-skinned Aboriginal people who may experience racism, if there is any acknowledgement from society about this at all (Gorringer et al., 2011; SBS, 2013). This is because the dominant white society often does not understand racism because of their Whiteness (as discussed in Chapter 3). Whiteness is often seen by wider society to be all about skin colour and not values, privilege or structures of society. The assumption is that because light-skinned Aboriginal people have the colour of a White person, then they will receive the same amount of power and privilege that is attached to Whiteness. This study has shown this is not the case as many of the participants still struggled in many areas such as health, life expectancy, incarceration experiences, socio-economic status and educational opportunities.

As a participant said in trying to understand this complexity:

We are so obsessed with using the colour of people's skin as an identity marker that we can't conceptualise that racial identity is actually not about that. Experiences of the concept of race are more complex than that.

Perhaps some of the racism exists due to limited resources in the community for Aboriginal people, who feel they have to protect the little given to them. As one participant suggested

So it's a deliberate ploy from outside but unfortunately our mob fall into the trap of fighting each other. It's like if you throw a scrap of bread into a mob of starving men. They are going to rip each other to pieces to be the person that gets that scrap.

Much of the racism that is received by light-skinned Aboriginals is seen as 'their fault' as they have persisted in identifying instead of assimilating into the wider predominantly white society. One participant alludes to this by stating:

Race is a technology of war. It is an invention and continues to be used against people.

How much heritage is enough?

Light-skinned Aboriginal people are discussing the fact that they are being asked if being only 'this much' Aboriginal is enough. Some people have been questioned if their heritage has extended further than a great grandparent. This can make light-skinned Aboriginal people ask themselves if they have enough Aboriginal heritage.

One participant tried to discuss why they had light skin by saying:

Is the simple fact of my existence- the simple fact of people being light-skinned Aboriginals is that just too confronting? It is the reality of assimilation? That is the net effect of the Protection era and assimilation policies. I am what assimilation looks like. Are we so inept as a country that we don't have the resilience to be able to deal with the effect of colonial violence, a policy of genocide?

Feeling nervous about being light-skinned or feeling less authentic due to a mixed heritage can make participants less confident about participating in research in the area. Some participants felt like they 'did not have the right' to speak as an Aboriginal person or for Aboriginal people due to not having as much Aboriginal heritage as someone with darker skin. Some participants had also been reluctant to claim their Aboriginal heritage due to feeling they may be questioned about their blood quantum.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter places the participants in a context both in wider Australia but in the Aboriginal community as a light-skinned person who also lacks community and kinship links. It discusses their Aboriginal heritage and what this means for them. Finally the chapter highlights the sensitive nature of the research and how I have had to think about situating the results of this research to both give the participants voice but also confidentiality and safety.

Chapter 7 will discuss the themes that presented from the interviews such as legitimacy of identity, feelings surrounding identifying as an Aboriginal person, trying to become part of an Aboriginal community, why participants have bothered to identify as being a light-skinned Aboriginal person. It examines what it might be like to live as a light-skinned Aboriginal person and the journeys to formulating varied and diverse Aboriginal identities without the community or kinship links to guide them.

Chapter 7: Building and sustaining connections

Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armour yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you (G.R.R. Martin, 2011).

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter gave an insight into the participants in terms of where they came from, their Aboriginal heritage and general life experiences. It is important to give the participants this voice as this research is owned by them. Discussing their stories enables readers to get a sense of who the research is talking about and why this is such an important area to understand.

This chapter will highlight my analysis of the data that I gained through interviewing light-skinned Aboriginal people. It aims to produce a rich description of their journeys and process through which Aboriginal people with light skin and little kinship and/or community ties negotiate, construct and express their Aboriginal identity. This discussion seeks to understand how this group of people, sometimes with lack of guidance experienced the journey and including how they maintained and sustained their identity in a complex world.

This chapter explores how this group of light-skinned Aboriginal people actively sought their Aboriginal identity, from what sources and why they do this. It examines the problem of establishing links to Aboriginal community or kinship network for those participants when they had not been born into those circumstances. It seeks to address understand why in difficult circumstances and against resistance and racism why light-skinned Aboriginal participants wanted recognition by the Aboriginal community or to gain a confirmation of an Aboriginality certificate.

Aboriginal cultural knowledge

A question that was asked of all participants was how they had pieced together the cultural knowledge they now had. This was particularly pertinent for those participants whose circumstances meant they had not had an Aboriginal person involved in socialising them into

the culture when growing up. One purpose of asking about the input of cultural knowledge was to find out if these participants were gathering cultural knowledge, and if so how. Ultimately what I wanted to produce was information for Aboriginal people who did not have community or family to know where to start, where to go and what they might be able to do to help them gain more understanding and information about their identity.

The literature suggests (Bolt, 2009; Hall, 1991) that cultural information is passed within the family and in direct social settings. Individuals are socialised within a culture through being taught values, world views and ethics by direct family members, extended family members and from other cultural community members. These worldviews are also role modeled by those we interact with both on a daily basis and as a community. My question was designed to find out how people who had acknowledged that they had few kinship or community ties had found and developed Aboriginal cultural knowledge and what this had meant for them. Questions I asked of the participants included: How had they begun to source cultural knowledge? Was this a difficult or easy journey and most importantly, could this journey be replicated and how.

Some participants felt that they had been brought up with some cultural knowledge, which they had primarily gained from their Aboriginal parent although some participants also had access to kinship networks or peers while growing up. These participants were still open to learning more about their culture.

Other participants felt that they had not had access to cultural knowledge or Aboriginal people in general. For these participants their cultural story or journey was of discovery. They were consciously seeking and learning about their people and culture and living a life of committed practice in terms of finding out more about Aboriginal worldviews, values, ethics and knowledge surrounding their Aboriginal identity.

Yeah, the journey is like the onion skin where you take off layers constantly and more is revealed. (Matong)

There are several common ways light-skinned Aboriginal people sought cultural input when they have limited community or kinship guidance.

The most common place people accessed cultural input is through schools, TAFE³⁸ and Universities. At the school level, participants learnt cultural aspects such as traditional dances and songs from teachers, mentors and other Aboriginal people brought into the school. At times these were not from the Country where the participants were originally from, but they were seen as something to identify and ground the participant in Aboriginality.

Elders and mentors were spoken about by several participants. Their sharing of knowledge and role modeling had a large effect on identity. Mentors and leaders were usually attached to a school such as the Aboriginal Education Officer. Schools also brought in mentors such as the AIME mentoring program³⁹. This program enters schools to increase literacy and numeracy skills and to retain students in the education system. It could be said that if some of the participants had not found key Aboriginal people to guide them in their culture and identity, that many of them would not have been as successful at integrating this later on. Participants gave examples of other Aboriginal students teaching them culture for example Kalina stated:

So they had the Aboriginal students who would meet each fortnight. They would come and sit down and talk about being Kooris and I actually got to see a whole other bunch of other kids who were just as white as me but they had all this knowledge. They did not care where I was from they just knew I was Koori and that I did not know much and so they wanted to teach me as much as they could. They shared what knowledge they had. (Kalina)

Some participants spoke about the school providing opportunities to connect to others as expressed by Burrun.

Our principal knew who all the Aboriginal students were and she would get you and take you to meet whoever was the Aboriginal liaison at the time and she would make sure you were involved with everything that was going on to the point where she would call your parents and say look this is happening today, I had no notice can you just give me permission over the phone. I found our school was good with that where the principal made sure that we were always together and involved and knew who we were. (Burrun)

Thoomie gives an example of a mentoring program and what this meant to them:

³⁸ Technical and Further Education institutes that provide a wide range of vocational tertiary education

³⁹ <http://aimementoring.com/>

It was those one on one conversations with my mentors which have saved so many dreams because they showed an unfathomable and bottomless well of belief in me. (Thoomie)

Some schools had homework centers, breakfast clubs, NAIDOC⁴⁰ activities, and school camps or outings and staff members such as Aboriginal liaison officers which fostered cultural knowledge.

My older sister went on a camp and they went and found bush tucker in the area and everything. It was amazing. (Kalinda)

The group that did have access to role modelling, mentoring and elder participation expressed that this contact was vital in the development of their Aboriginal identity. It gave opportunities to connect to other Aboriginal people, to see others that were like them in colour but also in knowledge and to meet those that had more knowledge. It provided them with Aboriginal people who accepted them as an Aboriginal person and then gave them further knowledge about their identity and culture.

However, not every participant had access to an elder or a mentor. In fact, many did not know where they could go to access this kind of valuable cultural knowledge, if they would be allowed to approach an elder or mentor for this knowledge or be accepted as acceptable to teach (because of their lack of connections and light skin) by anyone willing to share this knowledge. It appeared from the interviews that participants felt that cultural knowledge was closely guarded by individuals, families and communities. Participants were unsure how or where to access this knowledge from. Although participants could go and watch an Aboriginal dance group for example, the chances of being taught this dance or being able to access this information without family or community links was unlikely.

Participants (those who did have access to Aboriginal people and those who did not) spoke about primary school in particular having a positive influence on the development of their Aboriginal identity. They stated that they received less racism and more acceptance within primary schools compared to high school, University and workplaces and stated that children themselves were less racist and more accepting of diversity. There seemed to be

⁴⁰ NAIDOC stands for National Aboriginies and Islanders Day Committees and is a celebratory day in the community of Aboriginal culture. There are usually local and national events with varying cultural activities and information.

encouragement to learn about Aboriginal culture (even if this was only small and simple things like colouring in Aboriginal drawings).

Participants also learnt a lot of cultural knowledge from other students attending the schools and these children's families.

You learn a lot more about the Aboriginal culture and find out a little bit of background like about the different tribes that they are from and how they have grown up with it. (Nepo)

Participants spoke about these friends and families often taking on the role of socialising them into the Aboriginal culture and community.

I think it is easier at school because you make friends with other Aboriginal people and then you sort of start mixing and learning from them. I think that is where the Aboriginal identity comes from. From mixing and learning from their parents. (Dhulan)

At high school, participants reported a rise in racism from others around their identity with participants often being called names such as 'coon' and 'boong' by non-Aboriginal students. Some participants reported that it was here they found acceptance of diversity in the form of conversations, role modeling and forming of connections to other Aboriginal students.

I met other Indigenous kids like myself. But these kids were different because they were proud of their culture. The school was proud of having them as their students...with every single conversation with them, my kinship and connection to the community grew. (Thoomie)

Twelve participants had at some point attended University. University is a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the country are increasingly attending. Participants were aware that all shapes, sizes, backgrounds and colours of Aboriginal people attend University. It was at University that many participants not only found cultural information but had ready access to seek it by taking Aboriginal specific courses and therefore could learn about Aboriginal history and issues such as the 1967 Referendum⁴¹ and information about the Lands Right movement.

⁴¹ The 1967 referendum proposed to include Aboriginal people in the census and to allow the Commonwealth Government to make laws for Aboriginal people (Creative Spirits)

University also gave participants the opportunity to participate in their local Aboriginal community. Participants were involved in Reconciliation events, local community cultural events, Indigenous games, Indigenous curriculum boards, mentoring and participated at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units⁴² within universities. For many of the participants, University was where they started forming not only a clearer picture of their identity, but they started to develop community, networks and adopted people into kinship relationships. This gave them a sense of belonging and a stronger sense of their Aboriginal identity whether they were part of the group that had known they were Aboriginal or if they had recently found this out. In this way, participants became very active within the community. This could be seen as seeking acceptance and involvement within the community. It could also be seen as the participants giving back to the Aboriginal community, wanting to be useful and a productive member of the community. This in itself reflects Aboriginal worldviews and shows that the participants have gained an understanding of this reciprocal relationship.

Some of participants who were raised knowing about their Aboriginal identity talked about Aboriginal dreamtime stories, ways of living (traditional practice) and values that were passed down to them by direct family. For the group who had not been brought up near or with Aboriginal people, it was mainly from complete strangers or courses that participants were being socialised and gaining cultural information adding to their Aboriginal identity. Some of these courses were being taught by non-Aboriginal people. There has been discussion in the literature about who should be teaching Aboriginal content and culture at all and whether this should be left to Aboriginal people (Reed-Gilbert & Zubrzycki, 2011) that has not been resolved as yet.

Some participants felt that the Aboriginal community did not seem to regard providing cultural information to them as important. They feel this is because they have light skin and are not seen to be as valid, authentic or as valuable as someone with darker skin. This has not perturbed them though. Many participants are quite blunt about their persistence. Participants have read all that they can about the Aboriginal culture and the area that they are from; they have

⁴² Units based at Universities often become experts in research, teaching and student support both personal and academic.

attended community gatherings or any community event where they may learn and have used their listening and observing skills to obtain cultural knowledge. As participants highlight:

I really had to find it myself. Everything I've gotten I've fought for. Nobody's taken me and shown me and taught me. (Wiree)

I have just learnt it all through what I have read. (Ekalla)

I try to be like a sponge and attend events wherever I can and listen to people whenever I can and try to find out what it is. (Matong)

It seems very important to the participants to have as much cultural knowledge as they can, although for some they seem ill informed as to where else they may be able to go to be able to get this.

You should know more about your culture. I am trying. I am trying. Sometimes it is just hard. (Thoomie)

Despite their commitment to their culture and their identity, this handing down of cultural input is an integral part to the sustainability of the Aboriginal culture. One of the questions that remain unanswered for me is if this apparent lack of teachers and sharing of cultural knowledge is harmful to the long term sustainability of the Aboriginal culture. In 2013 I visited Canada. At first, it was to attend the Indigenous Voices in Social Work conference. I did not have the money to attend and so a colleague of mine began to raise money for us to go. My colleague's family put us in touch with an Aboriginal man in the Vancouver area and we approached him to present with us at the conference. A respected member of the tribe then invited us to come and stay with his family and participate in cultural activities with him and the Cowichan Tribe that he is part of. I was involved in many cultural activities with this individual including harvesting cedar wood, sweat lodge and discussions on language. What I found in Canada was that anyone with cultural knowledge taught it. Sweat lodge and the relevant ceremony surrounding this, pipe ceremony and various other traditional knowledge were passed on to everyone that wanted to know, despite their original culture or racial identity. When I asked why this was the case, they stated that the more people that knew this way of life and embraced it, the more likely the knowledge would not only survive but be sustained for the future (Personal

communication⁴³, 5.7.13). This experience of openness and sharing of the culture really struck me as quite different to my experiences in Australia where this openness and sharing does not occur in the same way. Cultural knowledge is highly guarded and can sometimes be coveted by one family or language group. In Canada, there seemed to be a growing interest in the first nation ways of knowing, doing and being from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The teaching of knowledge as a spiritual need and a necessity of wellbeing was integral in Canada. It struck me as a generous and enriching experience to be taught this knowledge. Cultural knowledge and the ownership of it is a concept that could be investigated in Australia so that the current gaps in knowledge and information that many Aboriginal people are experiencing can be addressed and if possible, eradicated.

Participants feel they are in a balancing act around their Aboriginal identity. Although they can be seen as being part of mainstream society due to their light-skinned appearance, the feelings of being Aboriginal and wanting to belong to that culture are present. Some participants have managed this by rejecting any other heritages that are part of them. Others have incorporated all of the various heritages that they have but have prioritised their Aboriginal identity. The participants persist with trying to identify, seek cultural knowledge and input and belong as an Aboriginal person despite having light skin. It is something that each and every one of them has committed to and at times fought for. It is something the participants see as a necessary, needed, wanted part of themselves and it matters to them. Ang (2001) and Paradies (2006a) have both articulated Aboriginal people's right to incorporate various heritages and to form your own version of an Aboriginal identity.

Legitimacy of identity

The participants in general do not think or feel that they 'look' Aboriginal. Many have spoken about their fight to become part of Aboriginal society and to forge their identity despite barriers. Questions I asked myself about this were: Where have they received these messages from? Where and how has their legitimacy to their own heritage and identity been questioned? How is this impacting on the participants and on Aboriginal communities as a whole? Some of

⁴³ Due to confidentiality names have been withheld

these answers were answered in the stories participants told or when questioned about their journey of identity.

From speaking to participants, these negative perceptions and experiences around Aboriginal legitimacy are still valid for them. Conversations about legitimacy come from friends, colleagues and strangers both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal and are based on the myths that are perpetuated through avenues such as the media as discussed in chapter 5.

For example I am on ABSTUDY because I am studying at University at the moment....and I get it all the time them saying, 'Oh, you get twice as much as us'. (Ekalla)

People just tell me that I am a liar or that I am not Aboriginal or that I am faking it to get ABSTUDY or whatever. (Mabun)

Positive discrimination exists to address the 'gap' that is acknowledged by the Australian government brought about by past policies and practices. Identified scholarships, educational opportunities and monetary help for those who meet means tested standards are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who can produce confirmation of Aboriginality certificates⁴⁴. These benefits exist to address past wrongs, policies and practices surrounding Aboriginal people that produced socio-economic 'gaps'. However, there seems to be little understanding or acceptance of this in mainstream society.

Current debates surround the question of whether light-skinned people have somehow fabricated, falsified or lied to obtain these Aboriginal certificates. Even when it is proven that these certificates are based on real evidence, discussion occurs around whether light-skinned people have suffered the same extreme racism, lack of privilege and lack of socio-economic circumstances as a dark-skinned Aboriginal person. Further questions remain as to how much biological heritage should be counted until the person is deemed no longer Aboriginal (for example heritage spanning further than a great grandparent would mean you are no longer considered Aboriginal). This was also discussed in Chapter 5.

⁴⁴ Being able to prove that you identify as Aboriginal, have proven heritage and are accepted by the community you live in with your local land council.

Participants themselves entered the debate around whether they deserved benefits or help or not.

Obviously there are people out there who have done it a lot harder than myself and I think they are probably more deserving of it for the simple fact that they have been through a whole lot more and have come out just as well or better than I have. (Thoomie)

My grandparents' being black doesn't make me any whiter, even though I've got a white parent. It just makes my skin lighter. But what's wrong- we're only this way because they tried to breed us out. That's the only reason we are this way. ..Why are people getting blamed for something that history has done? (Wiree)

Well I don't know if I deserve it as such because...yes I am Aboriginal but because of that lack of kinship and I hadn't been in touch with my tribe much at all...I didn't feel like I deserved it or I should take it. (Nepo)

Being scrutinised by society in general is a hurdle that participants have to overcome to decide to go ahead with legitimising their Aboriginal heritage through a confirmation of Aboriginality certificate.

I was nervous about going to the land council. What if they kick me out? I think as much as the piece of paper does not define who you are, when I got my certificate of Aboriginality I felt a bit more comfortable because people could not challenge me as much. I know it's a piece of paper. I understand it is a piece of paper and that is all it is. But it stopped people from being able to say 'well you're not really' because I can be like well actually I am. (Kalinda)

Matong had been unable to source a confirmation of Aboriginality certificate. This was due to being sent back to the community that their family had originally come from more than forty years after they had left. Matong felt it was hypocritical to say that they were part of a community that they had never had any relationship with just to gain a confirmation of Aboriginality.

I don't really need anything to know who I am. (Matong)

Thoomie had gained a confirmation of Aboriginality but felt that despite this

There are always going to be people doubting you. (Thoomie)

Mabun comments on the perceived privilege of having light skin but notes the complexities of this.

I think you have to start interrogating what that means when you walk through the world and you look like the rest of the Anglos but you have a different kind of identity. I think that puts you in a position that requires some pretty serious reflection. (Mabun)

Cunningham (Cunningham, 1997) discussed the privilege of having the option as passing for white with light skin but also states that this passing is fraught with high social costs such as separation from family, potential loneliness and that psychologically this can be perceived as a drastic step for the person with light skin. The privilege of being able to move more freely in the dominant culture has the side effect of something named survivor guilt (Scales-Trent, 1995; Williamson, 1980). This is the knowledge that as a light-skinned Black you are protected from the baser forms of racism and this leaves the light-skinned person embarrassed, ashamed and guilty about being linked to the oppressors whilst trying to maintain loyalty to the Aboriginal community.

When you have light skin, often stating this is not enough evidence for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that the person is Aboriginal. Participants discuss aspects of this including being asked to provide a certificate of Aboriginality, to be expected to have the ability to name your lineage often going back as far as you can, being seen as active in the community (and this activity and the definition of what that means is constantly changing and evolving), giving back to your community (again the definition and expectations of what this means are diverse) and being very vocal about your Aboriginality.

Some light-skinned Aboriginal people choose to be less active about their Aboriginality.

Downing and Roush (1985) discuss passive identity development where an individual will be unaware of elements such as discrimination or inequality. In some ways, there is a similar stage for Aboriginal people who are unaware of cultural oppression. The step to having an active identity seems to need readiness, receptivity and openness to risk (Erikson, 1963; Helms, 1984).

Participants shared a similar hope with each other that they would be acceptance as Aboriginal by the general society and in particular the Aboriginal community from which they came, although the journey to this appears complex.

But I wish I could wake up, be darker, and have an identity; know something, know somebody. Because my son said to me last year 'If you don't know who you are, how are we able to know who we are?' It dies, it dies...I hate having white skin. (Wiree)

You are in no man's land. I sometimes feel like I am not white. But then I am not black either. I feel like I just want to belong somewhere that is one or the other not in the middle. (Ekalla)

So I have no idea what it means at times and I am just so out of my depth. (Matong)

Participants are looking for acceptance of their Aboriginal identity, usually by an Aboriginal community (or at the very least an Aboriginal person or organisation). This legitimacy seems to be integral to the individual's ability to accept themselves and increase their sense of validity around their identity. It could be argued that it increases wellbeing but at the very least, it makes the journey towards self-acceptance a little easier. Hollingsworth (1992), Boledaras (2002), Paradies (2006a) and Cunningham (1997) have all discussed the issues of authenticity and legitimacy surrounding light-skinned Aboriginal people, their desire for community acceptance and the necessity for self-acceptance.

Legitimacy isn't as easy as having an Aboriginal confirmation of authenticity or being eligible for ABSTUDY or an Aboriginal scholarship. Without the acceptance and ability to be an active, accepted, contributing member of the Aboriginal community, being able to prove your heritage is meaningless. Aboriginality is all about relationships. One of the main successes of any relationship is the ability to share experiences with each other, to learn and to grow together and to feel like you are making a difference both to yourself and the relationship you have entered. This is the crux of legitimacy- you need a partnership with an Aboriginal person, organisation or community to really feel a sense of belonging and acceptance as an Aboriginal person.

Feelings surrounding identifying as light-skinned Aboriginal people

When I first started this research I had some idea that I was going to link Aboriginal identity to improved wellbeing. As discussed in chapter 3, there have been links to identity and increased wellbeing (Dockery, 2010; Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; L. Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). This research may be able to identify enhanced wellbeing for light-skinned Aboriginal people once they were linked to culture and community. As I started to speak to people I found out that there were a myriad of feelings attached to identifying as an Aboriginal person for this group of people. Perhaps I could still show that eventually identifying added to wellbeing as it does for other Aboriginal people but I had to acknowledge the pain, distress, confusion and doubt that existed in the process as well. It certainly explained why some people have not persisted with identifying.

As discussed above many participants spoke about the preconceived notions that others had of them due to being a light-skinned Aboriginal. These preconceived ideas included not being a 'real' Aboriginal, faking being an Aboriginal person, being a thief and stealing from darker-skinned Aboriginal people and also the racist ideas attached to being an Aboriginal person in general society including being unreliable, dishonest, unclean, a drunkard, running on 'Koori' time and being generally disreputable. Participants reported feeling that this was annoying, frustrating, unfair and unjust. Some participants went to lengths to explain and educate those who were naïve about Aboriginality or were interested in learning more about history and the diversity of Aboriginality. Some participants felt that there were individuals in the world whose racist and limited opinions of Aboriginal people or light-skinned Aboriginal people would not be changed and that this was a sad fact of life.

Although experiencing negative judgments being made about you as an individual with no basis other than racial identity and skin colour is difficult, participants reported that the greatest pain and discomfort came from being disbelieved by the very community many of them were attempting to enter and negotiate.

I find it annoying and frustrating but the best word is disappointing...I can't help it that I don't look Aboriginal...they don't take me seriously. (Kalinda)

It's a bit confronting for young people growing up in those communities...people make the comment that I don't look Aboriginal at all and I have to take that on board to an extent. (Nepo)

Being aware of their light-skinned status did not prevent participants discussing feeling proud of their Aboriginal identity. Once participants had accepted their identity and the diversity of it, they reported feeling more content and comfortable with who they were. There was acceptance that although the feelings surrounding the journey of forging an Aboriginal identity were not necessarily pleasant or warming, the participants still wanted, needed and felt definitive about creating their Aboriginal identity. Participants spoke about a developed resilience because of this lived experience, a feeling like the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle had suddenly come together to form a picture. When I asked what word would describe the picture, a few of the participants stated simply 'home'.

Two participants had gone through a process of not identifying for a period of time in their life. When asked why this occurred, the responses were based on the experience of everyday racism that they had received and fear that they would be stereotyped and receive more racism if they did openly acknowledge their Aboriginal heritage despite their light skin. These participants had decided later on in their life to identify. When asked why they had done this, the two participants explained this decision as recognition that the decision to identify was their right to do so. One of the participants had made the decision because not identifying was hurting loved ones around them and because the participant had accepted their Aboriginality as a true part of themselves that could not be denied. One participant stated it was like having a body part that you didn't like in adolescence and then growing into understanding that like the rest of you, it needed to be loved and accepted. Thoomie and Mabun explain their process.

When I wasn't proud of it and when I wasn't fully identifying I was embarrassed. And I was really shy. I was ashamed a lot of the time. That just meant I would withdraw into myself. I wouldn't talk about myself or how I felt. I wouldn't talk about what I thought because I thought my opinion was second rate to anybody else's. It was hard to realize what I was doing. It was only

when I go that sense of pride and achievement in being who I was and having the bloodline that I do. That made me appreciate who I am as a whole person. (Thoomie)

At certain periods of my life, particularly in my early 20s where I chose not to tell anyone about my family. I did not quote unquote 'tick the box'. I did not disclose I did not talk about my heritage, my aboriginal family, my identity. I sidestepped it, I removed myself from arguments about Indigenous issues and I just did not do it and that took a pretty serious toll not just on myself but also my family who felt that I was pushing them away and who felt that I was separating myself from them and what they saw was important so I think that it has become a question of how do I not only be true to myself but what is the best way that I can... I don't know... do justice to my family. I do not know quite how to describe it but it is important not just to me but to make sure I was doing the right thing by my family. You cannot just put part of you in a box and pretend that it does not exist. I think that does a very real violence. I think that effectively it is internalised racism. (Mabun)

Exploring feelings was not a simple thing to do. When I was growing up, I saw that it could be hard entering into the Aboriginal community as a light-skinned person. I had hoped to find that twenty years later things had advanced. I had thought I might find some light fuzzy comments about how nice, loving and accepting the Aboriginal community now was. I was shocked to find that people are still being rejected by their Aboriginal communities purely due to the colour of their skin. It had always been presented to me in various ways (Elders, Stories, media) that Aboriginal values and worldviews are supposed to be about relationships, belonging and acceptance. In reality, colonisation and trauma have created fear, doubt, judgment and racism. It is difficult forging an identity, but the difficulties when you do not look, speak or act the way you are 'supposed to' - when you don't quite fit in are real and significant. Going ahead despite your diversity must take a lot of courage and tenacity. Remaining strong in that identity is a true commitment on many and varied levels.

Gurugan spoke about the key ingredient to acceptance of Aboriginal identity:

The first step is just accepting yourself. If you can accept yourself it doesn't matter what anybody else has to say. You don't need anybody's approval no matter who they are. If you want to work in a certain place or get access to a certain service you may need a piece of paper to do that.

Outside of that nobody can tell you who you are. Just be. The land knows who you are. The universe knows who you are. If you can just accept who you are, that's the most important thing and it's about building the connections back in. Even if you never get those connections you are still you. And nobody can take that. (Garugan)

Becoming part of the Aboriginal community

Participants all wanted to be accepted by the (or an) Aboriginal community on some level in some way. Not only is it vital for recognition as an Aboriginal person in Australia due to the definition as provided by the government but it was also seen as the element that would complete their identity. As stated in Chapter 3, identity formulation has been seen as a crucial aspect of individual development for some time (Erikson, 1959; Rogers, 1961). Ekalla explains why it is important to belong to a community.

You feel like I am from this community and it will complete your identity a bit so that you can be more whole in the white community. When people ask you these things you can be like 'yes I'm Indigenous I am part of this community' and then even try to do things for your community. (Ekalla)

Despite this, some participants had not been accepted in a way that they had hoped or wished for. For some, it was because they could not adequately provide the documentation for an Aboriginal Certificate. For others, it was because they had not been verified or introduced into the community by family or other known community members. For others, it was because they were not allowed to integrate into the community despite their ability to provide evidence of heritage.

As stated previously in this chapter and Chapter 6, one group of the participants, were able to be involved in active community participation such as, socialising with other Aboriginal people and attending various community events, camps and had experiences of Aboriginal people share culture with them as a child. Some of these participants did not have extensive participation in what could be defined as the local Aboriginal community, such as the local land council, extended kinship networks or any community event held locally. Reasons for this were varied and have been discussed in the previous paragraph.

Participants whose families had a history of Stolen Generations or removal tended to keep to themselves or their own family group. They seemed to have made an active choice somewhere through the generations (usually after someone was removed) not to get known as an Aboriginal person, or part of an Aboriginal community. This made identification as an Aboriginal community member more complicated and difficult for these current participants (who were mostly grandchildren of members of the Stolen Generation). These participants chose to re-enter the Aboriginal community but were often met with doubt as the family had not been active for at least two generations. Sometimes this was made a more complex process when only certain members of the family were choosing to identify while others were still choosing to actively deny their Aboriginal identity. For the Aboriginal community, this can be perceived as suspicious and needing to be thoroughly investigated and authenticated before the person wanting to identify is acknowledged as being Aboriginal. Although understandable on many levels, this can be a long, painful and intricate process for the person trying to enter the community and develop their cultural identity.

In the Aboriginal community, there are some large families that are recognisable by name or families that have been active in the community or have been living in the local area for extended periods of time. For participants whose family were part of the Stolen Generations, or had been removed, identification by family name is also complex. Many participants no longer had what would be regarded as an Aboriginal surname. Some did not know their Aboriginal genealogy and so were unable to quote names of who they would be related to. Lack of accessible information about their Aboriginal genealogy and history also complicates the entering into a community. It is very difficult to produce information about who you are related to, where you come from or how you might fit into the community if this information has been hidden, lost or denied to you. Many participants have resolved this by deciding that the community that they now lived in was the community they wanted to be accepted by. Some have accepted that they may not ever be able to get the evidence to be able to prove to Government standards that they are Aboriginal (and some reject that they should have to). This inability to provide such evidence did not mean that participants could not identify as Aboriginal or enter the community, as all had done this. It did preclude them from identified jobs or

scholarships. It may also have implications for any family they may choose to have in the future in terms of if they can or will be able to identify and be accepted by the Aboriginal community.

For some participants their last name was significant due to a common or known surname that is affiliated with being Aboriginal. This was of benefit to them when entering the community.

Apparently it's a name used in that area with lots of the Aboriginal people. So when they heard my last name it made it a little easier for me, but I didn't know. (Kalinda)

I am lucky I have some authenticity. I am lucky my tribe is a huge one. I had no idea going in. I thought (delete name) is a bit of a white last name and people are going to be questioning me there. And there's like a zillion of them. (Balabalaa)

This shows how significant these apparently small details can be when re-entering the Aboriginal community and can make the difference between an easier and more pleasant experience compared to a possibly doubtful or even hostile response.

Many participants have now begun to form their own diverse communities. They have begun to surround themselves with other light-skinned Aboriginal people or others both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal that they have found supportive, accepting and open to their identity. This has helped participants feel attached to areas and people. However, this is not always an easy process.

Yeah, I guess I kind of feel like you have to start from scratch and kind of recreate a bit of a family when you move somewhere ...at least it is a community I think. (Mabun)

Others have increased participation in more defined ways as part of the land council or other advertised community events.

But I want to participate more. I found that participating so far has really made me feel good. Really made me feel more connected. I would like to continue and get even more involved. (Kalinda)

Some participants felt they were not accepted by their community or that they were on the outside fringes of it, still trying to work their way in. Some participants talked about not

knowing protocols, rules or etiquette. Some participants did not get acceptance from the local community despite having evidence to prove their Aboriginal heritage. There was no 'rule book'.

If you aren't attached to the land council it is a huge barrier I have found. (Kalinda)

I am a member of the land council so I am part of the community now, but I'm still not in. There are things that are specific to a community and if you are not really part of that then I do not know where to begin. Should I go to a community which is the area where my ancestors are from or the area where I live or one that I like? (Ekalla)

I did not know who you could turn to (to vouch for me). I just remember the stress I felt when I had to get somebody from the community who knew me. I didn't know where to go. I was really lost until I realised (delete name) was an elder. But without that you would be stuffed. (Kalina)

Of course, the answer is never simple. Often the community response is complex. Individuals can be met with doubt, racism and open contempt, deciding that the individual wants something (usually access to funds or jobs). Some participants had been home to their Country to find that there was no one left living to vouch for them. Unable to get a certificate in the community they were living in and accepted by because they needed to seek acknowledgment from a community they had never met or interacted with, this left them with no community at all.

But it felt like if I wanted to get a certificate I would have to say that I am part of the community that I am not a part of. (Matong)

The common experience described by participants was that hard work, persistence and making friends within the community were ways to make the journey easier.

There are a lot of actual people that would not have forged it that way because they have dark skin and they would have been part of a family. They would have had a family name. They would have already had the community. It would have just happened for them, especially in (area removed). For lighter-skinned people what I see is that actual work. They have to go and volunteer. They have to be at the land councils, have to be part of the Uni groups, they have to forge their own little community don't they? (Wanggii)

I think if your family is well known in the community and you are born into that then of course your family has done something or is part of that community so you do not really have to prove that. Whereas I think it is an important thing to people who have not grown up in the community and want to be part of it that they pay their dues to their community whichever community that is. (Konol)

Once you are in they embrace you with open arms and they let their guard down but before that they are very standoffish. Obviously that is a reaction to years of oppression let's face it. If you know someone it becomes really easy because they will teach you where to go. If you just try to google it then it is incredibly difficult. (Balabalaa)

When asked what might make the process easier for others Balabalaa stated:

One of my friends helped me with the process. They were absolutely invaluable. I don't think I would have done it without them because they were so welcoming. I needed someone to help me along with the process. (Balabalaa)

Kalina advises:

Finding strong mentors along the way is what grounded me in my cultural identity. You have to find someone in the community that accepts you and from there you can fit into the larger community. You can't just go straight in. You've got to go around. You know how you see those dot circle paintings? I always see a community like that. You can't just go to the heart of the community. You have to follow your way around to get in and then you have your links to the next place and you have to go around again. (Kalina)

Gurugan came up with some similar advice:

It is never easy I have to say that upfront. The less you know about who you are the harder that path is. What I would say is that it is about the easiest way is being able to find someone who can mentor you, take you under their wing, and accept you. Someone who has a level of acceptance within the community. If you have some idea about who you are or who your family is and where you are from if you are able to make connections back that way so the grandchild of blah and then people who already have that connection are more likely to accept you and then once you have that acceptance then you are more likely to gain other people's acceptance. So really it is being able to make that connection back and then being able to find, not a

champion as such, but someone that will guide you, will vouch for you and will give you information. Some people they will never know who their family is or where they come from but you do see some people who do develop that sense of community and connection within a group of other people. (Gurugan)

The importance of community is to have acknowledgement, acceptance, a sense of belonging and a sense that Aboriginal identity does not only mean something to the individual alone, but also adds to the wider local Aboriginal community and to society at large. The best outcome for participants was to have a level of acceptance by a community, or to create or adopt one of their own.

Why bother?

As an educated woman of 36, when I was in the hospital giving birth to my son the midwife informed me that there was a current health policy to 'red flag' any Aboriginal woman attending the hospital to give birth. This involved the Aboriginal woman being given a file (if she did not have one) and this was then taken to a special meeting of professionals within the hospital whose job it was to assess the risk to the woman, the risk to the unborn child and whether there was any perceived need to involve the Department of Community Services⁴⁵ (perhaps in regards to perceived neglect of the unborn child and to look at removal at birth). Given this fact she wanted to know if I would like to re-consider my current status, which was Aboriginal. After all, I could 'pass' as a non-Aboriginal person. Given this information why would I still want to identify in the broader Australian society as Aboriginal? To do so may have placed me at risk of having my child removed at birth. I insisted on ticking the box. Many would ask why?

At some point many light-skinned Aboriginal people have heard statements such as: 'You don't have to identify', 'no one can tell', 'you could pass' and 'no one would have to know'. The big question that non-Aboriginal people in particular seem to struggle with is 'Why bother?' Being identified as Aboriginal can appear to be painful, difficult and plagued with racist remarks from every corner of society. Why sign up to approximately twenty years less in life, health issues, unemployment issues, socio economic circumstances that have a lot to be desired, personal

⁴⁵ Government organisation mandated to assess risk and remove children from parents if needed.

attacks on your own identity and that of broader Aboriginal people, marginalisation, more risk of involvement in prisons and Juvenile Detention Centres, more unemployment and risk of removal of your children? It seems a relevant question. Therefore I asked the participants why they identified as Aboriginal, given that they don't have to and when it can be difficult and painful?

Most participants were all aware that they need not identify as Aboriginal because most of their lives they had been told messages such as 'you don't look it', 'you can't tell' and 'you can't be' but even if they had not received these very direct messages, they had compared their skin colour to those of their family, their friends and to other Aboriginal people. Many commented that they knew they did not look like a stereotypical Aboriginal person- perhaps they did not have the kinky hair, or the nose, or the legs, or the ankles- each and every participant discussed in detail why they did not look like a stereotypical Aboriginal person 'should' and so were very aware that they also need not identify. However, some participants also spoke about the darkness of their skin compared to other people (for example 'I look like someone with a good all year tan' (Wanggii) and also spoke of ways they did look Aboriginal. Skin lightness is sometimes based on personal perception and always on societal stereotypes. Some participants had been told by various people from their own family to general society members that they should, could or needed to identify as any other race and culture other than Aboriginal.

A few different themes emerged as to why, despite the rejection of society and also of Aboriginal people and communities, light-skinned Aboriginal people persist in identifying as Aboriginal. Firstly, this Aboriginal heritage is factual. Aboriginality is seen as a part of an identity that is important to recognise and as valid as any other identity (such as sexuality, parenthood or gender). Participants shared a sense of awe and pride to be a part of one of the oldest continuing culture's on Earth. Participants described it as being a special and unique culture that gave great gifts to its members such as spiritual connection, connection to Land and traditions spanning generations.

It is a part of who you are. It is a part of your identity. Trying to hide a part of your identity is not a positive thing. (Kalinda)

There is no lying about your heritage. It is what it is. You can't walk away from that. (Ekalla)

Once I embraced my heritage, my Aboriginality, I felt kind of complete. (Kalla)

Basically I was lying to myself and lying to my family. It was not until I was told that it was taking a toll on my family that I realised it was to something that I could not do to myself and I could not do it to them, it would just be like cutting off my left leg or something. (Mabun)

Secondly, one group of participants stated being Aboriginal was how they had been raised or socialised. They asked what they were supposed to be when they hadn't known how to be anything else. Although they may have had many other mixed heritage that made them look like they did, it had been the Aboriginal worldviews, values, and underlying cultural principles that had shaped them and formed them into the person they now were. Some felt a strong part of the Aboriginal history of dispossession and colonisation and felt that they only had light skin due to this history. Participants felt they were entitled to be part of their own Aboriginal family, which in turn gave them permission and perhaps the right to be part of the broader Aboriginal community and culture. To them being Aboriginal was real, it was fluid and above all it was valid.

You can feel the land. When (delete name) and I touch dirt we feel something. It is our dirt and we love that. Someone who comes from Scotland or Ireland feels an urge towards seeing that even if their family hasn't been there in generations and they identify themselves as Scottish or Irish ancestry. They feel a connection to that land and I feel one to this one. (Balabalaa)

When you walk in this direction that which your whole being is, it's like the connection to yourself, to your kids, to your family, to why you think the way you think, why you feel the way you feel, why you make decisions you do. (Wiree)

And I can't be any different to who I am. I can run around and try and tick all the boxes but it's not going to bring peace or make me anymore or any less Aboriginal. I was born Aboriginal and nobody can take that away. Nobody can make me be it. I'm it and I'm it because that's what I am and that's what the universe made me. (Gurugan)

Some participants felt they had found acceptance and a sense of belonging through identifying as an Aboriginal person. This created a feeling of peace, comfort, specialness, pride, responsibility and accountability.

This will stop me feeling like I am missing a bit of something. (Ekalla)

It's interesting because as I have gotten older it has just become my everything. (Wanggii)

Others felt that it added to the dimensions of who they were and to other identities that they had already forged. Nevertheless, it was a persistent theme that participants made comments such as 'they can't take this away from me' (Bulabalaa). Even though these participants had felt strong and complete in who they had been, the addition of their Aboriginal identity still seemed important if not precious to them.

Some participants stated that identifying as Aboriginal gave them a sense of being true to an inner reality and self. It was described by one participant as like connecting the dots and being able to see a clear picture. Owning their own Aboriginal identity gave many participants purpose, meaning and perspective.

That it is me and it is my identity...just saying that we are here and this won't be stolen from us. (Matong)

Belonging is one of Maslow's top things of needs and wants. If you can identify a community to belong to, it is going to be beneficial. Even if you have some negative experiences within that. (Konol)

All of the feelings that I was going through it just kind of made more sense to me and put things into perspective. (Kalla)

Some participants spoke about how fortunate they were to have found their identity and spoke about their role and responsibility in 'giving back' to Aboriginal community and peoples. Some talked about the government and Aboriginal community paying for their education and so they felt a large responsibility to use that education for the benefit of Aboriginal people at large. Others spoke about the need to mentor others, to be strong role models for other light-skinned Aboriginal people (one of the reasons for participating in this research) and for making it easier

for the next generation (from this they meant to make it easier both to identify but to also be able to source and be proud of their Aboriginal heritage). Some of the female participants were aware that they wanted to make the journey easier for any children or grandchildren that they may have or will have in the future. Participants seemed especially eager to not repeat negative experiences in the future and for future young people to be unashamed or feel they have to be silent about their identity. There was a sense that participants wanted to pass on that sense of pride and the permission to be someone who was Aboriginal.

I wouldn't want any kids to go through it. (Wiree)

It was tough getting into the community and now I want to make that path easier for kids and their kids to come. (Wanggii)

A lot of people have said to me they get more cultural education by doing Aboriginal studies at university or TAFE than they do in their own home. I think that is really sad that we do not have the Elders in the community doing a lot with the youth and passing on our culture. I really think we do poorly at that and I do not know how we can fix it or how we can do better. (Kalla)

Those participants who did have children in the current school system spoke about the changes in the information that is being taught to their children in areas such as history, science and even cooking. Schools seem to be integrating Aboriginal culture and knowledge. In one participant's view, there was no longer the racism attached to being Aboriginal present in the school system that their children were a part of. Some participants reported that mentors attended the school their child/ren were going to in order to teach culture and that there were also community programs provided at school that were seen to be enriching cultural knowledge to the extent that some of the children were coming home and teaching their parents something about the Aboriginal culture.

All bar one participant felt that identifying had increased their sense of wellbeing inside of themselves. These participants spoke of increased confidence, sense of pride, greater understanding of who they were in the world and a sense of peace.

Your identity gives you a sense of belonging. It doesn't matter what culture, religion, gender you are from. For me to have complete and utter acceptance and pride in my Indigenous heritage it

has increased my wellbeing...As much as you might try to deny it or you might not be 100% aware of Aboriginal culture, identity is everything to us. I have seen kids that didn't really know, be so completely lost at the time. (Thoomie)

I feel a lot more space for want of a better word. I feel a lot more grounded. It is fantastic. That turmoil that I had so long. It is just not there anymore. I just am and that is great. (Matong)

Be true to yourself. There is no lying about your heritage- it is what it is. You can't walk away from that. Even if you try not to pursue being part of a community it does not change the fact you are Indigenous. (Ekalla)

As an Aboriginal person I feel a real sense of actual belonging because I know who I am and where I am from. I can trace my heritage and it is very strong with ties to land and community. I think that does increase my mental wellbeing. Because of that sense that I know where I belong and who I am. (Kalla)

There was one participant who felt that they had already designed their own identity picture prior to the knowledge of their Aboriginal ancestry and so they did not feel that this knowledge had fundamentally changed who they were or how they felt about themselves.

So becoming Aboriginal was good because it answered some questions. But it did not fundamentally change me in any sort of way. (Balabalaa)

It seemed that for this participant there had been some connection to being Aboriginal before the confirmation of this identity. They had known they were different and had felt a connection to the land from a young age. Although they did not have to identify they also spoke of it as a treasure- something no one else could claim or take away from them but something that was also an intrinsic right. As well as this, as the participant spoke there were some changes to their life. Accepting identity had opened up a world that could be explored and learned about. It opened up new friends and relationships. Most of all, the participant had committed to their Aboriginal identity and had started the process of gaining an Aboriginal certificate and entering the local Aboriginal community. It would be very interesting to interview this participant in another five years to see if their wellbeing had been influenced by these current choices and paths they were embarking on.

It must be noted that the acceptance of who you are as a light-skinned Aboriginal person and wellbeing might be linked, but they do not automatically equal each other and this is obvious due to the current imbalances in areas such as education, incarceration and health. There are also light-skinned Aboriginal people who are not identifying at all (perhaps they were not socialised to be Aboriginal, the racism is too daunting, they may not know how to start the process or they may be afraid of rejection). Yet, these participants have shown that there is a great sense of comfort and wellbeing to be gained from a strong Aboriginal identity and perhaps it even leads to greater success, pride and above all peace in who you are as a human being.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has identified the themes highlighted by the participants surrounding light-skinned Aboriginal identity. Themes included legitimacy of identity, feelings surrounding identity and why the participants felt that they wanted to identify as Aboriginal.

The next chapter focuses on the participant's experiences of racism as a light-skinned Aboriginal person and where this might occur and what the effects of it may be. It discusses racism from the broader community, racism from other Aboriginal people and incidents of no racism. The participants comment on how racism has occurred in their journeys to formulating their identity as a light-skinned Aboriginal person.

Chapter 8: Racism and light-skinned Aboriginal people

‘In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently’ Harry A. Blackmun⁴⁶.

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter explored the participant’s experiences of living as an Aboriginal person with light skin and what this meant when trying to formulate an Aboriginal identity, particularly if they did not have community or kinship links. It began to give a voice to those individuals who have been through this process and to discuss the positive and negatives to this.

There has been little discussion in Australia about the different experiences of racism among lighter-skinned Aboriginal people. Although there have been studies that investigate the experience of racism on and for Aboriginal people in Australia in an urban setting (Paradies, 2006b; Paradies, 2006c; Paradies, 2006d; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009; Ziersch, Gallaher, Baum, & Bentley, 2011a, 2011b), research on racism in Australia has tended to incorporate all Aboriginal people and has not examined in detail some of the experiences for lighter-skinned Aboriginal people. Racism was a common experience for all participants in the research and had occurred at some time during their identity formation process. Racism also impacted on whether and when they identified. It was such a common and influential experience throughout the participant’s narratives that it became an overarching concept for understanding identity development.

Defining racism

The concept of racism has been subject to much debate in the literature by varied disciplines. A common understanding is that racism comes as a combination of power and prejudice (G. Berman & Paradies, 2010). Essed defines racism as ‘the definitive attribution of inferiority to a

⁴⁶ URL accessed 1 March 2013
<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/racism.html#IKQz18VkQmLzMQ5Z.99>

particular racial/ethnic group and the use of this principle to propagate and justify the unequal treatment of this group' (1990, p. 11). In other words, racism describes the incidences of prejudice, discrimination or antagonism that has been directed at some light-skinned Aboriginal people by others.

Racism can be expressed as beliefs, stereotypes, prejudices or discrimination (Luke, Paradies, Priest, & Stewart, 2011). It can manifest in the form of small remarks made seemingly casually to open threats or taunts and can be deeply embedded in social systems and structures (Bergman & Paradies, 2010). Racism can result in unfair inequalities in power, resources and opportunities (Luke et al., 2011). Racism can be seen as a manifestation of oppression as it can result in further disadvantaging ethno-racial minorities while creating opportunities for the dominant members of society (Paradies, 2006b; Paradies, 2006c).

Racism occurs on three levels. The first is the institutional level, which involves the practices, policies and processes that are part of organisations, institutions and systems of society (for example within the education system or within employment institutions). Second is interpersonal racism, which occurs in interactions between individuals either in institutions, in social situations or as individual to individual. Third is internalised racism where an individual internalises the attitudes, beliefs and ideologies about the perceived inferiority of their group as held by the dominant society (Ziersch et al., 2011b).

Racism has been seen as a normal societal occurrence (Delgado, 1995). Mainstream non-Aboriginal dominance is ingrained in all aspects of social structures and practices in Australia and is therefore normalised and often difficult to name, recognize or address (Kessar, 2006). Kessar (2006) argues that by uncovering, identifying and naming the hidden social practices of racism against Aboriginal people, strategies will be developed thus helping the process of decolonisation.

Racism has been seen as a determinant of Aboriginal health at a national level (NHMRC, 2006). Individuals reporting incidences of racism have also reported poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes (Krieger, 1999; Paradies, 2006c; D. Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Incidences of depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsion and decreased life satisfaction can be

results of experiences of racism (Krieger, 1999; Ziersch et al., 2011a). Racism can have lasting health implications including increased stress and negative emotional reactions (Ziersch et al., 2011a). This is concerning for individuals experiencing ongoing racism in Australia.

Participants reported incidences of racism from the broader community about their racial identity (certainly these views are not new and are often debated in the media as discussed in chapter 5) from their family and friends and also from the Aboriginal communities they are trying to join and participate in. Despite these experiences of racism, the participants persisted with the journey of their Aboriginal identity and to try to belong as an Aboriginal person.

Racism from Aboriginal people

My skin colour meant my Aboriginality was always questioned by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, it was so much harder hearing it from other Indigenous people in my community as it made me doubt myself and where I belonged. (Thoomie)

Participants felt that they needed to prove their Aboriginality to the wider society due to their lack of distinguishable stereotypical Aboriginal features and skin colour. When having to prove their Aboriginality to their own community they expressed feelings of confusion, hurt and disappointment. Participants reported that they understood some of the feelings from Aboriginal people but had hoped there would be more understanding, tolerance and acceptance from their own people and community in regards to light skin and its association with the genocide, assimilation and Stolen Generations that occurred in Australia.

I was forced to live in a white man's world. So I understand in a way that they look at me and they think, how can you be? But if I ask them the same question of their light-skinned grandchild they would say, 'Obviously they are, because they are mine'. (Wiree)

The genocide and Stolen Generation and the fact it was actually hidden or shame to do. We were not allowed to practice culture and so I think that plays a really big part in why we have come to this point. I know it plays a bit part for me. In all that time when we were not allowed to have language and practice culture so much has been lost that it is really hard to pass down. (Kalla)

Racism from other Aboriginal people has been directed at either the participants themselves or other light-skinned Aboriginal people. Participants gave examples of incidences that they considered racist from other Aboriginal people.

He was calling them Snow White and other names. (Wiree)

I have heard people say to me in general light colored people have no right to be around here. (Matong)

The Aboriginal community asks intimidating and intrusive questions about your family and heritage, trying to catch you out in a lie. When I had Indigenous people questioning me saying 'you have an accent' 'where are you from?' and when I told them I am from around here they were like 'no you're not, you're not dark enough'. It was really hard for me to say yeah I am because they were darker than me and they seemed more in touch with the culture. So I felt like they were right. (Thoomie)

I also think that it is important to recognise how racism manifests itself always in nasty ways and sometimes in ways that are particular to people with fair skin basically. (Mabun)

I hate people treating me as if I am lesser than them because I don't happen to have the luxury of two dark-skinned parents. (Wanggi)

It was you don't look Aboriginal and when you go out into community you get a lot of aggression. Who are ya? Who's your family? What's your name? When I was in my 20's a young girl aged about 15 grabbed me and said who the fuck are ya and what are ya doing here. I was really intimidated...until they know or you can say who you are connected to and why you are there you get treated like you are a hostile person in an environment where you are going to get your head smashed in if you don't speak up. It is important to know who you are, who you are connected to, who sends you where you go. Without any of that knowledge you are going to get your arse kicked. (Kalina)

After experiencing these sorts of incidents of racism (and lateral violence), participants spoke about lowered self-esteem, feeling they should not be proud of their Aboriginal heritage, feelings of rejection, of being unwanted by the Aboriginal community and of being less than

dark-skinned Aboriginal people. These situations may preclude some light-skinned Aboriginal people from re-entering the Aboriginal community or seeking their Aboriginal identity.

I think that I see young people who might not have connections with community or they might not know their history or even just kind of general Aboriginal history. It is tragic. It is incredibly sad because I know how that feels to feel disconnected and like you are not owned by anyone. I think it is that disconnection which is so destructive. (Mabun)

I find that the closer I get to darker people the more that they put their walls up that I am trying to steal something from them, take something from them, latch onto their money pot- all those sorts of things...there are vicious ugly politics...so it makes it all quite difficult. (Matong)

I've met a lot of light-skinned Aboriginal women and men who just do not identify because they don't know that (name, country) information. They have been challenged by darker-skinned Aboriginal people and they don't have the words to say and the darker-skinned people say well you shouldn't be fucking claiming to be Aboriginal if you don't know where your mob is or your culture or anything. You shouldn't be fucking saying anything. You just stand back there. And I've heard that. It's anxiety producing to be out in community. (Kalina)

As discussed previously in this chapter, the history of colonisation and lateral violence in Australia has also left some participants with certain views of Aboriginal people that may be seen as stereotypical. In fact, some participants exhibited racism about themselves and Aboriginal people in general at various times in their life.

I think that growing up in a regional town where there is a lot of stereotypes around what Aboriginal people do, look like, stereotypes around the work ethic that Aboriginal people have about not turning up, being late all, those kind of things were really powerful stereotypes, in a place where I grew up so I have always been really conscious of doing the absolute opposite to that which has been difficult occasionally I guess. (Mabun)

I didn't have any role models or anyone at the time to tell me any differently. So I had only seen and knew from some people that I had seen some other Indigenous people that they were like that. I know now that it wasn't everyone; it was just those select people that I knew. But that made it really hard to even want to identify as being Indigenous. (Thoomie)

[Large city] is quite critical in that respect because it is so multicultural; it allows for people to be diverse). In (regional area) there are very few perspectives on anything.... And so if you try and step outside like if you try and be different there's always someone to give you a piece of shit over that. (Nepo)

At other times, there seemed to be a stigma attached to discussing Aboriginal identity, heritage or culture at all.

My Aboriginal grandparent was brought up in a home where you weren't allowed to talk about it because of assimilation policies. The real fear of removal. There is a lot of conflict around that. It caused real breakdown with my grandparent's relationship with their siblings. So whenever someone would talk about it my Aboriginal parent would leave the room. So that's like no we are not talking about it. (Dhulan)

You don't want to ask them about it because you don't know what sort of reaction it could have. (Ekalla)

As discussed in Chapter 2, lateral violence occurs in Aboriginal communities across Australia (Butler, 2012). It is known that oppressed groups can take a conquer and divide approach amongst their own peoples. Differing experiences of lateral violence occurred for participants who also seemed to accept it as a common and expected occurrence.

Some people come up from *delete area* and their family name is known and they are clearly Aboriginal and no one asks for their paperwork and they might not have paperwork even though they have just fought long and hard over this person with light skin that did not have paperwork and say you can't come in without paperwork and then this family is not asked for paperwork. I have found it particularly enlightening because this once happened straight after a light-skinned person was knocked back for not having it. (Kalinda)

When I was younger I used to have darker-skinned people question me about whether I was lying or a fake a lot. I suppose I wasn't that well known. I have found it better since I got older but I am not sure if that is because the situation has improved, whether I am better known or because I don't really care anymore. They can't tell me who I am- only I can tell me who I am. That attitude may silence bullies. (Wanggi)

It seemed rare for participants to be in an environment that was without the politics of lateral violence.

This is one of the first places I have been professionally where people do not actually give a shit about the colour of my skin...they were more interested in what I know and who I am rather than what I look like. (Mabun)

Participants who had received an Aboriginal cadetship into University or a designated Aboriginal job stated they thought it provided them with opportunity to try to finish at something, to go from beyond poverty, to success. Some participants did not come from a life of complete or abject poverty or disadvantage, yet they spoke about repaying the community and helping Aboriginal people who were disadvantaged. Some of these participants were already doing various volunteer roles in the Aboriginal community with this goal in mind.

Some participants had moved from a place of being someone without a clear, formed identity to being strong role models for others. However, it was clear that identity issues are not necessarily 'fixed' for light-skinned Aboriginal people.

I think that the inter-generational effects of poverty and the Stolen Generation and language loss and cultural loss are much more long-standing. I think the effect continues for more generations than what it takes to make skin fair. I do not know how these things kind of manifest in different generations, but our children are probably going to be even fairer-skinned. How do we address those things across generations and maintain that sense of connection. (Mabun)

One participant spoke about the fact that having light skin mostly precluded them from having to face overt racism based on skin colour.

So I think that there is very definitely a privilege to walking around in the world with light skin. I think that that is inescapable and something that people need to have discussion about. (Mabun)

However, on this discussion of more privilege due to light skin colour, another participant had this to say:

You are constantly battling the prejudices that are out there...More recently I heard that someone was making a comment about another person around white privilege and saying that Aboriginal people with fair skin get white privilege. It was like no that hasn't been my experience in life. In fact it has been quite the opposite. To me that has been really mind blowing that idea that somehow life is easier or I get more stuff given to me because I have fair skin and I am Aboriginal. So the difficulty really is about other people's perceptions about what your Aboriginality means or what your Aboriginality gets you. The reality is that my Aboriginality has stopped me. There is that a whole lot of knowledge and experience in both the white world and the Black World that I don't have and that's because of my Aboriginality. (Gurugan)

In fact, Mabun spoke about their perceived need to have access to Aboriginal benefits despite their light skin colour.

If there had not been a system for targeted services and targeted welfare there is absolutely no way that I would now be doing a (degree deleted) at a sandstone university. (Mabun)

This is an important concept to tease out. Light-skinned Aboriginal people may not be receiving as much overt racism due to their skin colour but that did not mean they did not commonly experience racism. Having light skin does not necessarily automatically improve their socio-economic or health status of Aboriginal people. Participants also often had family or friends surrounding them that did experience overt racism due to their skin colour and so while they may not have life experiences such as not being able to find accommodation to rent, or being followed around a shopping complex or not being able to successfully hail a cab, they did witness this behaviour being enacted to other Aboriginal people. Racism then is often part of identifying as an Aboriginal person either from the broader community or from other Aboriginal people. It may take a different shape with light-skinned Aboriginal people, but its existence is irrefutable.

When asked what some of the solutions to racism could be many participants spoke about acceptance of light skin and that the community needed to 'blur the colour boundaries '(Kalina). There was a real sense of fear for future generations, who may not have anyone in their family who has distinguishable Aboriginal features. Participants asked questions about the future for other light-skinned Aboriginal people in generations to come such as where would they seek

their legitimacy and acceptance from. Kalina felt that the situation was not being adequately addressed in Australia and stated 'It is like a ticking time bomb'.

Racism from 'others'

Racism from the broader community ranges from people that the participants did not know to friends, relatives and acquaintances. The most common racist responses to the participants were around their lack of skin colour.

They are like you're not one of the people that live out of the Northern Territory...You're not a real Aboriginal. (Kalinda)

Some people have actually got offended when I have said to them I am actually Aboriginal...They get quite offended at that and I don't know why or what right they have because they are not Indigenous at all. (Nepo)

Well people look at you a bit strange and when you talk about your Aboriginality they look at you and they will say that you are white...or if they do not know you and they do not know your family they tend to be less accepting. You probably find you have to prove who you are. (Kalla)

It was then that I would get either a questioning of my identity or racist comments like 'you coon', 'you boong' 'you are going to be a thief' 'you are going to be a drug addict'. I had one teacher say 'Oh then what is the point of me teaching you? You are not going anywhere anyway.' (Thoomie)

Having a discussion about their own families and their own position on racism or people being racist it was found that most participants were intolerant of racism. It was clear that discussions had been had, where appropriate with a range of people ranging from friends to complete strangers, with participants taking opportunities to educate and advocate for their own people.

They have made snide little comments to me over the time and I have confronted them straight away. (Matong)

She just started absolutely rubbishing the Indigenous employment strategy of this organisation and why the hell would they bother to employ black people because they are all lazy bastards

who do not turn up for work. At that point I identified myself as an Aboriginal person. She refrained from anymore comments. (Kalla)

It was defiantly when I was a child people used to make Aboriginal jokes and even back then I thought they were toss bags for it. (Balabalaa)

‘Oh it says here you’re Aboriginal. Well I wouldn’t worry about it ‘she goes, ‘because how much Aboriginality have you got? How much Aborigine have you got in you?’ Well, do you think I could shut my mouth? No. Sorry. ‘Excuse me’ ‘Yes?’ ‘It doesn’t matter how much’ ‘yes it does. It’s a fact’ I said ‘No. You go and get educated. It is not a fact. Your facts are wrong. (Wiree)

Kessariss (2006) discusses the phenomenon where non-Aboriginal people feel entitled to speak about Aboriginal people as the experts and often in their presence. She names this ‘unconstrained Mununga (White) talk’(Kessariss, 2006, p. 355). It is seen as harmful because it is frequent, unpredictable and can be utterly dismissive of the Aboriginal person and their life experiences. She argues that this kind of unconstrained conversation can be very damaging when it is cumulative for an individual, especially if the Aboriginal person is unable to remove themselves from it (such as at a workplace or at University classes). She comments that often non-Aboriginal people make this worse by taking no responsibility for their racist views or conversations and leaving it to Aboriginal people to educate those around them about racism and the issues surrounding Aboriginal people. Kessariss states ‘ the best analogy for me is a pack rape victim being expected to help his/her attackers by assisting them to work through their issues of power abuse’ (2006, p. 355). Wanggii discusses their experience with this:

I’ve gotten ‘you don’t look black’ about a million times and my response is and you don’t look racist but yet here we are. People ask ‘what part Aboriginal are you?’ and have asked for my blood percentage. We get suspicion. People think you are lying and you have to justify yourself. You get ‘you don’t look black so why did you get a black job’. There are some Aboriginal people I could name who speak better than me and have more money than me and have dark skin. Does that make them white? It seems to all come down to being white or dark-skinned. It comes down to that whole stereotypical racism. (Wanggi)

Many participants came from families who were against racism themselves, either because of their Aboriginal identity or because they were generally accepting and open people. Participants

seemed to be advocates for an equal and just society and for the acceptance and even integration of Aboriginality into mainstream Australian culture. Friends and family were made aware that no racial insults, jokes or opinions were appreciated or welcome. When members of society were racist it was seen as an opportunity to educate them. In some ways it is also seen as a challenge to racism and racists themselves. As Kalla explains:

I like to be quite open with people that I am Aboriginal and often. I will give you an example, I was sitting on an airplane and obviously I am not visibly Aboriginal. This woman started talking about how the Aboriginal people do not do this and do not do that and blah blah blah. I said that is interesting because I am Aboriginal. She just shut right up. Like as if oh I need to watch what I am saying now. (Kalla)

It is hard to understand why there are racist people in the world these days, especially with so much diversity and education about cultures. Participant's thoughts on why individual's held racist views were varied.

She was just repeating what she had heard or something like that. Like she didn't understand. She was like eight. (Kalinda)

I guess that comes from being ridiculed that you think like that. (Wiree)

I just put it down to complete ignorance because they are more ignorant about what Aboriginal people have gone through with genocide and everything. (Kalla)

I think people want the easy answer. Dealing with complexity is hard. Presenting people with the kind of propositions that you are talking about is inherently complex. It is messy. It is difficult. It is an emotionally fraught. (Mabun)

Maybe they are a bit naive and they don't want to look at it differently or look at it from a different perspective or something like that. (Nepo)

The attacks on me about my Aboriginality are not really about people questioning my Aboriginality itself; it is about a way of discrediting me and what I have achieved. (Gurugan)

When speaking about racism participants reported they were generally not subject to daily or obvious racism due to their skin colour. This was seen as being due to not being physically

recognised as Aboriginal due to light skin. Some participants spoke about wanting to be seen and recognised as Aboriginal and described how they had often taken great pains to tell anyone who has not been able to 'tell'. Due to the colour of their skin, participants stated that if they felt they wanted to talk about being Aboriginal or any Aboriginal issues, then they felt they had to explain their heritage and justify their authority to speak on the subject. Some of the roles that they took in the wider Australian community were to be advocate, educator and adjudicator on issues surrounding Aboriginality. Dhulan educates those around them on what being a light-skinned Aboriginal person may be

They said I didn't know you were Aboriginal because you've got white skin. So it was always the response you got so you just kind of go well no I am and this is who I am and where I am from.
(Dhulan)

Wangii speaks about the pain associated with not being recognised visually as an Aboriginal person:

They can visually identify a darker-skinned person and this hurts as you may have spent a great deal of your life working to be part of the community. How far do we have to rub the salt into the wound to prove ourselves? (Wanggi)

Ekalla talks about the choices they had felt they had had to face:

So I really felt this year that I had to choose between being a good person who puts back into the community or being someone who chases money basically. Or maybe chases a quick career.
(Ekalla)

Kalinda made an analogy between light-skinned Aboriginal identity and homosexual identity.

It is not necessarily like you were trying to hide it. It is like you are gay and coming out. You always have to come out because no one can see. Sorry I have gay friends. In a way it is like that. Everyone assumes you are not. You are not really hiding but you don't have that connection. When you do have that connection it is part of your identity. It is important. (Kalinda)

The similarities between the two different identities are interesting. The literature states that the process of identifying as a homosexual shares similar stages to the identity development of

Erikson's theory (Cass, 1979; Dank, 1973; Erikson, 1959; Henncken & O'Dowd, 1977). It also states that developing a homosexual identity is influenced by socialisation and the nature of interpersonal relationships, much like an Aboriginal identity (Coleman, 1982; Sullivan, 1978). The literature speaks about the identity of homosexuality needing self-identification, self-acceptance and public labelling very similar to Berry's stages for Aboriginal identity (Berry, 1999; Dank, 1971; J. Lee, 1977; McCall & Simmons, 1966).

Aboriginal people in general are often judged in advance and are viewed not as an individual but as a member of a race (Reynolds, 1999). Non-Aboriginal people and light-skinned Aboriginal people who are present or aware of racism towards Aboriginal people are then faced with the dilemma of choosing between complicity or confrontation. This places individuals in a situation where they can fit in with friends and family or risk causing conflict to the point of being viewed as 'eccentric or self-righteous or to be assuming moral superiority' (Reynolds, 1999, p. 47) if they verbalise disagreement.

I had made the assumption when I undertook the research that all of the participants would be proud of their identity and that they would be open about it (in some ways they had to have accepted it to even consider talking to me about forming an Aboriginal identity). However some participants had not always identified or been proud of their identity. In some ways, at different times, some participants had been racist against their own people and against themselves as Aboriginal people. These participants articulated the fear of being stereotyped and receiving negative racism from general society and possibly those that are closer to them, including other Aboriginal people. Mabun talked about these issues in the following way:

I try not to. I am very conscious of beating the drum. If you know what I mean like (name removed)'s friends, for example I do not necessarily tell them because they are, quite frankly, racist buggers. So I am very conscious and careful of the people who I tell my story to and actually go out of my way to not adopt clothing, jewellery or physical markers that say anything about my heritage whatsoever as a matter of fact I probably go to the other extreme and try to be possibly more conservative or dress more professionally. I think I consciously do a lot of things to make my Indigenaity not the issue, not the marker because I think that if anyone is

going to critique my work professionally or if I am going to have my work questioned in any way, then Indigenaity can be used in that way and I am very reluctant to be able to provide people any more reasons than they need to. (Mabun)

This leaves the question: how many light-skinned Aboriginal people are not identifying because of the amount of racism they receive? An Aboriginal academic I know recently held a lecture. One student would not identify as Aboriginal due to being '1/16th Aboriginal' and the heritage was 'too far back'. At the end of the lecture about Aboriginal identity the student presented confused. The student had been taught that they could choose to be Aboriginal due to their heritage and that they had the right to be Aboriginal. The student wanted to ask what did it all mean and where could they go if they wanted information on the culture and the process (Personal communication, 13th March 2013). This was a profound learning for that student. The possibility of gaining an Aboriginal cultural identity became opened to them. There is the distinct possibility that individuals such as this will need to be re-educated on their mindset about themselves, their direct family and Aboriginal people in general. It is also a possibility that by accepting an Aboriginal identity they will now have to endure racism, doubt and questioning of that identity, which they may never have experienced before. There is a lack of information and education about light-skinned Aboriginal people and also about identity formation in the broader public society. This shows the need for new, positive media coverage and more informative articles. There are also people like this student who have already fallen through a gap and others who know they are Aboriginal but do not have the information or support available to start to enter the community. These are issues that need to be addressed for the sustainability of the culture.

It can be gleaned from the interviews that participants who identify as Aboriginal when they have light skin are likely to get racist remarks about Aboriginal people in general as well as comments on their legitimacy as an Aboriginal person. Some light-skinned Aboriginal people starting on the identity journey may also have to process the internal racism that they may have about Aboriginal people. There is a risk telling others you do not know about your Aboriginal identity when you have light skin that involves having to face fear, doubt, stereotyping and rejection.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has addressed a specific theme from the interviews of racism for light-skinned Aboriginal people. It has explored the participant's experiences of racism from both the wider society and from other Aboriginal people. Participants spoke about where and when they have faced racism as a light-skinned Aboriginal person and how this may have affected their journey to acceptance of their Aboriginal identity.

In the next and final chapter I will present the thesis contributions to social work and hopefully to Aboriginal people with light skin, little or no community connections who would like to forge their Aboriginal cultural identity.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and contributions

Unlike a drop of water, which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self. B. R. Ambedkar⁴⁷

Chapter introduction

The aim of this thesis was to identify how light-skinned Aboriginal people formulate and solidify their Aboriginal identities. To answer the research question: how do light-skinned Aboriginal people with little or no family or community ties formulate their Aboriginal cultural identity, two key strategies were adopted. These strategies included a media analysis and 15 in-depth interviews with participants; analysed using qualitative and narrative analysis. This chapter highlights the findings of this process and discusses their relevance to how cultural identity can be developed, as well as implications for social work knowledge and practice.

This research aims to contribute to the emerging literature about the formulation of Aboriginal identity in Australia (Bolt, 2009; Gorringe, Ross, & Fforde, 2011; Paradies 2006a). It does this by exploring Aboriginal cultural identity and, in particular, the experiences of Aboriginal people who have light skin (and little or no kinship ties and/or community ties). The thesis contributes to the understanding of what it means to have a more diverse and physically changing identity and the implications of this for the future of Aboriginal identity and culture. It also offers important insights into the experience of light-skinned Aboriginal people and identifies the possible needs of these individuals in a social work context.

The core argument in the literature has been that culture and cultural identity are socially constructed (Matsumoto, 1996, Bolt, 2009). In Australia this construction has been impacted by colonisation and resulting policies which, I have argued, influence the ability of some people to develop and forge their cultural identity, particularly if they have light skin, and little or no community and/or kinships ties.

⁴⁷ URL accessed 1 March 2013

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/b/bramedk396096.html#ET55WzEkVF97QmqH.99>

This final chapter draws the thesis together and outlines the research contribution to understanding the issues involved in identity development. It begins with an overview of the argument and material presented in the previous chapters. It restates the aims of the research and the justifications for the directions taken. The second section then discusses how the participants in this study are developing their identity, the common elements of their experiences, and what assisted them on their journey. The third section discusses a possible model of identity development that emerged from considering the existing literature and the participants' experiences. The final section reflects on the implications of this study for social work and concludes with comments about what these findings might mean for the future.

Review of the thesis

Aims

The aim of this thesis was to identify how light-skinned Aboriginal people with little or no community and/or kinship ties are formulating and solidifying their Aboriginal identities. To understand the contested struggles around 'who is' and 'what counts' as Aboriginal in Australia, I sought to understand Aboriginal identity within the historical context. History has played an important part in the construction of Aboriginal identity. Policies such as assimilation have impacted on the ability of Aboriginal people to reproduce cultural knowledge. Intergenerational traumas have also added to present issues with difficulties experienced for Stolen Generations in finding out information on their heritage, as well as making it more difficult for some to formulate their identity.

Media can be a key source of information for people in the modern world and is key to how social issues are framed and understood (McCallun, Waller, & Meadows, 2012). Therefore, it was important to review the media on this topic and to analyse how the media represents light and dark-skinned Aboriginal people. A media analysis from 2009-2013 on light-skinned Aboriginal identity was carried out. This analysis highlighted a number of important themes, including: the debate as to who is a 'real' Aboriginal person; the debate around what benefits an Aboriginal person receives; and the need versus race debate in terms of benefits given to Aboriginal people.

A qualitative research approach was adopted to effectively answer the questions that drove the study. That is, to explore how participants make meaning of their lives, in this case their experience of developing an Aboriginal identity. Using mainly snowball sampling, 15 people agreed to participate in the study. As discussed in Chapter 6 this is a sensitive topic and participants were very generous to agree to be interviewed. Aboriginal identity has received a lot of media attention in Australia recently, some of which was not positive. It is an area that is laden with emotion, involving a topic that can be deemed stigmatising. The research topic involves social conflict and could be perceived as risky to be involved in. The existing literature makes the point that Aboriginal identity has barely been addressed (Markstrom, 2010, Boladeras, 2002). This thesis, therefore, has made an important contribution by adding to the limited research, particularly around light-skinned Aboriginal identity development.

The experience of identity development

All participants claimed to be Aboriginal due to their biological descent and membership to the Aboriginal collective. Some participants were also able to trace family lineage such as relatives, place of Country, and who they may be related to. They did this through a range of methods such as tracing birth and death certificates, speaking to people in the area they had originally come from, and going to Aboriginal land councils. Although socialisation is important and helpful when formulating an identity (Bolt, 2009), those participants who had not known about their Aboriginal heritage until later in life had still managed to construct their Aboriginal identity. This study has demonstrated that Aboriginal identity is not just taught through socialisation but can be learnt through different processes such as courses at University and TAFE, DVD's, speaking to knowledgeable people, and other methods of self-learning; although limitations of content and accessibility still exist.

The participants fell into two groups. The first were those who were socialised on some level by someone Aboriginal and introduced to their Aboriginal identity to some extent. For example Konol who had an Aboriginal parent bring them up in the worldviews and ethics of the Aboriginal culture and who also had some extended family. This family was known in the community and could vouch for Konol when Konol decided to enter the Aboriginal community.

The second group were those who had not been socialised into the Aboriginal culture and community. These were people who often didn't know about their Aboriginal heritage until they were adults and may not have had any extended kin to introduce or vouch for them in the community. Being vouched for, or at least having one person in their lives that identified as Aboriginal helped the first group of participants feel, and be recognised by others, as legitimate in the Aboriginal community. This experience had also cemented their identity in their childhood and adolescence. There were more opportunities for these participants to learn about their culture as they were growing up from both their parent/s and any kinship or community networks that their parent/s were involved in.

Both groups admitted to having limited cultural knowledge, with gaps in areas such as Aboriginal history, their own family history, and general Aboriginal culture. The first group, with at least one Aboriginal person in their lives, had more opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture. They took-up opportunities to learn such as Burrun who attended seminars and NAIDOC events. They also seemed to have found networks and relationships with Aboriginal people while growing up as a result of introductions by their Aboriginal parent/s or kinship networks. These relationships were critical in reinforcing their identity. Having one Aboriginal person in their life was the key to cultural knowledge and acceptance by others. Although Aboriginal identity can be developed through means other than socialisation, participants reported it is ultimately easier to be accepted into the Aboriginal community when you have family to lead the way, in terms of getting a good name and vouching for the individual. If this does not exist, it is likely that the individual will be on the outskirts of the Aboriginal community and find it difficult to know how to enter and be accepted. This, then, creates a risk that individuals will be alienated from their culture and people and may even stop identifying as Aboriginal (as had happened for some of the participants' family members).

The literature (explored in depth in chapter 3) sees culture to include integrated patterns of learned beliefs and behaviours that are shared in the cultural group, such as communication styles, values, and practices (Hall, 1990). Theorists agree that socialisation is the process by which we learn and internalise roles and patterns of behaviour which are accepted by our culture (Bolt, 2009, Matsumoto, 1996, Vaughn, 2010). This study shows how those participants

who had been socialised into the Aboriginal culture were more integrated into the community in which they lived. Those who had not been socialised and were often not able to make connections with the community were, nonetheless, able to learn about the culture and able (to some extent) to socialise or teach themselves about the values, behaviour and ideologies attached to Aboriginal culture and identity. The issue here was finding the mentors or information to be able to learn this knowledge. Participants were reliant on finding an Aboriginal person willing to accept them as legitimately Aboriginal and then able and willing to teach them and introduce them to the Aboriginal culture. Some participants had been unable to find a person, organisation or people to teach them, and were subsequently limited to knowledge that was given at University, through books, or readily available to searches (such as the internet). This meant there were gaps in knowledge and connection for participants, with some on the periphery of the Aboriginal community.

In this group of participants, age and gender did not seem to influence the experience of socialising the self into an Aboriginal identity. This was an interesting occurrence and may have been because the path is the same regardless of age or gender, or that some of the differences that used to exist due to age or gender have been eradicated, perhaps because of colonisation or other unknown factors. Even though the two groups (one with an Aboriginal person as a socialiser, and one without, who found out about identity later in life) seemed to have differences, the journey to an Aboriginal identity was very similar. In addition, the success of this journey was not guaranteed, even if there were family to vouch for the participant, as being accepted by the Aboriginal community was more about the communities' willingness to accept an individual and not the proof that may surround heritage. This is seen in Ekalla's case, where they were able to provide enough documentation and evidence of Aboriginal heritage to be accepted by the land council and gain an Aboriginality certificate but remained on the periphery of the Aboriginal community, as they did not know how or who to approach to become more of an integral member. It was not evident why this lack of acceptance happened in the Aboriginal community but most participants had commented on this occurring to them to some extent in their journey. For example, Thoomie who was originally questioned and not accepted by their

own community due to the colour of their skin, but then later accepted by a mentor and made an integral part of that community.

Light-skinned Aboriginal people have been questioned about their legitimacy and authenticity by both wider society and by Aboriginal communities. The media analysis shows very clearly there are strong messages in wider society about what constitutes being Aboriginal. This has impacted on participants in several ways including internal racism, shame, worry, being scared to identify, and measuring their own identity against the stereotypical constructs in society. Although an Aboriginal cultural identity has a unique and individual part to it, the participants ultimately discussed the need to be accepted by the Aboriginal community in which they lived, worked and socialised. It seemed counterproductive to be part of the Aboriginal collective community if you were not accepted by, and integral in, the community in which you live. Participants could say they were Aboriginal and continue to live apart from the culture and community (but commented that this would be 'more of the same' non-Aboriginal life) or they could become a productive member of the Aboriginal community. It might also be that for participants who are able to be identified by the Aboriginal community, it becomes easier for their children to identify as Aboriginal.

Theorists state that developing an identity is an important step for the individual (Erikson, 1959, Berry, 1999). Having an Aboriginal identity seemed to give participants in this study a structure or focus to who they were, how they related to others, and how they then related to society. This is not different to non-Aboriginal identity structures. Theorists have implied a linear development of identity (for example Cross 1971, Phinney 1989), however, the process was not linear for the participants in this study. Instead, the process was fluid and seemed to have no entry point. Some participants had started with finding their genealogy while others had begun with self-learning. Each had their own pace and learnt what to do next through guessing, from other Aboriginal people, or by luck that allowed them to go onto the next stage of development.

Historically, theorists have assumed that identity begins and is basically formed in early adolescence (Erikson, 1959, Marcia, 1966). Identity was seen as a shift away from the parent's identity, as adolescents developed their own values, ethics and norms. This study highlights that

individuals may not always have a parents identity to shift from. Also, for one set of participants they had to shift from a fully formed identity (one of an ethno- centric (White) Australian) into a new identity that required a new set of ethics, worldviews and norms. This also has implications for people who are not Aboriginal who have been adopted or who for some other reason have to develop a completely new identity in adulthood. The current identity formation models do not adequately explain or expand the diversity of identity formation for light skinned Aboriginal people, or for those forming their identity without kinship or community ties to assist them in this process.

Enablers and barriers to identity development

The enablers of gaining an Aboriginal identity for the light-skinned people who lacked kinship or community ties, in this study, included gaining an elder/mentor who will vouch for the person. The mentor imparted cultural knowledge and a deep belief in the individual's right to be Aboriginal. This relationship was also useful to find other likeminded individuals both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal who accepted the individual as Aboriginal and supported them in their endeavours to learn more. Participants had also attended various cultural events (NAIDOC, seminars) to expand their knowledge. Community events were helpful when they enabled the individual to gain connections with members of the Aboriginal community. These events created space for the individual to gain acceptance from other Aboriginal community members and to increase the possibility of self-learning about various aspects of the Aboriginal culture. This validation and knowledge then increased the ability of the individual to reach self-acceptance of themselves as a light-skinned Aboriginal person.

Barriers to gaining Aboriginal identity included racism from society at large, reflecting the strong discourses about 'legitimate' Aboriginal people. It was particularly experienced by most participants from other Aboriginal people in the form of lateral violence within the Aboriginal community. From this study it appeared there is also a lack of elders and mentors that are available and prepared to pass on Aboriginal culture to the participants. Kalla for example felt that the Aboriginal culture is not being passed on very successfully and Kalinda did not know where to source an available or willing elder or mentor. As a result some participants had not

entered the Aboriginal community despite fighting their family to gain documentation to prove heritage. Some participants (or members of their family) were on the periphery of the Aboriginal community even after several attempts at entering the community. Some had chosen to stop identifying as Aboriginal altogether, and some had decided to identify but no-longer try to enter the Aboriginal community, due to the continued barriers they perceived and rejection they felt from Aboriginal people. Other participants had created their own community made of like-minded individuals who accepted their Aboriginal identity without question; had volunteered in the community to gain a name for themselves in the community; or had joined groups such as the lands council or sporting groups in an effort to get to know the community and be accepted by it. These strategies of entry into the community were successful to varying degrees.

The experiences of this group of participants indicated a pattern or path of taking responsibility for developing their Aboriginal identity. This journey had no real start point, in that there was no set or linear way to proceed, but still had common elements. This included the drive to trace family genealogy, actively finding and developing family and community links, and finally accepting oneself as legitimately Aboriginal (discussed in detail in chapters 6 and 7 and mapped further within this chapter).

Racism and the effect on identity development

All participants had been around people being racist towards Aboriginal people, even if it was not directed at them. There were, however, also incidences in the community where the acceptance of diversity and openness to Aboriginal culture was noted.

Many participants spoke about the open acceptance of them as children when they were growing up. It wasn't until many people became older and those around them became more strongly influenced by media and society, that they were viewed as different to darker-skinned Aboriginal people as discussed previously in this chapter.

Participants who had moved from what they described as small country towns into a large city such as Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide commented that they now received comments such as

'that's great' or 'that's interesting' from people they did not know well and with whom they had discussed their identity with. Many of the participants credited their local Aboriginal unit or campus at the Universities for educating those around them, but also for being a visible presence that people could learn from if they chose to.

Some participants discussed how sometimes non-Aboriginal peers in classrooms (specifically at TAFE's and Universities) would defend Aboriginal people and would reject any forms of racism occurring around them. They spoke about this being inspiring.

I just think not having to explain yourself all the time and not having to explain how I can be both fair and Aboriginal at once. It has allowed me to become a lot more confident about things. And maybe that explains exploring the elements of my own cultural identity that I might not have given the situations that I have had before perhaps. (Mabun)

Some participants spoke of an accepting and open family and peer group who had been interested in and accepting of their Aboriginal community. Many participants spoke about the importance and positive influence of having an Aboriginal person they knew accept them without question, support them and even teach them in the process of finding out more about their culture.

For someone who is new to this or has just found out I think that going to the land council is not the first thing you should do. I think the first thing that anyone finding out they are Aboriginal should do is find someone else who is...I don't think I would have done it without them because they were so welcoming. I needed someone to help me along with that process. (Bulabalaa)

Although not as common, there obviously are some areas of the community, both the wider and Aboriginal, that does not have racism. This section seems to be open and interested in the conversations and journeys of the participants. Some Aboriginal community members are looking at how these participants can be made part of the broader community while still being able to keep their own individual identities. This seems to be a very important concept, worth replicating, as acceptance of participants identity led them to report positive feelings both about themselves and others in society. Participants reported that other's acceptance of their identity made the process of identification easier.

Racism exists in Australia and is certainly present for all Aboriginal people. Light-skinned Aboriginal people are facing incidents of racism and of lateral violence from wider society as well from their own communities. Addressing and eradicating racism will be a long and strenuous process. This process should begin with self-education followed by education through schools, institutions and mainstream media. Silence about this issue is necessary for its maintenance. Acknowledging racism's role in Australia in terms of achieving and maintaining colonial aims is integral to fighting and defeating racism. Non-Aboriginal people must take the majority of the responsibility in owning up to and working against racial social conditioning in Australia. Social workers must understand the self, one's own racial background and privilege to address unbalanced power relationships and racism (Bennett, Zubrzycki, & Bacon, 2011; Walter et al., 2011). Green and Sonn (2006) highlight the importance of critically engaging with racial discourses and challenging racism so that society ceases to reproduce oppressive practice

Identity development models and light-skinned Aboriginal people

This section returns to the existing identity models and theory of Whiteness to examine whether they assist in understanding and explaining the experiences of the participants in this study.

As discussed in chapter 3 most models of identity development involve a series of steps. For example, Curry- Stevens (2007) discussed six steps to developing an identity, including: developing awareness of oppression, and of oppression as structural, enduring and pervasive; locating oneself as oppressed or locating oneself as privileged; understanding the benefits that flow from privilege and understanding oneself as implicated in the oppression of others; and understanding oneself as the oppressor. When considering light-skinned Aboriginal people, it is important to have an understanding of oppression and colonisation in Australia, the dynamics that hold this oppression in place, and how this might affect identity development. Participants were able to locate themselves as part of an oppressed group and also acknowledged they held more privilege than some other Aboriginal people and communities because of their light skin (for example they were not the targets of daily racism based on skin colour). They were also able to discuss the implications of continued marginalisation (such as being of a low socio-

economic standing). This made the concept of what was privilege for a light-skinned Aboriginal person complex, but also showed that light-skinned people have not escaped the ramifications of being Aboriginal (such as health issues and continued marginalisation).

'Whiteness', as explained in the Australian context by Moreton- Robinson (2000), was looked at as a form of understanding oppression and colonisation. However, Whiteness did not seem to fit the experiences of light-skinned Aboriginal people in this study. The argument is that the privilege of Whiteness is built into the White dominant society, underpinned with beliefs and values, including how colonists believed they were racially superior to Aboriginal people (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). In other words, Whiteness has been imbedded in our knowledge production, discourse, and social structures and in some cases our identities. Whiteness sets up those who are superior and White versus those who are not. This means that Aboriginal people with dark skin can be viewed as more authentically Aboriginal than light-skinned Aboriginal people, who appear to be physically White. These social arrangements result in the need to prove authenticity (C. Anderson, 2009). Instead, privilege, both in positive and negative ways, seemed to be a better way to view and understand the participants' experience. Although they did not experience being seen as less superior due to looking White, they still lived with various marginalisation and socio economic concerns as a result of identifying as Aboriginal, and often felt less privileged compared to White people.

Berry's (1999) identity model is also useful in explaining the participants' lives. All of the participants believed they were part of the Aboriginal culture and each gave this a level of importance in their life. They placed most emphasis on being accepted by the Aboriginal community; a significant part of their social identity. Acculturation (Berry, 1999) is also pertinent when examining the history of colonisation in Australia. Participants appeared to be in the integration phase where they were adopting the cultural norms of the dominant culture while trying to actively maintain aspects of the Aboriginal culture. Participants also seemed to be questioning how to develop their own distinctiveness as light-skinned Aboriginal people as well as maintaining Aboriginal values, ethics and customs. All participants had experienced both positive and negative aspects around being part of the Aboriginal culture. Most of the participants had gained a positive feeling of self-worth from seeing themselves as Aboriginal.

Although a broad range of identity models were considered when analysing the data, there were differences for light-skinned Aboriginal people not addressed by American theorists such as Cross (1978) and Parham (1989).. Firstly a light-skinned person was not always considered as 'black' by society around them. All of the participants 'felt' Aboriginal but did not have the visual evidence available (skin colour) to prove it. This affected how a light-skinned Aboriginal person started to even articulate their cultural identity, let alone how they thought about or processed it internally. Some of the participants had been raised in a non-Aboriginal world due to colonisation processes such as the Stolen Generations. As a result they experienced a process of re-learning Aboriginal cultural worldviews, ethics, norms and practices, which were not automatically part of the participant's upbringing. This kind of process, experienced by Stolen Generations and their children/grandchildren, has not been addressed in existing identity models. As discussed in chapter 6, this evoked significant and complex emotions for participants on their journey to formulating their identities. Some family members had even stopped identifying due to the perceived hardships of having to constantly 'prove' authenticity of Aboriginality.

Secondly, participants had taken a great deal of effort to train, teach and learn about the Aboriginal culture on their own. An individual endeavour not reflected in existing identity models, which assume there will be at least be one person available to socialise the individual into the culture. When participants did not have this individual to socialise them, they often had no choice but to develop the learning on their own. Also, some of the Stolen Generations families had to search for information that may have been hidden, denied or even lost over time. Participants showed a large commitment to, and passion for, developing their Aboriginal identity even without help readily available.

Finally, participants also took the initiative to teach other people about Aboriginal culture, which did not seem to be evident within existing American identity models (e.g. Phinney, 1990). This education seemed to be an effort to eradicate racism and improve individual's understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal identity. Participants also seemed to gain some joy in being able to share what they had learnt with others.

Each participant was active in seeking and forming their Aboriginal identity. This was perhaps a reflection of the stage they were interviewed at and their interest in participating in the study, ensuring they were past Cross's (1971) pre-encounter stage. In this pre-encounter stage participants would be likely to view themselves from a non-Indigenous frame of reference. Some participants did, however, speak about a time when they had been in pre-encounter and had a mainstream view of Aboriginal people in general and of themselves. These participants could be seen to have embodied an assimilation mentality at this stage. However, all of the participants had moved past this stage. In fact all participants when interviewed were committed to their Aboriginal identity and in finding activities to express this. Cross (1985) warns that the individual needs to continue to be involved with their identity group in order to consolidate their identity and to be able to contribute to political significance. Some participants had been able to do this, but as discussed previously, others were still unable to become part of the Aboriginal community.

Some participants seemed to be in Cross's (1980) immersion-emersion phase where they were trying to be the 'right' kind of Aboriginal person. For some this meant breaking societal stereotypes of being Aboriginal by being on time, not being lazy and not participating in alcohol or any other drugs. For others it meant immersing themselves in 'Black' literature, events and anything else that appeared relevant to cultural identity. Most participants had gained the internalisation stage (Cross, 1980) where they had formed an inner security and self confidence in their Aboriginal identity. All participants were committed to their identity and to making lasting change in their own and their communities' lives.

From the literature and the interviews, it is clear that identity can change, and develop through adulthood (Marcia, 1993, Parham, 1989). The participants who had found out about their Aboriginal identity as adults had also experienced many of the identity stages, as discussed by Cross (1980) and Berry (2005) and outlined in chapter 3, in the course of developing their new identity. This shows that regardless of the age of participants, development of an Aboriginal identity was possible. Their journey had similarities to those who had undertaken the process as a child and to existing identity models.

This study has shown that light-skinned Aboriginal people with little or no community or family links undergo similar identity formation processes to those explained by identity models, alongside some very important differences. For example, for this group of people identity development is not a linear process. The experience of acceptance, or not, is critically important both by society generally and by the Aboriginal community with whom they want to identify. The experience of racism, both from wider society and the lateral violence within the Aboriginal community affects how the participants feel about themselves in important ways and can even decide if an individual will identify as Aboriginal or continue to identify as Aboriginal. Participants did not have any choice in some cases but to educate themselves around what it means to be an Aboriginal person. Some individuals had been able to do this more successfully than others, due to information available and the general Aboriginal community's acceptance of them as legitimately Aboriginal with light skin. These insights and unique experiences from established identity models are of importance for future light-skinned Aboriginal people.

The next section provides a model that has emerged from the data – as to how this group of participants developed their Aboriginal identity.

The identity, legitimacy and acceptance journey

This section will discuss the stages participants went through to develop their Aboriginal identity and, in particular, will highlight the genealogy of identity (knowing where you come from and where you fit), finding out information about the Aboriginal culture, and entering (and being accepted by) the Aboriginal community. Following this will be two visual representations of this journey.

Family/genealogy: know where you come from, know where you fit

As discussed in chapter 1, it is imperative in developing relationships with Aboriginal people to have a strong understanding of your own life story and your family history, and to be able to locate who your ancestors and relatives are. As noted in chapter 3, it is important to situate a

cultural identity within a socio-historical construct (Berry, 1999; Hall, 1991; Paradies 2006). In other words, there needs to be an understanding about how an individual fits in to the Aboriginal culture in order to formulate how to relate to others in that culture and to general society (Woodward, 1997). This will give the individual a clear and confident sense and understanding of Aboriginal identity (Phinney, 1989).

The idea of gaining wisdom and insight from other Aboriginal people and seeking answers within genealogy or family stories made sense, as the participants needed to know this to understand where they fit in the Aboriginal world. It was fascinating to hear from people who had no family to teach them this knowledge, what processes they undertook and their experience of the search for connections. The less participants knew about their family and history the more difficult the journey to identity development seemed. Participants had to learn as much as they could from as many sources as possible because some of the participants did not have contacts to show or teach them, others had limited opportunities to learn from a small amount of people (for example their Aboriginal parent), and because there seemed to be a lack of mentors and elders to teach this content. Bulabalaa states:

You don't get it without accountability for yourself. If you are expecting anyone to hold your hand and listen to your weeping story and put a doona over you and give you a cup of hot cocoa it is not going to happen...if you don't educate yourself in the process or you sit back going gimme gimme there is no way in hell that that is going to work (Bulabalaa)

Not surprisingly participants who had grown up with at least one Aboriginal person had some idea as to where they were from and who they may be related to. Some had also had exposure to extended kin and to the Aboriginal community. However for those who had not been brought up with this knowledge, nor had yet found a key person to assist them, they had to actively seek and find their Aboriginal identity from sources such as birth and death certificates, organisations (such as cultural centres, libraries, land councils), DVD's and any willing Aboriginal people they could access.

The conversation of how to map or develop an Aboriginal genealogy is not common in the Aboriginal community. It is often assumed that an individual will have family or friends to take

on the role of socialisation, introduction to family members and the community, and induction into the culture. If this does not happen, participants were lucky to find elders and mentors to teach them protocols and ways of being. However, as can be seen from the experiences of participants in this study, they were often left to investigate family, community and cultural issues on their own and unsupported.

Gaining knowledge about Aboriginal culture

An individual understanding of one's local Aboriginal culture is imperative to sustaining a strong, vibrant and healthy future for Aboriginal peoples. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, learning about Aboriginal culture is generally through kinship and community contacts. For those participants who did not have these contacts, they have found other ways to learn about general culture and history and to develop community links.

Participants in this study were asked how they had formed their cultural identity and where they had managed to get cultural information. This cultural information came from several sources. These sources have been discussed within chapters 6 and 7 and include internal resources such as friends, family, peers, elders and mentors, and external sources such as DVDs, cultural heritage areas, cultural days and events, and local land councils.

What became apparent is that these participants developed a keen form of reflective, open listening and learning. If someone suggested a book to read or site to visit, they had done so. Many participants travelled to their Country of origin and researched into the area's history on both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal level. Some people visited the local land councils in their area of original Country and also in the areas they lived, and spoke about the values, worldviews and cultural principles of being an Aboriginal person with everyone they met who was Aboriginal. It was like an alien discovering how humans on earth would operate - they came to the subject with curiosity and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Gurugan explains a successful strategy:

It also about being quiet sometimes and listening. Being around a whole lot of black fellas particularly older black fellas and just listening to what they say. If you can listen you learn so much more. (Gurugan)

As a result of this keen exploration, some of the participants had formed a vast library of information, and may have exceeded what some people (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) of the area knew about Aboriginal people. Participants sought information on Aboriginal worldviews, spirituality, connection, values and lifestyles from any available source. They then integrated some of this information into their own individual lives, for example as part of their world view, values and daily living practice. An example of this is how some of the participants went home regularly to re-connect with family and land and to participate in any cultural activities that were available to them. Self-learning seems to be a large responsibility, especially without family or community to support participants.

This research indicates there are gaps for people without kinship or community links when trying to find cultural information. As has been discussed, some participants are still on the outskirts of the community or worse, totally alienated from their community and therefore culture. There seems to be no map to follow and a scarcity of leaders available to guide and teach Aboriginal people formulating their cultural identity who had little or no community or kinship ties.

Entering an Aboriginal community

It is important that Aboriginal protocol is observed when entering an Aboriginal community in order not to repeat past damages and disrespect Aboriginal people and communities and all that they have endured in Australia's history. There is little information on record that discusses how these rules, guidelines and protocols are used, what shape they may take and what they may or may not mean. This makes it difficult for participants who have not been educated in these protocols or socialised into them to be able to utilise or follow them when entering an Aboriginal community.

There are many websites that discuss Aboriginal protocols for non-Aboriginal people.⁴⁸ However, to my knowledge, there is nothing written about entering an Aboriginal community

⁴⁸For example:

when you are Aboriginal. Of course, some of the protocols that have been written are helpful but there are also many things that have not been documented.

Participants found that getting to know an Aboriginal person who already has strong family and/or community links to introduce them to people in the community, and vouch where necessary, was the most successful approach to entering the Aboriginal community. Some participants had been unable to find someone to fulfil this role. Balabalaa and Konol both suggested forming relationships with the community by staying in contact and being committed and consistent. For example they attended regular land council meetings and volunteered at local community groups and events. They found this a way to develop networks and links and to create a role for themselves in the community; proving a successful strategy for them.

Participants found surrounding themselves with their own community, filled with likeminded individuals, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, was a very successful and supportive strategy on the identity journey. Some participants found acceptance and community in a workplace or in the University unit that they had access to. Participants verbalised the importance of accepting their own definition and reality of their light-skinned identity. As Gurugan states:

I can run around and try and tick all the boxes but it's not going to bring peace or make me anymore or any less Aboriginal. I was born Aboriginal and nobody can take that away. Nobody can make me be it. I'm it and I'm it because that's what I am and that's what the universe made me. (Gurugan)

The visual maps

The visual constructions I developed (the identity map and how to develop an Aboriginal identity pp.259-230) were framed after reading the literature, talking to various people including participants and members of the Aboriginal community, and analysing the interview data. From this, the two visual representations were constructed. The flower was developed as a visual representation and metaphor on the development of identity. For me there was strong

<http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/state-archives/resources-for/indigenous-people/files/Protocols%20for%20Staff%20Working%20with%20Indigenous%20People.pdf>,
<http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/education-kit/protocols/>,

resonance to the Earth, to growth and to change in the flower. After creating the flower, I decided there were individuals I knew who would appreciate a more logical, less artistic model, and so from this I then developed the second map. Although this model is not linear (developed in a circle to indicate no beginning stage and no end stage), it is grouped in sections rather than having an idea per petal depicted in the flower. In this way I hoped to reach more people in an attempt to explain and understand the process participants had described. When I started these maps, my aim was for a young person to be able to use these tools as a way to develop and grow their Aboriginal identity; now I hope they will prove useful to people of any age.

Reflections on the flower map

Early in its development, I showed the flower map to my friend and colleague Jen Molyneux for thoughtful and, for me, safe feedback. Jen observed 'It is like any plant, the fewer petals, and the less likely the plant is to thrive. Where do you think they get their photosynthesis⁴⁹ from?' (Personal conversation, 26 April 2013). This was how the petal 'spirituality' got added.

Participants had spoken about land connection and spiritual connection but I had not joined the map and this concept together until this conversation. In my view, without a spiritual/land connection no Aboriginal plant will grow. Jen made me think. Was there a direct link to lack of petals and wellness? Where did all the nutrients come from if there were no elders and mentors? Could you create your own way of feeding your needs?

A conversation about the map with my mentor, friend and colleague Sue Green added yet another aspect that was obvious once she made the remark 'The most important aspect of it all is self-acceptance' (Personal conversation, 4 November 2013). For me it took conversations with key Aboriginal people to truly accept myself. The conversations were around the fact that I had light skin because of assimilation policies and my Aboriginal heritage; that my elders accepted me as Aboriginal and so it did not matter what anyone else thought about it and, most importantly, that I needed to accept myself on all levels and to stop comparing my skin colour, cultural knowledge or Aboriginal notoriety to explain or define who I was. The lesson was that even if an individual does not get those connections to an Aboriginal community, they are still

⁴⁹ Is a process used by plants and other organisms to convert light energy into chemical energy to be released to fuel the organism (Etymology Dictionary, 2003).

Aboriginal and if they can accept and integrate this into their identity, then it is theirs and no one can take it from them.

Figure 1: Flower map

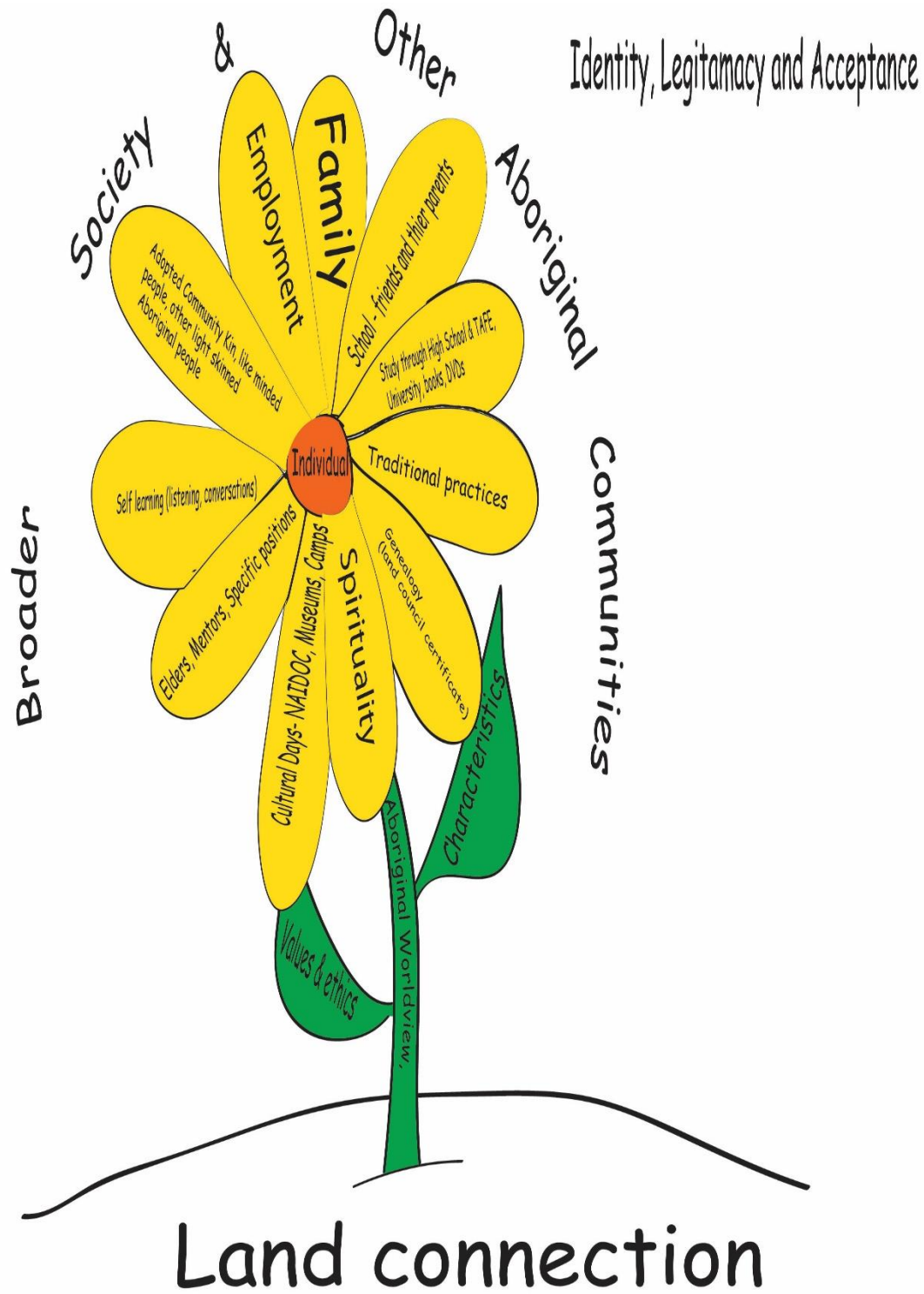
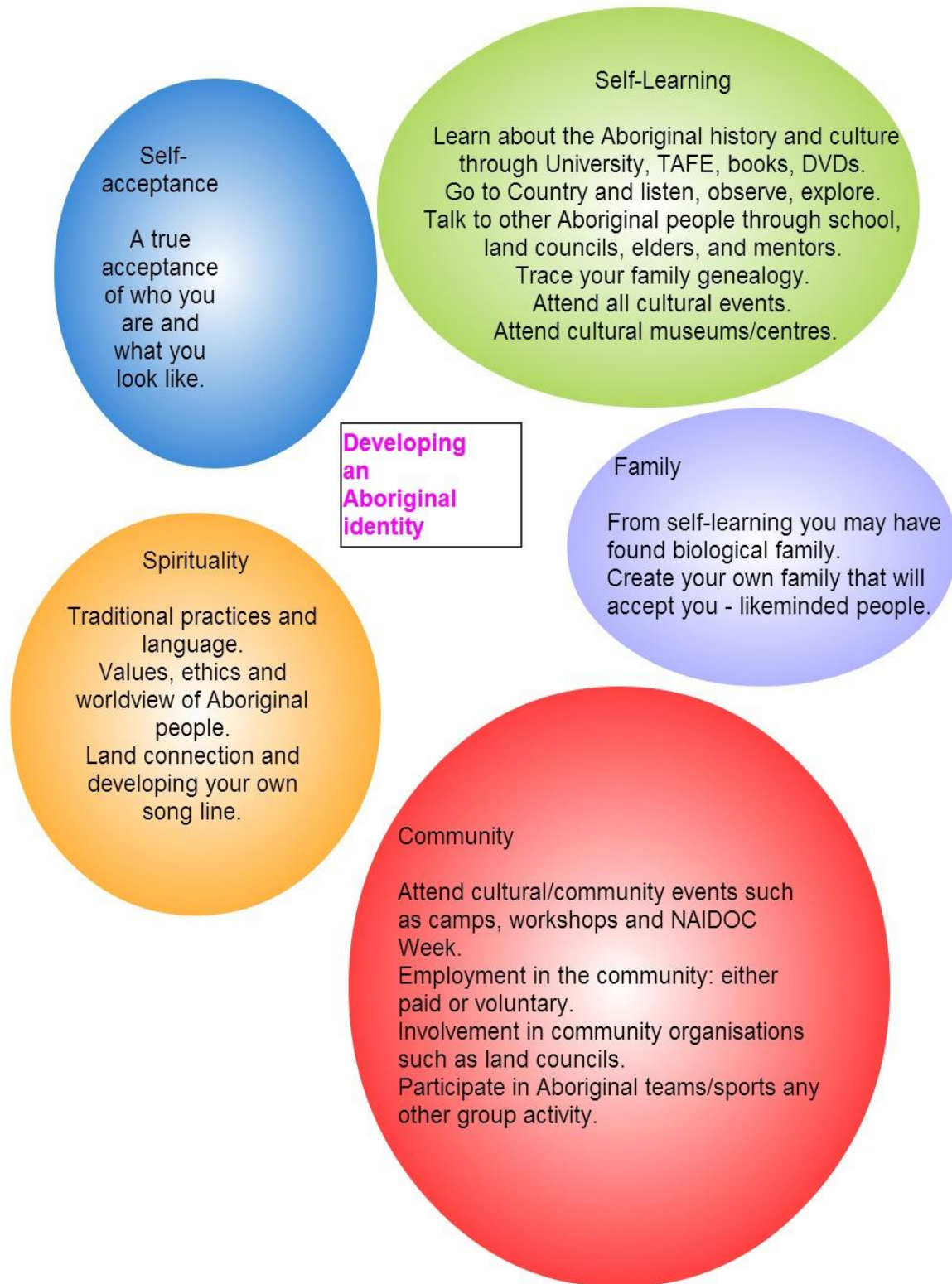


Figure 2: Developing an Aboriginal identity



Implications for well being

There has been virtually no research that relates ethnic self-identification to social outcomes, principally because the very possibility of switching ethnic self-identification has rarely been entertained (Hallet et al., 2008). Identity is related to coping strategies and overall mental health (or well-being) (Kickett-Tucker, 2009) and this study supports the concept that a well-established and accepted identity adds to the participant's self-esteem, sense of worth, and sense of purpose, which all add to a better well-being. This seems to have implications for Aboriginal people and in particular youth.

Implications for Social Work

Adding to the knowledge base about the needs and experiences of light skinned Aboriginal people in forging their identity is important in social work due to the diversity of practice areas social workers are located in. Social workers practice in all areas from birth to death and deliver support services to individuals who may be experiencing social and emotional difficulties (such as identity issues). It can be argued that due to the sensitive and often contentious nature of Aboriginal identity in Australia, social workers have not been thoroughly informed about issues pertaining to identity formation for light skinned Aboriginal people (particularly those lacking community or kinship networks). Gaining knowledge and skills in how to help Aboriginal people forge their identity is an empowering skill set for a social worker.

As a social worker myself, a key reason for doing this project was to better inform social workers and other human services professionals of the issues facing light-skinned Aboriginal people with little or no community or kinship ties. Social work may need to develop more appropriate assessment tools, which incorporate the knowledge contained in this thesis, to better respond to these Aboriginal people's needs. It is essential that social work interventions respond to the diversity of Aboriginal peoples. This is particularly important in Australia where there is the myth that everyone is treated the same (Pedersen et al., 2011). Social workers have a role to educate others that Aboriginal people are in the minority and are severely disadvantaged in

Australia, which can then impact on them in a variety of ways including difficulties developing their Aboriginal identity.

Social workers are human rights workers (Calma, 2008). Human rights and social justice principals enable us to shift our focus to empowering; with rights based practice focused on developing individuals and communities' capacity (Calma, 2008). It also means advocating for Aboriginal people to be free from discrimination due to their racial background. It means encouraging the individual to have the freedom to develop their own identity and cultural beliefs and to self-determination. Taking a human rights approach to social work means recognising that individuals are key actors in their own lives and development (Calma, 2008). Social workers are in a position to develop programs that enhance these factors and reduce disparity of outcomes in Australia.

Social work is a holistic and multidimensional profession that works to improve wellbeing and social justice with many individuals across a wide range of settings . As such, it is highly likely that social workers will, at some time, interact with Aboriginal people and individuals who are trying to formulate their Aboriginal identity. Social workers have a responsibility to address issues surrounding identity formation both as practitioners and educators.

Cultural responsiveness

Culturally responsive social work practice is still emerging in Australia. It contributes important evidence for social workers in general, but specifically for Aboriginal peoples. The concept of cultural responsiveness was first developed in North America (Williams, 2007). Culturally responsive care can be defined as “an extension of patient centred-care that includes paying particular attention to social and cultural factors in managing therapeutic encounters with patients from different cultural and social backgrounds”(IAHA, 2013, p.2). Being culturally responsive places the onus back onto the social worker to “appropriately respond to the unique, physical, sensory, psychological, cognitive, social, emotional and cultural attributes of the person they are working with” (McMillan, 2013, p. 2). Part of the challenge of becoming culturally responsive social workers is learning to stretch beyond personal comfort zones and be

able to comfortably interact and work with people who are both similar and markedly different (Baxter, Hayes and Gray, 2011).

McMillan (2013) argues that culturally responsive practice necessitates a holistic, reflective approach to working with Aboriginal peoples. It moves beyond simply acknowledging and understanding the colonisation history and experiences of Aboriginal peoples and involves understanding and respecting the diversity and difference of each person's culture. It highlights the social worker being able to reflect on their culture and how this impacts on their practice (McMillan, 2013). Social workers can then develop the capacity to work collaboratively and respectfully with any Aboriginal client. Cultural responsiveness means that the social worker is responding to the issues and needs of the presenting client in a way that promotes social justice and upholds human rights (Calma, 2008). It is helpful for social workers to reflect on their own identity in order to gain the knowledge, skills and responsiveness required when working with Aboriginal peoples, and to give them an empathic understanding of the identity journey that may be facing their clients or for Aboriginal peoples in general.

Using a culturally responsive framework, a social worker can respond to all diversity of cultures, including Aboriginal cultures. It opens the social worker up to a more reflective practice that includes decolonisation approaches and interventions. For light skinned Aboriginal people, it means understanding that a culture and relating identity exists despite skin colour and is therefore important to acknowledge and understand.

Anti-racist/anti-oppressive social work practice

Anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice is consistent with the values underpinning social work (Boyce et al., 2008). There is a pressing need to address racism against marginalised groups in Australia and this will involve change from the individual to the structural levels (for example working with a young person in a school, working with the teachers at the school and then working with the larger school community).

Pedersen et al. (2011) present fourteen mechanisms in their research on anti-racist and oppressive practice including: providing accurate information to individuals (Pedersen & Barlow, 2008); involving individuals in any anti-racist process in order to decrease hostility and

resistance (Pedersen & Barlow, 2008); and increasing the individual's capacity for empathy. For social workers this might mean coming into contact with an individual forging their identity and being able to listen respectfully and deeply to their story, being able to link them to helpful people or organisations and believing their Aboriginal heritage and its importance to them as a person.

Social workers can support and advocate for societal change. They can be involved in showing a deeper understanding of inclusivity in society at all levels from the individuals, communities and the policy level. Social workers could have a role in supporting the efforts of Aboriginal people when formulating their identity, and within their families and communities which may have both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members. For example, participants in this study found the linking to Aboriginal services and Aboriginal units within their University, and supporting the individual through their journey very helpful strategies. Their job as social workers also entails advocating in wider society about identity formation and its importance. This may take place through education of others, supporting Aboriginal people in their identity journeys, and challenging unhelpful stereotypes in existence in the media or in general society.

Anti-racist interventions are best delivered over the medium to long term as this allows time for in-depth analysis and sustained behaviour change (Pedersen et al, 2011). Paradies (2005) states that individuals must be able to identify racism to acknowledge its effects, and have role models that can demonstrate appropriate responses to racist situations. It is imperative that social workers are role models and take affirmative action to reduce racism. For the participants, it was important to find people who accepted their Aboriginal identity without judgement and stereotypes. Having social workers accept them without racism is an important part of their identity journey.

Social workers can work collaboratively with Aboriginal people (some of them are also social workers) to assist Aboriginal people gaining access to resources around identity formulation (for example linking to readings, DVD's, or to community members known to the social worker). Social work values of self-determination, empowerment and participation are central to any intervention in this area, as well as the values of empathy and respect when working together

with Aboriginal people. Using these professional skills will help facilitate a good outcome for Aboriginal people formulating their identity.

Social work and the future

Social workers need an understanding of colonisation in the Australian context and its ramifications for Aboriginal peoples (Bennett, 2013). Individuals enter a social work degree with their own feelings and issues around Aboriginal people, culture, history and identity, much of which is developed through the media. It is important that social work as a profession addresses any racism arising in these areas of student education and equips students to have an empathic understanding of Aboriginal people and the racism and disadvantage they may experience. For example in this study, participants identified racism in the media to include questioning heritage, questioning light skinned identity and questioning authenticity.

As this and other research has indicated, participants believed that a strong identity is important to their wellbeing (Pere, 2006; Yip & Lee, 2008) and, as such, social workers can assist in fostering Aboriginal identity and wellbeing through their therapeutic approaches but also through community approaches and programs. Aboriginal social workers need to affirm their own identities and to have these understood and acknowledged in empathic ways by their colleagues and workplaces.

Social work can play an important role in representing identity and identity formation in areas such as literature, social work education and in general social work practice. Social workers can be advocates for an individual's diversity and complexity and can help participants such as those in this research start their journeys back to family, community and culture. This appears an important role for social workers given their unique social justice and human rights perspectives.

The next steps

This research has raised some important questions: if a strong cultural identity is related to wellbeing can it be measured? What are the implications for mental health? How can cultural identity be passed on in Aboriginal communities given the current barriers and issues? How

does the Aboriginal community build a pathway to cultural continuance? It is important to speak to the Aboriginal community about the model developed in this thesis and how (or even if) it will be useful and, if useful, how it will be distributed. This research has begun to question and add to a model of identity formation for many individuals in revising, switching or re-forming their cultural identity, and the implications for this for young people and adults needs to be further explored.

Thesis conclusions

It has been shown that the persistence of cultural identity among Aboriginal communities is dependent on how successful one generation is at passing on its beliefs and practices (Meyer, 1996). Geertz (2004) has argued that one of the most significant factors in determining how successful a group will be in maintaining and sustaining their cultural identity is through a sense of community. This means a collection of individuals who share activities and cultural knowledge, as well as an effective networking system.

This thesis has explored with a group of light-skinned Aboriginal people the process by which they have developed their cultural identity. Understanding and better supporting this process is essential for the ongoing sustainability and strength of the Aboriginal community. I have argued that understanding this process of identity formation will assist others on their journeys. What might also assist is for programs to be developed to support individuals to create a strong sense of Aboriginal identity. The Aboriginal community needs a process and protocol for identity re-assertion that focuses on the concept of the right to self-representation at all levels and draws on all aspects of self-such as descent, shared colonial history and ways of living and relating to each other and to the culture. There needs to be a debate about what Aboriginal identity is in the current evolving society. There may be more light-skinned Aboriginal people who are disconnected from family and community. There may also be more Aboriginal people that are living in mainly urban situations which may or may not have as many cultural elements available to individuals. Finally it needs to be acknowledged that identity is diverse due to difference of Country/area, age, gender and situation. These issues need to be discussed and decided on, preferably by Aboriginal people.

I want our culture to grow. I want the younger generation to know who they are and to be proud of who they are. The way to do that is to tell your story. (Thoomie)

There has been much talk about the view by many individuals, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that light-skinned people choose to identify because there are benefits attached to an Aboriginal identity such as money and jobs. On the other hand, there is also disadvantage, marginalisation, and increased risk of being involved in prisons, poor outcomes for health, both physical and mental and poor education outcomes that occur for Aboriginal people regardless of their colour. There seems to be no acknowledgement that these individuals may have had trauma in their lives because of colonisation (such as removal and Stolen Generations). Perhaps these disadvantages are supposed to go away with the colour and physical attributes attributed to being Aboriginal? As discussed in chapter 5, there has been a debate over need versus race in regards to current resources for Aboriginal people. This means that only Aboriginal people in most need would be eligible for the current resources. Need should not rule out light-skinned Aboriginal people. In fact, I believe there are both dark and light-skinned Aboriginal people who would not qualify for resources currently available if it was a matter of purely financial means testing. Given this there should be a discussion about the various types of need such as socio-economic, cultural, spiritual and individual so that people are not left behind in any area. There would have to be much discussion and evaluation of the system used to judge need and to allocate resources. This is a contentious area that has not been addressed by Government's or Aboriginal communities as yet but which deserves further investigation.

There are many questions still left unanswered. It is argued that Aboriginal identity in 2015 is more complex, flexible and more open to being diverse and separate to, and from, other Aboriginal identities (Paradies, 2006a). Dillon (2013) argues that Aboriginal people need to see themselves as "Australians with common needs and shared interests- not us-v's-them" (p. 89). Although he still argues that an Aboriginal worldview consists of inter-relatedness and interconnectedness on a mental, physical, spiritual and cultural level.

For me, I have to believe there is some basic culture, worldview and values to follow and learn from in order to be Aboriginal, because how else would we continue to be a diverse and unique culture? This then opens the debate as to whether there is then a point in time or heritage where you are no longer Aboriginal if you cannot, or are unable to, do this. This question is currently not answered or is perhaps unanswerable.

This thesis has found some Aboriginal people who do not have much interaction with their own communities. There are also those Aboriginal people (for example Balaballa) who may feel no sense of 'otherness' either before or after they discovered their Aboriginal identity. This leaves me wondering if not engaging in the prescribed Aboriginal worldviews or values makes someone less Aboriginal. Where are the lines? Do we need them?

There are dangers both politically and personally to romanticising what it is to be Aboriginal due to the diversity of Aboriginal communities. One of the concerns I had coming into this thesis was that if we continue to ignore light skinned Aboriginal people's cultural needs and knowledge gaps, that we would be endangering the future sustainability of Aboriginal culture. Perhaps though, it might be that Aboriginal culture will just grow and diversify both individually and as a community. Given that there are currently many Aboriginal people who are living a more or less 'mainstream' life and still identify as Aboriginal then perhaps this implicit distinction is already irrelevant.

Participants have shown that there are ways to learn how to be Aboriginal even without the usual socialisation avenues available to them such as family and community ties. Processes and knowledge can be gained from mentors, books, classes and community events. Finding out what Country you come from, who you are related to, and your own Aboriginal history is one step but it is also not the only step individuals can take to help to formulate their identity. There are ways for individuals who have not previously been part of the Aboriginal community to re-connect with their identity through community participation, learning who they are and also creating their own networks and acceptance. As the participants have experienced, this process takes a long time and a lot of on-going hard work but it can make a real difference to the individual and their wellbeing.

It is going from feeling like one of the smallest people in the world and being continuously looked over to being looked at, people just seemed to look straight through me before, now to me standing up and putting my head back and saying this is me and I deserve your attention and I deserve your acknowledgment rather than just being pushed around. (Thoomie)

Light-skinned Aboriginal people can be taught the core of Aboriginal values, cultural principles and worldview. There are light-skinned people who are highly successful and are giving back to the Aboriginal community. It seems there are two choices for the Aboriginal community. The first is to gather together Aboriginal people and communities willing to maintain and teach every Aboriginal person about their cultural identity. The second is to leave things the way they are and have Aboriginal people who are uneducated about their culture. This may trigger the question as to how these latter Aboriginal people differ from others if they do (more or less) what mainstream society does. Without cultural teaching is there a potential to damage future Aboriginal culture and people?

This research has reinforced the value of a strong identity for Aboriginal people. Identity can and does change as it is socially constructed and therefore it adapts to context. One of the trends for the future may be the development of diverse Aboriginal communities largely (or solely) made up of light skinned Aboriginal peoples. Identity development and formation for light skinned Aboriginal people does not occur in a “black” or “white” paradigm, nor is it linear or on a continuum. Instead, this research has shown that it is more like a web that has ebbs and flows over the life span. Aboriginal identity is now lived and formed within a white society. It is not operating independently and therefore it does have constrictions and constrains of the modern world. This does not make it weaker or lesser. It makes it adaptive.

When my blonde haired, fair-skinned Wiradjuri/ Kamilaroi son comes to me and asks ‘who am I?’ I want to be able to say to him ‘You are here to be the best *you* that you can be’. I think that is the answer for us all. The best you can be includes being Aboriginal just the way you are. Aboriginality is so much more than what someone looks like or the colour of their skin. As an Aboriginal person, your essence is already perfectly Aboriginal.

Appendix 1: Poem

This poem below was chosen as it represents many of the thoughts, feelings and themes presented by the participants about being a light-skinned Aboriginal person. It also shows that Aboriginal people express themselves and their identities in many diverse formats including art, music, dance and literature. It was important to me to show a different way of discussing and expressing Aboriginal light-skinned identity. It echoed the importance of the Indigenous paradigm used in this thesis and it showed Aboriginal knowing, doing and being. It also spoke to me as I read it. It reiterated how I myself had felt at times in my life about light-skinned Aboriginal identity. It resonated with me and I thought it may resonate with other readers.

Real

Half caste, he said to me

That I wasn't one of those real Aborigines

Said he spent some time with them in the outback

Then he looked at my skin said I wasn't even black

I was more of a brown he went onto explain

His voice, the whole time, a certain disdain

He stared a bit longer then said I suppose

When I look at your face I see a bit of the nose

Oh, I said, a bit taken aback

To this obvious expert on everything black

My head in a muddle just trying to see

Why this man had a need to be questioning me

I thought for a minute then said to the guy

Are you waiting for me to try and justify

The complexities of identity

When it comes to Aboriginality?

Well, he said in a know it all voice

I don't understand how you made a choice

Proclaiming that you're an Aboriginal

When it's obvious that you're not really a full

Okay I thought, I'll play this game

And proceeded to ask him what was his name?

Christopher Smith he said full of pride

A name revealing his English side

So calmly I said, my friend what are you?

He said I'm Australian mate through and through

Now come on I said, is that not a myth?

From the Great land of England comes the name Smith

Your heritage lies in a faraway land

So to say you're from here, I don't understand

You're English, you said it, it's there in your name

And that's when all the obscenities came
You Abo, you boong, you know it all coon
It seemed that my friend had spoken too soon
Just moments ago I was not the real thing
Yet now by his words my heritage clings
Of course he was Aussie, I knew that he was
But I wanted to show him that simply because
I have other bloodlines flowing in me
It does not alter my Identity
The lifestyle I've lived, the way that I've grown
My identity is all that I've ever known
Just in the way he is Anglo Saxon
But yet in his heart he is Australian
I don't question his call, I accept it as fact
So why do his questions feel like an attack
Relentlessly judging to prove he is right
When the truth is, I'll never be white

It seemed that the man would go back to the days
When classification was all of the craze
A quarter, a sixteenth, an eighth or a half

Fuck all that shit cos I'm full in my heart
I'm full and I'm rich thanks to my history
The roots firmly planted in my family tree
Yet he wants to judge for he learns with his eyes
Too ignorant to learn from his mind
He can't understand what it means to be black
Yet he passes his judgement so matter of fact
I bid him good day, okay that's a lie
I wasn't really that nice or polite
It's just so annoying when fools come along
Who spend their time trying to prove that you're wrong
I don't understand what gives them this drive
Believing that they have this God given right
To tell me what I am yet don't know my life
The arrogance just unbelievably rife
See, there are some members in my family
Who are blessed with the gene where they're darker than me
But to say that I'm less because my skin's not as black
Just shows how much knowledge these idiots lack
I speak the same language, share the same roots
So why from my colour do I have to prove?

To someone who never has given a day
To sit with my family and learn of our ways
Whose eyes will not open for fear they will see
How wrong that they were in labelling me
Part Aboriginal, not really full
Sickening terms that I never will
Use to describe me or those of my peers
So to those would be experts let me make this clear
What's in my heart, the connection I feel
Is something unseen but totally real
And unless you have lived it you don't know it's strength
And you'll never disprove it no matter what length
You go to because is it something so true
Just as is the Australian in you
No matter your last name whatever it be
McGuire or Tomic or Andrews or Lee
Names that arrived from a foreign shore
Yet you are Australian to your very core
So please understand when I say that I am
A proud Australian, Aboriginal Man
And because I have other bloodlines in me

It does not alter my identity.

© Steven Oliver⁵⁰

⁵⁰ <http://anitaheissblog.blogspot.com.au/2012/05/steven-oliver-real.html>

Appendix 2: Interview questions

1. What attracted you to participate in this research?
2. Do you identify as having light skin? Why? Do you identify as having little family/community networks? Why/why not?
3. Can you tell me about you, your family and your life experiences?
4. Can you tell me about your Aboriginal identity? Have there been positive/negatives, easy/hard aspects to developing your Aboriginal identity?
5. Can you tell me how you got your cultural education? Has it been ongoing? In what ways? Tell me about how you went about getting cultural education.
6. Tell me about how you came about deciding to identify as Aboriginal? Has anyone ever questioned you around identifying as Aboriginal? Have you gotten any comments on your Aboriginal identity and who from? Why have you persisted or bothered to identify as Aboriginal?
7. Has your identity improved any situations for you? Why/why not?
8. If you could give some hints to anyone else on how to identify what would they be?
9. Have I missed anything?

Appendix 3: Participant letter

Title of Project: How is Aboriginal cultural identity developed, understood and experienced by young Aboriginal people with light skin colour and/or lack of kinship ties and/or community links?

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Morag McArthur

Name of student researcher: Bindi Bennett

Programme in which enrolled: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this research seeking to find out how Aboriginal people who identify as having light skin and/or little or no kinship or community ties develop their identity.

This research is being carried out to fulfil the requirements of a PhD but is ultimately to benefit our understanding of identity formation for Aboriginal people. The risks of the research are that some people may find discussing this topic distressing and as such counselling will be offered to all participants. Counselling details for your local on campus counselling as well as three alternative choices and online options will be provided to you at the beginning of your interview.

If you agree to participate in this research you will agree to be interviewed for approximately 1 hour. You will be sent the interview questions before hand so that you can think about your responses. The interview will be held at a place that suits us both and will be conducted by Bindi. Once completed, Bindi will transcribe the interview and they will be sent to you to check and make any changes. If a number of participants wish to be interviewed together, this is also an option.

Potential benefits to you will be an opportunity to explore a topic that has had little attention in the community and to develop links with others while being able to talk about your story and your identity. This research may be used for publication at a later date.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and optional. Participants have the right to withdraw without having to justify that decision from the research at any time without fear of recrimination or discrimination. Participants may withdraw any or all of the information they have provided until the final writing of the thesis.

All information obtained in this research will be treated in the strictest confidence. To ensure confidentiality, all personal information including people's names will be removed and pseudonyms (aliases) used instead. Access to any data during the study will be restricted to Bindi. Once the interviews have been transcribed and analysed, you will be offered your transcript back and the

Dictaphone will be erased. Those transcripts not requested will be stored in a locked room for a minimum of five years before being destroyed.

This study has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. If you have any concerns or questions regarding the research please feel free to contact:

Researcher:

Bindi Bennett

25A Barker Street Strathfield, 2135

02 9701 4294

Email: bindim.bennett@acu.edu.au

Principal Supervisor:

Professor Morag McArthur

Director Institute of Child Protection

02 6209 1225

Email: Morag.McArthur@acu.edu.au

Cultural Supervisor:

Associate Professor Sue Green

Social Work program, School of Social Sciences UNSW

02 9385 8482

Email: s.green@unsw.edu.au

Participants will be advised of the results of the research before the overall findings are disseminated.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor or Researcher has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.



NSW and ACT: Chair, HREC

C/- Research Services

Australian Catholic University

North Sydney Campus

PO Box 968 North Sydney NSW 2059

Tel: 02 9739 2105

Fax: 02 9739 2870

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

This research has been to the appropriate Indigenous agencies and community groups for consultation and this research has been given approval to proceed.

If you agree to participate in this research, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Student Researcher.

Principal Investigator/Supervisor

Student Researcher

Appendix 4: Advertisement / poster



You are invited to participate in a research project on:

How is Aboriginal cultural identity developed, understood and experienced by young Aboriginal people with light skin colour and/or lack of kinship ties and/or community links?

I am an Aboriginal PhD student completing my thesis project. I would like to invite you to participate in this interesting study.

What are participants required to do?

- You will be asked to participate in an interview about your thoughts and experiences around the topic which will take approximately 60 minutes.
- It will be held at a mutually convenient place and time or via skype / phone.
- Responses are confidential.

Who can participate?

- Anyone who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and,
- Who is aged between 18 and 35 years.

The project has been approved by the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (Registration Approval Number 2012 196N) and has community support.

To participate in this research, please contact:

Bindi Bennett: bindim.bennett@acu.edu.au or (02) 4392 2992.

Supervisor, Morag McArthur: morag.mcArthur@acu.edu.au or (02) 62091225.

Appendix 5: URL address of articles

Bolt

'Bolt breached discrimination act, judge rules'. Kerrie Ritchie. 29.11.11.

www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2011/s3327398.htm

'Abbott's vow to ditch racist speech law attacked'. Michelle Gratton. Sydney Morning Herald.7.8.12.

'White is the new black'. Andrew Bolt. 15.4.09.

[Blogs.news.com.au/php/colum-white-is-the-new-black](http://blogs.news.com.au/php/colum-white-is-the-new-black)

'White fellas in the black'. Andrew Bolt. Herald Sun. 21.8.09.

www.hearaldsun.com.au/opinion/white-fellas-in-the-black-story-e6frfifo-122576453297#sthash.2032MgAk.dput

'The Bolt decision will have implications for us all'. Andrew Didd. 28.11.11.

www.abc.net.au/unleashed/3026182.html

'Aboriginal identity goes beyond skin colour'. Dylan Bird.6.4.11.

www.theage.com.au>NationalTimes>Politics

Abbott

'Tony Abbott's remarks on Ken Wyatt spark row'. Amos Aikman. The Australian. 14.11.12.

www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/abbotts-remarks-on-wyatt-spark-row/story-fn9hmlpm-1226516188497

'Abbott in trouble again after 'urban Aboriginal' remark'. Phillip Corey. WA Today.15.11.12.

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/political-news/abbott-in-trouble-after-urban-aboriginal-remark-20121114-29cgz.html>

'Going backwards after Abbott's 'urban Aboriginal' gaffe'. Myrna Tonkinson. Eureka Street.18.12.12.

www.eurekastreet.com.au vol22 no 23.

'Abbott not having a go at Wyatt, says Premier'. The West Australian.14.11.12.

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewast/a/-/breaking/15382949/abbott-not-having-a-go-at-wyatt-says-premier/>

'Aborigine backlash for Tony Abbott'. Natasha Robinson, Joe Kelly and Patricia Karvelas. The Australian.15.11.12.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/indigenous/aborigine-backlash-for-tony-abbott-story-fn9hm1pm-126516951845>

'Abbott criticized for 'urban Aboriginal' comment'. 13.11.12.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-11-13/abbott-criticised-for-urban-aboriginal-mp-comment/4369688>

Mundine

'Anthony Mundine echoes the Ku Klux Klan: Mansell'. Tony Shepherd. 19.10.12.

www.news.com.au

'Anthony Mundine has labelled Australia one of the world's most racist countries and wants a new flag and anthem'. Jamie Pandaram. The Daily Telegraph. 19.10.12.

'Mundine apologises to Tasmanian Aborigines but no such deal for Geale'. Glenn Jackson. The Age.19.10.12.

'Mundine's cheap shot below belt'. Martin Flanagan. The Age. 18.10.12.

'What do you do about an Aboriginal racist?'. Tony Shepherd. The Punch.19.10.12.

www.thepunch.com.au/what-do-you-do-about-an-aboriginal-racist

'Mansell slams Mundine a racist'. Tracker.19.10.12.

Tracker.org.au/2012/10/mansell-slams-mundine-as-racist/

'Anthony Mundine apologises to Daniel Geale for remarks about his family, Aboriginal heritage'.

Joe Barton. Fox Sports.21.10.12.

www.foxsports.com.au

Appendix 6: Other media sources

An episode of the SBS (a free to air television channel) which airs a show named 'Insight' named 'Aboriginal or Not' on the 7th October, 2010, where participants debated their views on light-skinned Aboriginal experiences.

The Australian newspaper's magazine article titled 'Not so Black and White' (Overington, 24.4.12) article discusses an Aboriginal man's personal journey to gain a Certificate of Aboriginality.

'Getting under their skin' (Bongiorno, 7.6.12) is an article written by journalist Frank Bongiorno and discusses the debate around light-skinned Aboriginal people by linking it to the novels of Arthur Upfield (Bony).

Aboriginal identity; Who is Aboriginal?' (Blackfella Times, 13.3.10) was a blog written and produced by 'Blackfella Times'. This blog discusses Aboriginal identity and discusses stereotypes, myths and racism surrounding in particular light-skinned Aboriginal people.

'It's not about being black enough, it's about need' (Overington, 11.4.12) written by The Australian journalist Caroline Overington discusses Anita Heiss's book 'Am I Black Enough For You?' in the context of the Andrew Bolt articles and legal action and to discuss light-skinned Aboriginal people and

'Don't judge a Black by its cover' (Turner, 9.8.12) is written by Kyle Turner, a self-identified light-skinned Aboriginal man who was also the recipient of the 2012 Charlie Perkins scholarship. He writes about the changing and diverse identity of Aboriginal people in 2012.

A radio interview and report presented by the Australian radio station JJJ which discussed light-skinned Aboriginal identity (JJJ, 2012).

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