CHALLENGES TO ABORIGINAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN

AUSTRALIA: STOLEN GENERATIONS RESPONSES TO THE ABSENCE OF

IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

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Abstract

The Stolen Generations are generally understood as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed under Government race-based policies from their families between 1910 and the 1970s. After removal they were put into homes, adopted or fostered out to non-Indigenous families. The effects of removal have been well documented and include ongoing suffering, grief, and trauma that have been passed down from one generation to the next. The aim of the study is to explore the ongoing effects of dispossession that took place through the practices of child removal that resulted in the Stolen Generations, practices which included the denial and removal of primary legal documents. The study focuses on the effects of not having access to primary legal documentation such as birth certificates. This thesis explores the questions regarding the absence of birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors and notes the mechanisms that are enacted today through the framework of administrative violence and its impacts on reclaiming identity, belonging and culture for Aboriginal people. The research was informed by Indigenous methodologies, using yarning and in particular the Wiradjuri ethical approaches of Winhangadhurinya and Yindyamarra Winhanganha. Through the process of storytelling 14 participants, Stolen Generations survivors and their families living in Victoria and New South Wales, provide accounts of how family members living without a birth certificate and identity documents have been affected in their lives. Through critical narrative analysis of the stories shared by participants, the study highlights the complexities and challenges associated with efforts to legally affirm one's identity. Key themes identified in the literature include: Theme 1: Being made Nobody, Theme 2: Intergenerational Grief, Theme 3: Fear of History Repeating/ Intergenerational Fear, Theme 4: Belonging/ Practices of Recovery and Healing. Additionally, the study contributes to the understanding of how the absence of legal documentation and the difficulty in obtaining and accessing documentation can be seen as administrative violence.

This ongoing violence is both structural and administrative and continues to impact the lives of Stolen Generations survivors, their families and communities. This understanding of the continued experiences of violence contributes to the literature on experiences of administrative violence for the Stolen Generations and their families and community.

Student Declaration

I, Rebecca Peita Lyons, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Challenges to Aboriginal Identity Construction in Australia: Stolen Generations Responses to the Absence of Identity Documents* is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work. I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.
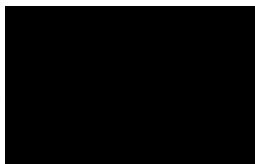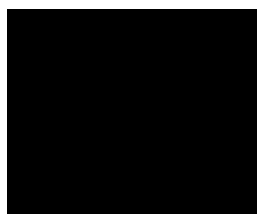
Signature   Date 27/07/2022

Declaration regarding Ethics Approval

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee and HRE18-241

Signature   Date 27/07/2022

Cultural Sensitivity Warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this resource contains images and names of people who have since passed away.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family and community who have supported me throughout this journey.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my Principal Supervisor Professor Christopher Sonn for his guidance and support throughout my research journey. Thanks for your feedback and for encouraging me to use a critical lens. Thank you for believing in me and my project. I would like to also acknowledge and thank my Associate Supervisor Professor Tracey Bunda for your support, feedback and insights.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Aboriginal identity has been used as a tool to control and manipulate and as a mechanism to justify oppressive policies (Clark, 2000). Indigenous people are still being controlled, with many being forced to live with imposed identities or without a legal identity. Imposed identities are those that are defined by an external party and applied to people, while a legal identity is conferred by an authority typically after the birth of a child and includes basic information like sex, name, place of birth, name of parents. The processes and practices of both imposing identities and of denying a legal identity through not issuing certified documents have severe implications for people both existentially and in terms of their capacity to access rights, services, and other resources. These processes and practices in Australia can be understood within the history of colonialism and racialised practices of categorising people that continues the maintenance of assimilation and enforcement of what I have referred to as "nullifying systems" (Lyons, 2014, p.21). In Australia, the definition of Aboriginality has a long and controversial history. The definition has been framed through explicit race-based ideology and included race-based blood quantum classification systems that have had significant personal and social ramifications. Imposing external definitions of Aboriginal identity has always been part of settler colonial practices, and this has been illustrated in McCorquodale's (1986) 'The Legal Classification of Race in Australia'. His research on legislation of both the Commonwealth and the several States examined over 700 pieces of legislation and found that since colonial settlement governments have used at least 67 classifications, descriptions, or definitions to determine who is and who is not Aboriginal. McCorquodale noted that: "A

bewildering array of legal definitions led to inconsistent legal treatment and arbitrary, unpredictable, and capricious administrative treatment" (p.7). The author also stated that:

> Definitions have been used from the time of European settlement to the present. These classifications may be grouped under six broad headings according to anthropometric or racial identification; territorial habitation, affiliation, or attachment; blood or lineal grouping, including descent; subjective identification; exclusionary and other; and Torres Strait Islanders. Some definitions, such as 'Aborigine', have what I call 'multi-factor' references. (McCorquodale, 1986, p.9)

These enforced white systems that define identity are damaging as they shape the mechanisms of colonisation and reinforce the control and oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Gilbert (2020), an academic in Critical Indigenous Studies, discusses the coloniality of settler impositions further:

> To understand some of these complexities, it is critical to identify why and by whom definitions of Aboriginality are generated. Placing definition-making within a context of settler-state motivations, a racial analytic and the requirement for testing a legislated 'Aboriginality' being placed onto Aboriginal Australian communities themselves, must also be central. Two major arguments are posited here: first, that a legal Aboriginality exists solely for the management of Indigenous populations to their end of Wolfe's 'territoriality' and Razack's 'disposability'; and second, that Indigenous Australians - like other Indigenous peoples around the world - are continually forced to speak to legal Aboriginalities which represent almost none of the interests or challenges they face in their struggle for physical and cultural survival. (Gilbert, 2020, p.249)

This construction of identification allows Aboriginality to be used as a form of control by policy and legislation within Australia. This was highlighted by the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group's (NSW AECG) Aboriginality and Identity Perspectives, Practices and Policies Report (2011) study into Aboriginal identity. The authors reported that:

> History shows that from the earliest days of invasion and colonisation white people have grappled with the issue and constructed and applied definitions of Aboriginality to primarily serve their own purpose and to marginalise and oppress Aboriginal peoples. They issued and constructed and applied definitions of Aboriginality to primarily serve their own purpose and to marginalise and oppress Aboriginal peoples. (2011, p. 5)

There has also been much debate about who gets to define Aboriginality in Australia. Historically, the definition of Aboriginality has often been negotiated in the public domain and embedded into legislation, but an ongoing dialogue has also been occurring within Aboriginal communities themselves. There are several aspects at play, including:

- How Aboriginality has been defined outside of or separate to Aboriginal people themselves;

- Identifying why the concept and definition of Aboriginality is required for both the Aboriginal communities and outside of those communities;

- How Aboriginality is defined, accepted and understood inside the Aboriginal community (Gilbert, 2020, pp.258-259).

Sociologist Professor Bronwyn Carlson is an Aboriginal scholar at Macquarie University, Department of Indigenous Studies. Her book, *The politics of identity:*

who counts as Aboriginal today? (2016), is based on the research she undertook for her doctoral thesis, which highlighted the multiple definitions of Aboriginal identity that have existed throughout Australia's colonial history and how these have a continuing impact upon "contemporary Aboriginal identities" (p.15). Carlson's work investigated government legislation that has tried to define Aboriginality since colonisation. The study also undertook a comprehensive examination of government policies and the lived experiences of Aboriginal people. She explores the critical issue of the politics of Aboriginal identity and notes that there is a concern "with contemporary struggles relating to Aboriginal identity in Australia: the 'who' and 'what' of Aboriginality, the processes of identification and confirmation" (p.vi). Carlson further commented that:

> Identifying as Aboriginal involves far more than knowing or claiming to be a
> descendant of Aboriginal families. It demands much more than an understanding of
> how the imposed identity categories of the past have been overturned to allow
> Aboriginal people to determine what it means to be Aboriginal. (p.7)

This work provides important context for understanding the challenges of claiming, proving, and defining Aboriginality both in history and today. Historically, Aboriginality was defined by the government; however, today the definition of Aboriginality is also community-based.

Carlson's (2016) study also notes that there has been Indigenous concern globally about a phenomenon called 'race shifting'. The genealogy of 'race shifting' (Sturm, 2011) "has been traced largely to the history of the settler colonial need to either oppose or appropriate Indigenous identities and culture" (Junka-Aikio, 2019, p.10). Indigenous scholars in Finland, Canada, the United States of America and Mexico have discussed the political problematics of

race shifting that are connected across widely different socio-political, territorial and/or settler colonial contexts, and examined how race shifting and similar mechanisms have specific impacts on Indigenous self-determination (Junka-Aikio, 2019; Junka-Aikio et al., 2021; Junka-Aikio, Lehtola & Nyyssönen, 2021; Sturm, 2011, Sturm, 2002). Junka-Aiko et al. (2021) noted at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Conference that:

> During the past two decades, growing numbers of settler-peoples have created organizations and demanded recognition by state institutions, legal venues, and Indigenous governing bodies as "Indigenous" people. Typically, claims associated with this turn, conceptualized here in terms of Circe Sturm's notion of race shifting, rely heavily on blood/gene narratives (i.e. distant Indigenous ancestry) and family lore (i.e. stories of "hiding in plain sight") rather than on reciprocal (kinship) relations with living Indigenous communities. (Junka-Aikio et al., 2021, no page number)

This concern of race shifting is also evident in the context of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, especially for members of the Stolen Generations survivors who are trying to affirm their identity. Community organisations have noted that non-Indigenous people have used the story of the Stolen Generations to request a Confirmation of Aboriginality, a common seal document that states that they are Aboriginal.

> Confirmation of Aboriginality document … usually includes the application of the three-tier definition but may include further conversations including identifying family and 'tribal' histories (usually provided under Aboriginal company seal by an Aboriginal corporation). (Gilbert, 2020, p.255)

The current study set out to understand the complexity of the issues surrounding administrative violence and the absence of legal identity in Australia for members of the Stolen

Generations. Furthermore, this study sought to provide information to government and community organisations with a view to effecting policy review and change, especially if people understood that the policies and practices of the past that were used to determine and impose identities continue to be expressed in the present with disastrous consequences for individuals, families and the community who are still living with the effects of historical removal policies. There is also the sense that this study will benefit studies of the challenges for Indigenous groups globally who are experiencing structural violence in the form of administrative violence as Indigenous groups around the world continue to experience the ongoing effects of colonisation and its impacts.

This study also describes the history of colonisation and the Stolen Generations as a specific example of how policies were used as a mechanism of control. The way in which I have come to understand these mechanisms is through a framework of violence, and many Indigenous people and scholars understand this violence as both structural and administrative in form. Lea (2020) noted that administrative violence can be traced back to Australia's history of colonialism. It is the basis of an infrastructure of control, suffering, oppression and most importantly the imposed white systems of identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through this practice the right to self-determination, which is preserved in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to which Australia is a signatory, is denied. By drawing attention to the non-legal existence of Stolen Generations members' identities and the complexities of how to address this issue, the research sought to generate important information about what healing work remains to be done, and how generations of survivors are wanting to begin the healing process.

Researcher Standpoint

I am a proud Wiradjuri/ Ngiyampaa / Ngunnawal woman, Aboriginal Blak feminist and proud child of a Wiradjuri/ Ngiyampaa / Ngunnawal Elder and a Stolen Generations survivor. I acknowledge my privilege in growing up and knowing who I am, my Country, my family and knowing my long and proud ancestral lineage, traditional systems and languages. Many survivors and families have reconnected and know their history. Unfortunately, this is not always the case for Stolen Generations survivors and their families, with many still on their journey to connect to family and Country.

I have also witnessed the stigma that surrounds the Stolen Generations, both by non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in both social settings and within government organisations that have been dismissive of Stolen Generations survivors and their families. These organisations have also perceived the Stolen Generations as stereotypically not knowing who they are and talking down or over them as though the organisation is the authority over one's identity and thereby they have treated people as deficient or lacking when connected to the Stolen Generations.

It must be noted that, even when people are still on their journey, their ancestral connection has never been severed, only disrupted. This ancestral connection is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have on a genealogical and spiritual level that connects us to our ancestors and to each other. It is important to note this connection is not bound by colonisation nor is it bound to this world. This connection we share as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is strong. Through my family connection and my work with Stolen Generations survivors and their families, we have spoken about this connection and how it is an unsevered ancestral connection. The stigma that has surrounded the Stolen Generations

has stemmed from a stereotypical treatment of being deficient through lacking cultural roots. This is extremely offensive and needs to be addressed in order to move forward. A better understanding of this treatment is needed in those government organisations that often are blind to these matters and in their blindness reinforce a status quo that leaves people feeling upset and isolated.

Throughout my lived experience, my studies and community-based research I have used an Aboriginal cultural lens to enforce my understandings of colonisation and dispossession of the Stolen Generations. Margaret Kovach (2009) refers to this as "personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences" (p. 95). Aileen Moreton Robinson (2013) writes about standpoint in this way:

> An Indigenous women's standpoint is ascribed through inheritance and achieved
>
> through struggle. It is constituted by our sovereignty and constitutive of the
>
> interconnectedness of our ontology (our way of being); our epistemology (our way of
>
> knowing) and our axiology (our way of doing). (p.340)

"Acknowledging the position from which one researches, and writes is critical to the integrity of the research" (Williamson-Kefu, 2019, p.5). My insights into the impacts of Stolen Generations and the legal documents such as birth certificates for survivors, and its interconnectedness to myself, my family and my community are essential for doing and understanding this research, because it enables me to disrupt coloniality and the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I began this research with the objective of giving understanding to the complexity of dispossessions for Stolen Generations survivors and their families today and how this can be understood as one part of the historical traumas that

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people carry, as noted by the research of the Healing Foundation.

Because of my positioning as researcher, this research understands the importance of the stories that are shared. It is important to understand that these oral histories are multilayered and have many meanings. Other scholars have discussed how Indigenous people globally tell stories in circles:

> Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen. (Metzger, 1986, p.104)

The notion that stories are not spoken in straight lines gives a clearer insight into the interconnectedness of stories for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as Indigenous peoples globally. Martin (2007) states that "stories give identity and a sense of belonging" (p.45). Smith (1999) shares that storytelling "gives testimony to the injustices of the past" (p.34). Understanding storytelling and the interconnections of these stories embraces a type of counter-narrative as "an important tool for disrupting dynamics of oppression" (Sonn et al., 2013, p. 295). According to Martin (2007) "stories are grounding, defining, comforting and embracing. Stories vary in their purpose and content and so stories can be political and yet equally healing" (p.45).

This understanding unmasks and contributes to the broader conversations of the historical impacts on contemporary lives of Stolen Generations survivors and their families today. Acknowledging my positioning as researcher, and my connectedness and understanding of Indigenous Knowledges and to the disciplines of humanities, social sciences and psychology,

as well as critically analysing and actively reflecting on the complexities of this role in my research is essential. Understanding my own positioning in the research is critical for high quality research (Smith, 1999; Williamson-Kefu, 2019; Wilson, 2008). According to Shawn Wilson (2008) in his book *Research is Ceremony,* "the research that we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world" (p.11). This ceremony also helps to establish respectful protocols, thus strengthening connections and building trust. Engaging in this way enables this research to privilege our narrative and power within the research and academic space. This understanding and privileging of voices and perspectives may also bring reconciliation to this space.

Associate Professor of Sociology and Oneida Nation scholar, Lina Sunseri (2007) wrote in the article, 'Indigenous Voice Matters: Claiming our Space through Decolonising Research' that '' 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (p. 93) and explained why decolonising research is necessary for Indigenous peoples globally:

> Although historically, social research has not always been a friend to Indigenous peoples – often more an imperial gaze distorting views of Indigenous societies – we are now embarking on a new path, wherein Indigenous peoples are reclaiming our own voices in research (as researchers and researched) and demanding that our perspectives of the history between the "West" and the "Rest" be given equal status in the existing literature. We are (re)establishing our ways of doing research and (re)presenting knowledge, with the self-determination of our Indigenous nations as the primary goal. In the process, Indigenous peoples will move beyond being considered as "objects" of study under a Western gaze, to become active participants and producers of our own knowledge. (Sunseri, 2007, p.104)

With this in mind, I am actively moving beyond the Western gaze, by using my positioning to connect and elevate Aboriginal voices and to gain a deeper understanding of this knowledge. I discuss my standpoint and the importance of decolonising research further in my Chapter Three on Methodology.

Locating the Research

The history of Australia has a comprehensive interdisciplinary body of academic research which has highlighted Australia's history of invasion, colonisation and the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This wide-ranging research has emphasised the control and power relations between the British and Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities (Atkinson, 2006; Behrendt, 2003, 2012; Clark, 2000; Germov & Poole, 2007; Land, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2004, 2009; Sonn et al., 2018; Quayle, 2017). These power relations, "shape and limit everyday lifeworlds, subjectivities, and intersubjective relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia" (Quayle, 2017, p.1) and in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations survivors and their families who continue to live with the social control (Krieken, 1999) impacts of Australia's past policies of child removal.

> It's estimated that as many as one in three Indigenous children were taken from their families between 1910 and the 1970s—affecting most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. These children were forcibly removed from their families and communities through race-based policies set up by both State and Federal Governments. They were either put in to homes, adopted or fostered out to non-Indigenous families. They suffered a huge amount of grief and trauma; losing their connections to family, identity, land, language and culture. Grief that continues

today. These Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have become known as the Stolen Generations. In 2008 the Australian Government formally apologised to them and their families. The national Apology to the Stolen Generations acknowledged the trauma and grief suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a result of past government policies, particularly the removal of children from their families. (Healing Foundation, 2020a)

This study is inspired by my father's experience as a Stolen Generations survivor and as a member of our family living in Carawatha, which in Wiradjuri language means place of pines (the colonial name is Finley), in regional New South Wales in the 1960's. At this time Aboriginal people in New South Wales were living under the control of the Aborigines Welfare Board 1940-1969 Act. My father's story has been documented through the legal system in Victoria and New South Wales, Australia.

The County Court of Victoria and Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales told my family that the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board took children, in some cases without cause, and there was little to no paper trail. It was also stated by the County Court of Victoria that my father was only targeted by Mr Snooks because he was Aboriginal, although at this time my family was not living under the Aboriginal Board's direction, as they were exempt under the NSW Aborigines Protection Act policy, because my grandfather was employed and the children were attending the local state school and living in non-government housing. Mr Snooks was an employee of the Aborigines Protection Board, who did not record the many removals of Aboriginal children in the Riverina of New South Wales including that of my father. Mr. Snooks was also responsible for arranging adoptions interstate. From what my family was told by Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales in 2019, Mr. Snooks did this without

their knowledge and without a paper trail. Within our community, Mr. Snooks was infamous for this, and I recall my Elders, aunties, uncles, cousins, father and grandfather telling me that he would work alongside the local hospital Matron who would conceal births and these babies would be adopted to non-Aboriginal families. Mr. Snooks and the Matron have never been held accountable. As a result of Mr. Snooks' actions, my father aged ten, an aunty and a cousin, who was raised as their brother were Stolen in 1968. This targeting of my family resulted in my father being taken across state borders, hidden, renamed, and adopted without his knowledge or consent nor that of our families in the state of Victoria. He was then made a ward of the State of Victoria and given a number and placed in several Victorian Boys Homes. My father was away from our family for four years, until my family found where he was. My grandfather, my father's aunty and cousin, and his wife and older sister wrote to the Aborigines Welfare Board New South Wales (who claimed to not know his whereabouts), and once my family found out that he was at the Salvation Army Boys Home they wrote to request access to my father. The Salvation Army Boys Home finally granted holiday leave and my dad went back to New South Wales. My grandfather never returned him to Victoria. My family are very thankful that he was found and that he came home. My father's story is one example of the importance of this study and his story also reflects the complexities of changes that individuals and families face obtaining identity documentation.

As an adult my father went through the County Court of Victoria court process to regain his original birth legal identity. This story inspired and led to me and my two sisters, Jaimie-Lea Lyons and Tanaya Lyons, investigating various interconnected aspects of the institutional practices involved for our respective Honours theses. Each thesis took a different point of view. Jaimie-Lea's thesis was titled "A Wiradjuri Family Experience: The

Consequences of Living under the Aborigines Protection Act, 1909-1943 NSW" (2014). She examined racism and the historical treatment of Aboriginal people that led to the Stolen Generations. Tanaya's thesis, "The Stolen Generations: The Triple Effect" (2014), explored the three layers of removal, "the triple effect associated with the members of the Stolen Generation who were moved across borders; placed with adoptive families; made Wards of the State" (Lyons T., 2014, p.7).

My thesis was titled "Terra Nullius: A Personal Family Perspective of the Stolen Generations" (2014) and addressed the complex consequences of having directly been impacted upon by these Acts. Terra nullius is a Latin term meaning "land belonging to no one" (Banner, 2005; Behrendt, 1999; Behrendt, 2012; Germov & Poole, 2007; Reynolds, 1987). Terra nullius was used as the legal notion by the British government to justify the settlement of Australia. British colonisation and subsequent Australian land laws were based on the claim that Australia was terra nullius (Reynolds, 1987). This justified the takeover by the British and occupation without a treaty. This essentially denied the existence of the Indigenous people's prior occupation of and connection to the land (Banner, 2005) despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities having their own laws and government structures (Behrendt, 2012; Pascoe, 2018). In 1992, through the decision of the High Court in the Mabo and Others versus Queensland [No 2] case, the fiction of terra nullius was overturned.

My study highlighted and addressed the reasons why my father did not have a birth certificate and what the effects socially, culturally and emotionally were after being forcibly removed from New South Wales to Victoria, Australia. The study explained that my father through the frameworks of white government systems did not legally exist and therefore his very existence is brought into question, and by extension that of his family. The thesis argued

that this is a continuation of the notion of terra nullius, where the application of terra nullius refers to the subject of the phrase, the "no-one" (Murphy, 2000, p.6). The research also explored these themes and exposed "a psychological terra nullius" (Behrendt, 2003, p.20) in the policies and practices of institutions and how this is still used as a tool to control the non-legal existence of Aboriginal people who were Stolen.

The thesis also discussed the legal court process for obtaining my father's original New South Wales birth certificate, which was quashed by the state of Victoria when he was Stolen and adopted. I speak about my family's experience of obtaining my father's birth certificate further in Chapter Three.

The current thesis expands on my Honours thesis and highlights the framework of structural violence that is embedded within Australia's systems today. This thesis is about the effects of the Stolen Generations historical intergenerational trauma, as well as white control and abuse of power. My family's story continues to be a driving force for this intergenerational understanding.

The emphasis of this study is on the importance for the Aboriginal members of the Stolen Generations and their families who have experienced issues obtaining their legal documentation of the effects of the "nullifying system" (Lyons, 2014). Stolen Generations members, their families and Aboriginal support workers have shared stories about the absence of birth certificates and the impacts that the absence of birth certificates have had on the families' lives and how it has impacted on identity, culture, belonging and healing. The research investigates these questions: what are the challenges to legal Aboriginal Identity formation for the people and their families who were made 'no-one' in the frameworks of white institutions and practices, and what is the legacy of this erasure (Farmer, 2004; Murphy, 2000;

Wolfe, 2006; 2016); what are the ongoing challenges associated with the systems and mechanisms evident in the stories about establishing legal identities for members of the Stolen Generations and their descendants; and what are the social, economic and cultural impacts of these systems and practices. The study uses the concepts of intergenerational trauma and collective trauma and explores these also in people's stories of removal and in their impacts upon identity, belonging and displacement. The study focuses on the understandings of collective trauma specifically in relation to not having access to primary legal documentation such as birth certificates, and how this can impact intergenerationally upon the Stolen Generations survivors' children and grandchildren.

The significance and contribution to knowledge from this thesis counter many white traditions in terms of methodology, themes, and outcomes. Government legislation has not only impacted Aboriginal people historically and socially but it has also had a psychological and spiritual effect.

Murphy (2000) notes that:

Australia's administration of Aboriginal Affairs since 1897 has operated from a premise of non-recognition under policies of assimilation and government initiatives have merely undergone technical adjustments designed to retain assimilationist practices. (p.1)

Thesis Structure and Overview

Chapter One, Introduction, describes the structure and my approach to the thesis. It provides background on the research context of the Stolen Generations and highlights my

family's lived experience. This chapter notes my positioning as researcher, as well as the approach that is explored through the thesis in using data from the study.

In Chapter Two, Historical Context of the Stolen Generations, I discuss the key concepts of colonisation, dispossession, and the Stolen Generations historical colonial policies of assimilation. Furthermore, I discuss the enforcement of the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as well as the removal of legal and cultural identity that led to the displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I focus on the lack of access to primary legal documents due to the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. This chapter further discusses some of the processes and current impacts of colonialism that are still of significance today, with an emphasis on the issues facing the Stolen Generations survivors and families in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This chapter provides an overview of the history of colonisation in Australia, including the Aboriginal policies of protection and assimilation, with particular focus on Victoria and New South Wales.

The chapter also includes a focus on the ongoing effects of colonisation on Indigenous people and how these effects continue to affect one's ability to reclaim identity, place, belonging and culture. This literature has been chosen as it helps to frame understanding of the Stolen Generations and the effects and continuing social impacts faced by survivors and their families. It is essential that this history is understood and this chapter highlights the impacts of removal that continue to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, who are living with imposed or no legal identity. This chapter also notes the mechanisms that continue to be enacted today through a framework of violence.

Chapter Three, The Impacts of Violence and Colonisation, examines the literature on the psychological, social, and cultural impacts these practices have had intergenerationally, by looking at the different forms of trauma.

In Chapter Four, Methodology, I discuss the methodologies and processes I have employed in this study, including the qualitative approach, storytelling, autobiographical storytelling and narrative enquiry. The research has also used the Indigenous methodology of yarning (storytelling) during the interview process to gather information. "Storytelling not only challenges or decolonizes institutions, it is a way of reasserting Indigenous voice, perspective, and experience. Storytelling is an act of sovereignty that reinforces Indigenous identity, values, and worldview" (Behrendt, 2009, p. 175). The research also engages in deep listening, as Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann (2002) has noted that the Dadirri-Listening Deeply technique should be used when engaging with community.

In Wiradjuri language, respectful deep listening is called Winhangadhurinya and when using Winhangadhurinya it is culturally important to combine it with Yindyamarra Winhanganha, the wisdom of respectfully knowing. I have used Yindyamarra Winhanganha as part of my ethical approach when working with community and engaging with participants in this study. Yindyamarra Winhanganha is not just a method, but it is anchored in an onto-epistemic-ethical framework (Boveda & Bhattacharya, 2019) that is place-based. This can be best described as respectful knowing. This too is both a practice, a process and an ethical approach.
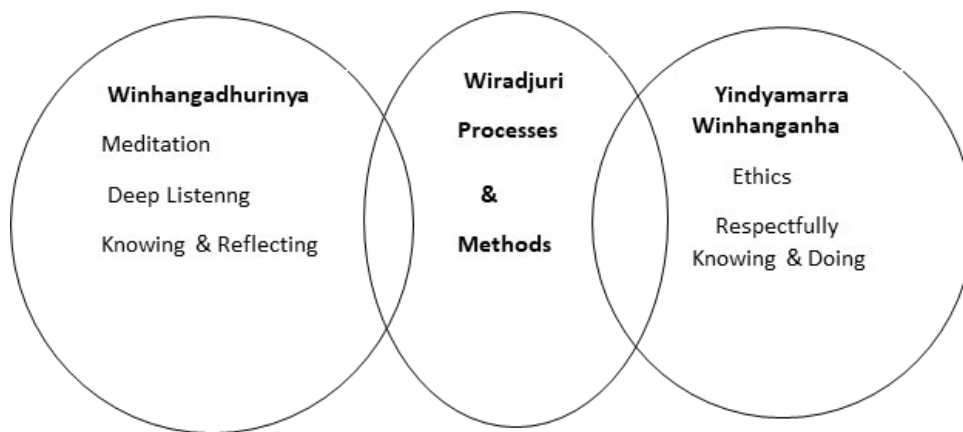
Figure 1. Wiradjuri Processes & Methods

Furthermore this chapter discusses the importance of working to "decolonise traditional methodologies" (Smith, 1999, p.137) in academic research and why we as Aboriginal researchers must continue to work with cultural protocols and respect in our studies. I also travelled across Victoria and New South Wales and gathered stories from 14 participant interviewees - Stolen Generation survivors and family members as well as Aboriginal community support workers who live in Victoria and New South Wales. They gave accounts of how family members and community members have been impacted by living without a birth certificate, and by extension other primary identity documents, and how this has affected and continues to affect their lives. The stories collected were managed, coded and retold in line with my ethical approach.
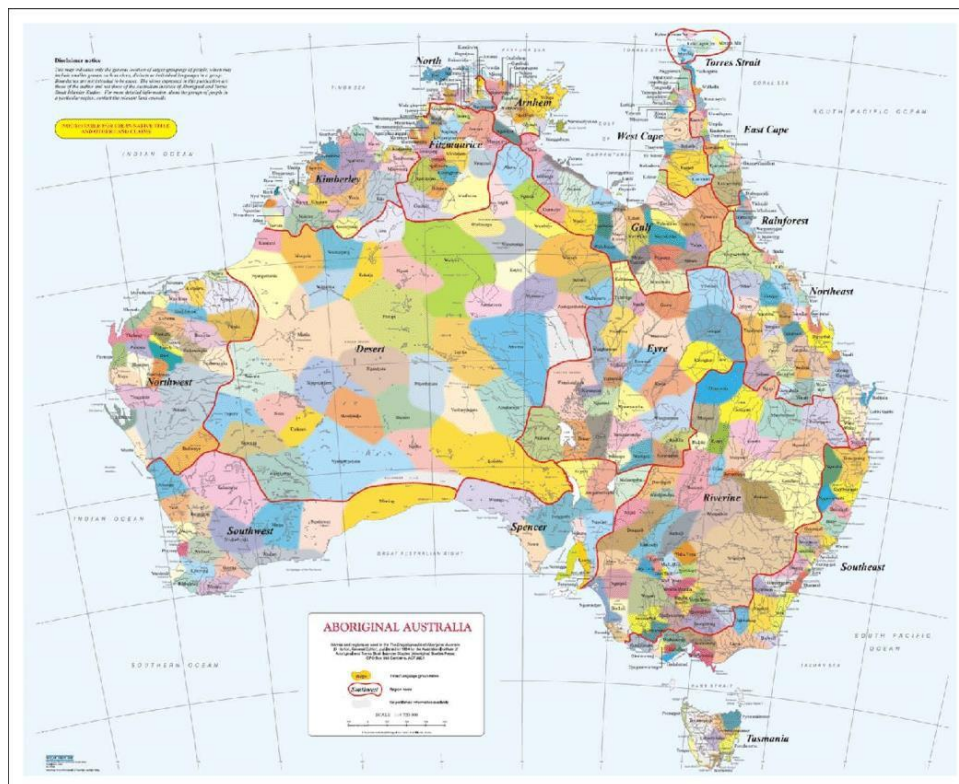
Figure 2. AIATSIS Aboriginal Languages Map (Source: Horton.1996).

Figure 3. Locations I visited during field work (marked with red pins)

The results of the study are presented in the next two chapters. Chapter Five, Stories of

Administrative Violence and Suffering: Absence of Identity Documents, reports on some of

the data and analysis of the stories shared by the 14 participants who took part in my doctoral

research. These participants were Stolen Generations members, their families and Aboriginal support workers who have experienced and or witnessed the impacts of lack of birth certificates on their communities and families. The stories shed light on the research questions. This chapter and the next discuss the recurring themes from the study with each of the themes and their subthemes illustrated with quotes from the interviews. The themes highlight a framework of violence. For this chapter the theme is Theme 1: Being made Nobody, with subthemes of stolen birth identity, birth certificates, documentation and administrative genocide;

Chapter Six, Legacies of Oppression: Absence of Birth Certificates and Intergenerational Grief, explores navigating the challenges of birth certificates and the mechanism of administrative violence. In this chapter the themes are: Theme 2: Intergenerational Grief with subthemes of navigating administrative violence, conscious grief, sorry business, acknowledgment of grief, and historical unresolved grief; and Theme 3: Fear of History Repeating/ Intergenerational Fear with subthemes of the legacy of colonisation, and intergenerational fear of removal.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses the importance of recognising and acknowledging intergenerational impacts including the grief that is felt today by the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Stolen Generations survivors as well as by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. This collective historical loss and grief has impacted at many levels on the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. This chapter highlights the lived reality of Stolen Generations survivors and families. This understanding highlights the challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities today.

Chapter Seven considers Theme 4: Belonging/Practices of Recovery and Healing with subthemes of historical mindfulness, collective healing, finding mob, intergenerational healing and healing centres. This chapter explores the absence of birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors. This chapter notes how the intergenerational impacts are understood and how these are addressed in ways that can ameliorate and reunify families. This section also emphasises that applying for a birth certificate and similar documents is not straightforward, due to the structural mechanisms that are enacted today through a framework of violence. This chapter also discusses the importance of obtaining birth certificates for families trying to restore and connect back to country and family.

In Chapter Eight, Discussion, the research discusses the findings that have impacted on the families' perspectives by highlighting the understandings of the issues from colonisation and how this continues to affect families and communities. My thesis questions draw attention to the forms of power implicated in the trauma experienced by the tearing apart of families over time - including the various sciences that accompanied the management of Aboriginal peoples during this period. This thesis has also been expanded to look at the reasoning by the white rulers and governmental authorities for the deliberate actions involving social control and the controls over movement, marriage and self-government. It also considers the structure of the biological sciences and the implications from the invention of the biological sciences, including the destruction of language and culture which has been reviewed as part of the literature review in Chapter Two. This chapter also shows the limitations of the data and the need for future scholarly inquiry. The chapter looks at the implications for family who still do not have legal identification and discusses the recommendations and highlights what healing work remains to be done. This chapter also gives a concluding overview of all the chapters and

reviews the findings of this research and situates the findings within the broader contemporary

social context. It summarises the main themes across generations and the key insights.

Chapter Two

Colonial Violence and Historical Context of the Stolen Generations

Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the processes and current impacts of colonialism, with an emphasis on issues facing Stolen Generations survivors and families in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This chapter provides an overview of the history of colonisation in Australia, including policies of protection and assimilation, with particular focus on Victoria and New South Wales. This chapter reviews the key concepts of colonisation, dispossession, the Stolen Generations, colonial policies of assimilation, enforcement of removal of children and identity, and the displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to the Stolen Generations. I focus on the lack of access to the primary legal documents that is one aspect of the nullifying system that has contributed to the dispossession of Indigenous people in Australia. This chapter also notes the mechanisms that continue to be enacted today through the framework of violence. Administrative violence is a term which describes one of the key mechanisms through which structural inequality is reproduced entirely legally (Lea, Howey, & O'Brien, 2018; Lea, 2020). As Lea (2020) notes, administrative violence begins with paperwork and ends with the loss of a child. This research builds on the notion of paperwork by examining the impacts of the absence of birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors. More importantly this research explores the effects of the paperwork related to the registration of personal identities through birth certificates as part of the "unrelenting nature of administrative violence under active colonisation" (Lea et al., 2018, p.305).

Forms of Violence and Aboriginal Cultural Identities

Historically, Australia has enacted the deliberate systematic dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from land, culture, language, family and community in ways ranging from the frontier wars to protection and segregation policies, assimilationist policies, practices, and discourses (Maddison, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2009; Walter, 2010; Quayle, 2017; Quayle & Sonn, 2013). Australia's colonial history is comparable to colonial histories globally, particularly in the other occupying settler colonies including New Zealand and the Northern American countries of Canada and the United States of America, where the colonisers have not left and have remained institutionally and culturally dominant over the Indigenous population (Durie, Milroy & Hunter, 2009; Smith, 1999; Quayle, 2017; Quayle & Sonn, 2013; Wolfe, 1999).

Colonialism is commonly defined as control by an occupying power over a region or people. In practice, colonialism is a racialised system of political domination and economic control over a dependent territory or people that is legitimised. George Balandier (1951) highlights that colonial power can be implemented through non-military means by using a combination of administrative machinery and ideological dominance. In the literature, this machinery and ideological apparatus have been described in different ways including administrative violence, or symbolic, cultural and structural violence. African anti-colonial scholar, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, notes that:

> Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military
> conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of
> domination was the universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how
> people perceived themselves and their relationships to the world. Economic and

political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. (1986, p. 16)

Anthropologist, Patrick Wolfe (1999), studied the links between race and settler colonialism and he suggests that "settler colonisers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" (p. 2). He writes that settler colonialism is enacted through various methods, ranging from violent to more subtle, legal means such as the naming of Indigenous identity within a colonial framework in order to enact policies of protection and assimilation. Furthermore, settler colonialism normalises the ongoing settler occupation and ignores its dispossession, oppression and racism. Wolfe's work is powerful because it highlights that Australian society is the product of an extended invasion under the form of settler colonisation.

Colonialism entails various interconnected mechanisms of control that have significant and often deleterious implications for the colonised groups including dispossession and oppression, and their sequelae of alienation (Dodson 2003; Dutta, Sonn & Lykes, 2016; Fine, 2006; Moane, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2009; Quijano, 2000; Quayle, 2017). Various scholars have outlined the mechanisms of control such as structural, symbolic, and cultural violence through which domination is achieved and how it continues in the present. In regard to structural and cultural violence Galtung (1969) notes that direct violence is easily recognisable while indirect violence, also known as the structural forms of violence, can be invisible. Structural violence refers to a form of violence wherein social structures and social institutions can harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs (Galtung, 1969). It refers to any constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures (Galtung, 1969;

Lea, 2020; Winter & Leighton, 2001), and includes symbolic forms of violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Collins, 2000; Galtung, 1990).

According to Galtung (1990), there is a triangle of violence; direct, structural, and cultural. He states that "the violent structure is institutionalised, and the violent culture is internalised" (p.302). Cultural violence is defined by Galtung:

> As any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form. Symbolic violence built into a culture does not kill or maim like direct violence or structured violence. However, it is used to legitimize either or both. (p.291)

Cultural violence also refers to the "symbolic sphere of our existence - exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science" (p.291) and this symbolic sphere validates this form of violence.

Symbolic and Structural violence

Numerous other scholars have written about symbolic forms of violence and symbolic power. For example, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2000) was the first to note that symbolic violence is made up of two processes - de-historicisation and universalisation. Bourdieu's work focuses on the notion of power as a form of domination. He emphasises that society has come to accept power relations as natural and is realised by a historical and contextual analysis of the historical roots of this power. For Bourdieu (2001) domination and violence are reproduced in everyday interactions, social practices, institutional processes and dispositions. Importantly, this constitutes symbolic violence, which removes a victim's agency and voice. This research argues that the absence of birth certificates is a form of symbolic

violence due to its ability to render Stolen Generations survivors invisible. By rendering one's agency and voice invisible it simultaneously legitimises and sustains other symbolic forms of violence and domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Collins, 2000; Galtung, 1990).

Symbolic violence describes a type of non-physical violence manifested in the power differential between social groups. It is often unconsciously agreed upon by both parties and is manifested in an imposition of the norms of the group possessing greater social power on those of the subordinate group (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Structural violence does not always become apparent and may be normalised and naturalised as the status quo, masking discourses of privilege and dispossession (Dutta, Sonn, & Lykes 2016; Fine & Ruglis, 2009).

A growing number of anthropologists have devoted their research to forms of structural violence. Paul Farmer (2004) refers to this as erasure:

Erasing history is perhaps the most common explanatory sleight-of-hand relied upon by the architects of structural violence. Erasure or distortion of history is part of the process of desocialization necessary for the emergence of hegemonic accounts of what happened and why. (p.308)

In addition, Farmer (2004) states, "erasures, in these instances, prove expedient to the powerful, whose agency is usually unfettered. An imbalance of power cannot be erased without distortion of meaning" (p. 309). He also notes that the erosion of social awareness is identified in modern psychology, epidemiology, and sociology through the technique of desocialisation that has resulted in the erasure of "historical memory" (p. 307).

Similarly, other scholars have noted interconnecting systems of oppression through structural violence. For example, Patricia Collins, an African American, black feminist, and

sociologist scholar discusses these systems of oppression. Collins (2000) called these interconnecting systems the matrix of domination.

> Matrix of domination: the overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society. Any specific matrix of domination has (1) a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, ethnicity and age; and (2) a particular organization of its domains of power, e.g., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. (p.299)

The matrix of domination encompasses the systemic and structural mechanisms, that dominant political or social framework and relational domains of power. These "domains constitute specific sites where oppressions mutually construct one another" (Collins, 2000, p.203). This organisation of power creates unjust societies.

These injustices that result from the matrix of domination consist of unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care, or to legal standing. These forms of structural violence and cultural violence "serve to justify, legitimize, mask and naturalize both direct assaults on human beings and social hierarchies" (Dutta, Sonn, & Lykes, 2016, p.2). These forms of violence "can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (Galtung, 1969, p. 291). The processes through which structural and cultural violence is perpetuated and its dynamics of dispossession and privilege that are reproduced (Dutta, Sonn, & Lykes, 2016; Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Galtung, 1990) are the lingering legacies of Australia's colonisation and are evident in what Lea (2020) has conceptualised as administrative violence.

Administrative violence

Associate Professor Tess Lea's (2020) book *Wild Policy Indigeneity and the Unruly Logics of Intervention* writes about Indigenous social policy in Australia through a conceptual lens of anthropology of policy and ideologies of settler colonialism and infrastructural inequality. She calls this "Wild Policy" (p.10) in that it targets Indigenous people through policy.

> Wild Policy is the product of a purposely fragmented ethnographic gleaning technique, a methodological process and framing that I call policy ecology, by which I mean both the ecology of policy environments themselves and the variegated connections that stem from and flow through the alive, inhabited worlds that policy emanates from and enters into, the coalescence between humans and multiple other forces, and the stretches of time help and hauntings that help shape the capacious policy category known as 'Indigenous circumstances'. (p.11)

Furthermore, Lea's (2020, p. 26) "policy ecology" considers how the past and present are connected and how it interacts and how this has produced policy implications. She states that these are "structural inequalities and privileges that state policy has otherwise been aiding and abetting" (p.167) using administration to do so. She notes that administrative violence is a concept which relates to another form of structural violence. Administrative violence is a term which helps describe the racialised basis for inequality in government systems.

Lea (2020) drew attention to Australia's colonial legacies and the perspectives behind the statistics of high incarceration rates, early deaths and high levels of trauma in the Aboriginal community, and she observes this is due to these forms of structural and administrative violence.

"These forms of administrative violence are embedded within software algorithms and archives" (p. 165). Lea shares that the issue with this framework of violence is that structural violence and institutionalised racism is legal, and it becomes something people refer to as "the system" (Lea et al., 2018, p. 313). Embedded within this system is administrative violence that is used as a tool that continues to leave people vulnerable and leads to and maintains inequality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. This study links administrative violence to the absence of documents for Stolen Generations survivors and how this can contribute to intergenerational impacts.

Administrative Violence and the Absence of Birth Certificates/Primary Documents

Administrative violence is a key mechanism that reproduces structural inequality and is related to another form of structural violence. Administrative violence has greatly impacted the Stolen Generations not only through their removal from their families and communities but they have also suffered the removal of their legal identity. This has led to ongoing pain for survivors and their families. Many continue to live without primary documentation. This administrative violence continues to perpetrate structural inequality in Australia.

According to Gerber (2012):

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still struggle to enjoy full citizenship in Australia. This is because of problems they experience accessing a birth certificate - the document universally recognised as being the key to accessing citizenship rights. Not having a birth certificate is the equivalent of being legally invisible. (Gerber, 2012, no page number)

This is also reflected in Orenstein's (2009) case studies that highlighted the impact and the lack of documents Indigenous people face today. Orenstein states that:

Not having a birth certificate is a major issue within the Aboriginal community, without the foundation of this primary documentation one cannot exercise one's basic rights of citizenship and one is unable to access basic services such as bank accounts, tax file numbers, driver's licenses and passports. (2009, p.2)

Orenstein pointed to numerous case studies that show that many Aboriginal people live without a birth certificate and the effects this has had on their life. Orenstein reveals that there is a need to reform government policies as the current policies "only exacerbate the problem" (p.1). This study discusses the lack of birth certificates and how this affects not only the survivors but also their families' wellbeing. My research examines the ongoing struggle that Indigenous people face who live without such documentation. I have done this by drawing on my family story and my father's struggle as a Stolen Generations survivor to access his birth certificate and the difficulties he faced in this process.

In Australia, the lack of legal identity and birth certificates is due to structural barriers and past policies. The lack of legal identity in other countries has also been discussed by scholars globally who have linked this to being a "determining factor in the cycle of poverty" (p.4). An example of this is the study of Harbitz and Tamargo (2009) which explored "economically, culturally, and socially vulnerable groups" (p.4) that have been "excluded from access to legal identity" in three countries, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala, but as they also noted this can also be seen throughout Latin America. Their study showed that "not having a national identity document was found to have economic and financial implications" (p.4). Harbitz and Tamargo (2009) shared that:

Failure to register births and lack of legal identity are considered to have a direct

effect on possibilities and opportunities for full participation in social, political, and

economic life. Although the registration of birth in the civil registry does not in itself

guarantee access to education, health, social protection, or citizen participation, its

absence can place those fundamental rights beyond people's reach. (p.4)

This is yet another example of administrative violence and how it impacts on people in

a society and on their possibility to live and participate in the activities and services that most

people take for granted. It is important to note that other countries have shown similar effects

where the absence of birth certificates or not having access to them can result in cycles of

poverty and exclusion that are directly due to the lack of legal identity. According to Harbitz

and Tamargo (2009):

Lack of legal identity can be depicted in two terms a) absolute, which is the case

when the person's birth has not been registered, and therefore has no birth certificate

or identity document issued in his or her country of origin; or b) relative, where the

person's birth has been registered but he or she has lost the registration document or

did not receive it due to a registration error, and thus never obtained a national

identity document. (p.9)

In Australia, another layer is being Stolen and dealing with identification issues of legal

identity for the Stolen Generations through administrative means, which makes the situation of

obtaining legal identity much more difficult and disempowers people. Australia's

administrative violence hightlights the "power relations reflect the structural relationship

between white society and Indigenous society" (Moreton-Robinson, 2020, p.236). This also

shows how "power operates structurally" (Moreton-Robinson, 2020, p. 251) and how it has

aided in racial oppression that renders people invisible because of Australia's oppressive history and practices.

Administrative violence gives an understanding of how this power works. Globally another consequence according to Manby's (2020) work *Legal Identity for All and Statelessness* of not having a legal identity or not having a birth registered is that it leads to what is known internationally as statelessness:

> The international legal definition of a stateless person is "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law". In simple terms, this means that a stateless person does not have a nationality of any country. Some people are born stateless, but others become stateless. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021)

Statelessness can be particularly seen with refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2014) stated:

> In a world comprised of States, the problem of statelessness remains a glaring anomaly with devastating impacts on the lives of millions of people around the world who live without any nationality. In October 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees called for the "total commitment of the international community to end statelessness". The Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 – 2024 (Global Action Plan), developed in consultation with States, civil society and international organisations, sets out a guiding framework made up of 10 Actions that need to be taken to end statelessness within 10 years. (p.4)

Furthermore, the implications of statelessness are currently being formed in "human rights terms, given that statelessness frequently results in discrimination in terms of accessing

basic rights" (Foster & Lambert, 2016, p. 567). It is also vital that all countries "provide greater recognition of and protection for stateless persons" (p.564). Manby (2020) states that countries need "to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration" (p.248) in order to eradicate statelessness.

Even though there is international understanding of the human rights violations that have resulted from the lack of legal identity and citizenship, it is important for this study to highlight current global issues related to a lack of identity document due to administrative mechanisms of violence. This basic human right is not acknowledged nor cared about as a human rights issue for the Stolen Generations in Australia. This is integrally linked to the fact that Stolen Generations survivors were not considered Australian citizens at the time of their birth and removal. This continued displacement of people is violent and can lead to emotional distress and trauma that can be passed down generationally.

Historical and Political Context of the Stolen Generations

Dispossession and Legislative Domination

The colonisation of Australia began with the now debunked myth of terra nullius. Terra nullius is a Latin term meaning "land belonging to no one" or "nobody's land" and purposely was used to give the grounds for the colonisation of Australia. Terra nullius was employed to justify the British occupation of Australia and used to provide a rationale for the dispossession that rendered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights invisible.

> The British treated Australia as terra nullius - as unowned land. Under British colonial
> law, Aboriginal Australians had no property rights in the land, and colonization
> accordingly vested ownership of the entire continent in the British government. The

doctrine of terra nullius remained the law in Australia throughout the colonial period, and indeed right up to 1992. Terra nullius is such a basic and well-known fact of Australian history that it is easy to lose sight of how anomalous it was in the broader context of British colonization. (Banner, 2005, p. 95)

On June 3, 1992, in the Court judgement for Eddie Mabo and Others v The State of Queensland, the High Court of Australia recognised the existence of native title to lands hitherto annexed under Imperial Authority (Meyers & Mugambwa, 1993, p.1203). By doing so, the Court not only "rejected the fiction of terra nullius" (p.1203) it found "that native title was not inconsistent with the Crown's radical title over its acquired lands" (Meyers & Mugambwa, 1993, p.1203).

This historical High Court judgement in the case of Mabo and Others versus The State of Queensland resulted in the recognition of land rights for the Meriam people, traditional owners of the Murray Islands. However, this case also cemented the "introduction of the doctrine of native title into Australian law, removing the myth of terra nullius and establishing a legal framework for native title claims by Indigenous Australians. The judgement ruled that the common law as it existed:

- violated international human rights norms

- denied the historical reality of Indigenous people's dispossession" (Australians Together, 2012).

Below are The High Court's rulings:

(a) rejected the doctrine that Australia was terra nullius (land belonging to no-one) at the time of European settlement; and

(b) held that the common law of Australia recognises a form of native title that reflects the entitlement of the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia, in accordance with their laws and customs, to their traditional lands; and

(c) held that native title is extinguished by valid government acts that are inconsistent with the continued existence of native title rights and interests, such as the grant of freehold or leasehold estates.

The people of Australia intend:

(a) to rectify the consequences of past injustices by the special measures contained in this Act, announced at the time of introduction of this Act into the Parliament, or agreed on by the Parliament from time to time, for securing the adequate advancement and protection of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; and

(b) to ensure that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders receive the full recognition and status within the Australian nation to which history, their prior rights and interests, and their rich and diverse culture, fully entitle them to aspire. (Mabo v. Queensland, 175 CLR 1, 1992).

The Native Title Act 1993 was introduced as part of the Commonwealth Government's response to that historic High Court decision (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1995).

The 1788 invasion of Australia began the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This dispossession involved various forms of interconnected violence such as structural, symbolic and physical violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Galtung, 1990). Gumbainggir historian and scholar, Professor Gary Foley in his research, 'Australia and the Holocaust: A Koori Perspective' (1997) highlights the colonial violence through its physical and genocidal agendas. Foley notes that from the beginning of the British invasion of Australia

the "myth of terra nullius" (Banner, 2005; Behrendt, 2012; Foley, 1997; Lyons, 2014) legitimised the slaughter of Indigenous people, reducing the population by up to 80%. Indeed in some areas like Tasmania, the Indigenous population reduced by 96% (Foley, 1997). The justification was that "Indigenous people were in the way of progress" (Foley, 1997) and this justification was used to eradicate the Indigenous populations across Australia (Foley, 1997; Haebich, 2000).

The arrival of British colonists had a devastating impact on the lives of Aboriginal people throughout Australia. In South-Eastern Australia, colonisation was so rapid and so destructive that anthropological and historical analysis of Victorian clans is extremely difficult because of the rapidity of European usurpation. By 1861 fewer than 2,000 of the original owners had survived what eyewitness accounts called "wanton slaughter" through massacres, starvation, and the effect of European-introduced diseases (Barwick & Barwick, 1984, p.109). Foley (1997) states:

> So comprehensive was the "ethnic cleansing" of Australia that out of an estimated 500 language groups on the mainland Australia when the British arrived, barely half that number of languages were to survive. (p.2)
>
> This was reflected in the writings of anthropologist George Carrington in 1871:
>
> We shall never possess a detailed history of the singular and gradual work of extermination - such a tale would be too horrible to read - but we have the opportunity of seeing a similar process in full work in the colony of Queensland, and when we have seen that we shall understand the mystery of Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. (p.144)

In both 1861 and 1871 eyewitness accounts acknowledged the horror of extermination. These accounts made it clear that genocide was the colonisers' agenda and that it was knowingly committed in this country. By the middle of the 19th Century, the circumstances for Aboriginal people throughout Australia looked grim. Morris (1989) observes that, "The colonial process had reduced the Aborigines to a residual minority, but they had not been eliminated. The problem was expected to resolve itself." In other words, a new policy emerged dubbed, 'Smooth the Dying Pillow', that was based on the assumption that what was left of the Aboriginal populace would now die out. So, whilst indiscriminate killings of Aborigines were to continue well into the 1930's, the widespread genocidal activity of early 'settlement' gave way to a policy of containment. This was typified by the Aborigines Protection Act 1909, which established the first Australian 'concentration camps' to provide a place for the doomed race to die off" (p. 98).

The surviving populations of Aboriginal people were then placed on to missions and reserves that were built miles away from cities and major towns. The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 was intricately tied to the ideology of race that deemed Aboriginal people inferior. This form of cultural violence was a systematic assault on the human dignity and self-worth of individuals and communities (Galtung, 1969; Dutta, Sonn & Lykes, 2016; Farmer, 2003; Martin-Baró, 1994; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004). Through these mechanisms and social systems people were also rendered invisible.

Murphy (2000) noted this invisibility and linked it to the notion of terra nullius and nullifying systems, the term she applied to the subject phrase, the "no-one" (p.6). This theoretical concept directly speaks to the experiences of Stolen Generations survivors, who

"are still dealing with the institutions and process that are imposed" (p.6). These processes have rendered Stolen Generations survivors legally invisible. This is the product of coloniality.

Similarly, Behrendt (2003) refers to this invisibility as a result of the erasure of "historical memory" (Farmer, 2004, p.307) and the continued "psychological terra nullius" (p.20). This not only refers to land, but to the nullifying of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultures, traditions and practices, despite the 1992 Mabo case finding "that common law could recognise the survival of Indigenous property rights following the assumption of British sovereignty" (Markus, 2001, p.38). A psychological terra nullius is the result of colonising practices.

Legal mechanisms of administrative violence were used to give justification for child removal. Administrative violence is a key mechanism through which structural inequality is reproduced entirely legally. McCallum in the book *Criminalizing Children: Welfare and the State in Australia* (2018) notes that since colonisation both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children have historically been subject to laws that led to their detention in both welfare and justice systems throughout Australia's states and territories. McCallum traces the history of what he identifies as criminalising 'problem children' in Australia, thus explaining that laws using categories of neglect and offending of children were linked to similar kinds of governing and control in Australia.

The purpose of these institutions was to deal with the discipline of Aboriginal people. This involved the stealing and removal of Aboriginal children in order to impose control over Aboriginal people and communities. McCallum (2018) notes that institutions and encampments have historically played a significant role in contributing to the social problems of today.

Policies and practices of assimilation in New South Wales and Victoria

Assimilationist policies were adopted by Australian state and federal governments until the middle of the 20th century. Initially, the theory of eugenics (McKendrick et al., 2013, p.12) was applied to 'breed' the Aboriginal race out by marrying 'part Aboriginal' women to Europeans. It was expected that the 'full blood' Aboriginal people would rapidly 'die out'. "Eugenic imaginings of blood in the 20th century provided a framework for classifying racial and national affiliations and was, for a time, a preoccupation of Western medical science" (Bond et al., 2014, p.5). White colonisers believed that they "could precisely measure the dilution of race" (p.5) by means of Aboriginal women and white men having children.

Sherene Razack's work 'Gendering Disposability' applies a framework of disposability and focuses on the Indigenous woman's expendability in settler colonialism (Razack, 2016, p. 285). Razack notes that in framing this violence is key to disposability. "The violence that is written on the flesh tells the colonial story of whose bodies have value. The wounds and injuries are pedagogical" (Razack, 2016, p.291). It is also essential to note that the othering of people "is core to creating new settler-states and allows the disappearance of such people into absence or as disposable bodies targeted for being locked up or bought and sold as commodities" (Gilbert, 2020, p.2).

According to McKendrick et al. (2013), after World War II the common global view was that eugenics were responsible for, or authorised, the Holocaust. This led to a change in Australian policy, "It went from a biological solution to the 'Aboriginal problem', to a cultural solution according to which Aboriginal people would cease to exist as a distinct cultural group – they would be made to assimilate" (McKendrick et al., 2013, p.13).

However, the forced assimilation that systematically removed Aboriginal children from their families and culture was still an act of genocide, as defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations Genocide Convention (1948), to which Australia was a signatory.

> Article II. In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (p.1)

The Australian government was aware it was committing genocide with the passing of removal policies and was also aware that they had committed genocide in one form or another since invasion.

Aborigines Protection Acts

> Prior to 1967 when historic amendments were made to the Australian Constitution, the various states and territories had the responsibility for Aboriginal affairs including the issuing of identity cards and the application of other policies and processes dealing with the definition of Aboriginality. (NSW AECG, 2011, p. 6)

Australian States and Territories had control and responsibility for Aboriginal people and enforced oppressive legislation. Each state "framed and enacted suites of legislations and policies that were punitive and restrictive towards Indigenous peoples" (Dudgeon et al., 2010,

p.30). States passed similar legislation in an attempt to "control Indigenous people" (McGrath, 1995, p.9). The practice of segregation and control under the guise of protection was a form of structural violence that shaped Australia's social systems and the mechanisms through which it produced normalisation, marginalisation, exclusion, and exploitation.

New South Wales established the Aboriginal Protection Board in 1883, granting legal power to the Board with the introduction of the Aborigines Protection Act 1909; Victoria introduced the Aborigines Act 1869; South Australia the 1911 Aboriginal Protection Act; the Cape Barren Island Act 1912 in Tasmania; Queensland Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897; The Western Australian Aborigines Act 1905; the Northern Territory Aboriginal Ordinance of 1911 and the Welfare Ordinance 1953 and the Australian Capital Territory Aborigines Welfare Ordinance 1954 (AIATSIS, 2008).

This section sets out the policies of both the New South Wales and Victorian Aboriginal Protection Boards, in order to highlight the extent of control the Boards had over the lives of Aboriginal people living in these states.

Aborigines Protection Act NSW, 1909-1943

Aborigines Protection Boards (APB) were created to oversee the so-called "protection" of Aboriginal people. The Boards oversaw the implementation of the Acts and the removal of Aboriginal children was the main motivation for the APB as reflected in their policies The Act gave the Board unlimited power to control the lives of Aboriginal people which in turn led to what is now known today as the Stolen Generations.

These are some examples of the power that the Board had over Aboriginal people in NSW. These were the terms of the Act that were enforced -

1) The Board may order any Aboriginal into any Reserve at its own discretion.

2) The Board may prevent any Aboriginal person leaving the state of New South Wales.

3) The Board may prevent any non-Aboriginal person from lodging or wandering in company with Aborigines.

4) The Board may cause the child of any Aborigine to be apprenticed to any master, and any child who refuses to be so apprenticed may be removed to home or institution.

5) The Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine.

6) The Board may remove any Aborigine from his employment.

7) The Board may collect the wages of any Aborigine and may hold them in trust.

(Aborigines Protection Act NSW, 1909-1943)

The Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 Victoria

The Aboriginal Protection Act as legislated in 1869 by the State of Victoria, Australia gave extensive powers over the lives of Aboriginal people to the government's Board for the Protection of Aborigines, including regulation of residence, employment and marriage. Powers included -

(I.) For prescribing the place where any Aboriginal or any tribe of Aborigines shall reside.

(II.) For prescribing the terms on which contracts for and on behalf of Aboriginals may be made with Europeans, and upon which certificates may be granted to Aboriginals who may be able and willing to earn a living by their own exertions.

(III.) For apportioning amongst Aboriginals, the earnings of Aboriginals under any

contract, or where Aboriginals are located on a reserve, the net produce of the labour

of such Aboriginals.

(IV.) For the distribution and expenditure of moneys granted by Parliament for the

benefit of Aborigines.

(V.) For the care custody and education of the children of Aborigines.

(VI.) For prescribing the mode of transacting the business of and the duties generally

of the board or any local committee hereinafter mentioned and of the officers

appointed hereunder. (The Aboriginal Protection Act Victoria, 1869, pp.1-2)

The policies enforced control, fear and trauma, with the removal of children being

embedded in the policies. Communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families still

live with the effects of the historical traumas that have been inflicted by these government

policies. These Acts have had many repercussions, including what is now known today as the

Stolen Generations.

Assimilationist policies and the Stolen Generations

Peter Read (1981) coined the phrase 'Stolen Generations' in his paper 'The Stolen

Generations: The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969'. Read

used this phrase to describe the multiple generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities across all states and

territories of Australia as a result of government policies. Read (1981) notes that the majority

of the Stolen Generations were forcibly removed between 1869 and 1969. However, it is now

understood that forceful removals occurred before and after this time period. They occurred

under each State board (Broome, 2006; Read, 1998). Many children were put in children's homes or other institutions run by governments, churches and state welfare organisations, while other children were fostered or adopted by white families. The use of the term 'Stolen Generations' grew in popularity as it explained and brought awareness to these removal policies that stole Aboriginal children. This term was then cemented by the 1997 'Bringing Them Home Report'.

In Victoria, the establishment of the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines under the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 replaced the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of Aborigines (1860 - 1869). In 1886, the Victorian Half-Caste Act was passed. This was an amendment to an Act entitled 'An Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria' (Public Record Office Victoria 2020). This was an extension of the Aboriginal Protection Act 1869, which gave the Board of Protection of Aborigines extensive powers over the lives of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The 1886 Act was used to excuse the removal of Aboriginal children that the Board identified as of mixed descent and who were labelled as "half-castes" (Haebich, 2000). Children were targeted and removed from families, Aboriginal missions and reserves for forced assimilation into Australian white society. The Board for Protection of Aborigines was abolished by the Aborigines Act 1957 and was replaced with the Aborigines Welfare Board.

The New South Wales Board for the Protection of Aborigines has been established in 1883 but under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 it was given extensive and extended power to control the lives of Aboriginal people in New South Wales. This included the power to remove children from Aboriginal parents and the power to dictate and control these children's lives. Specifically, under this policy Aboriginal children were removed from their families so

they could be assimilated. The 1911 amendment to the Aboriginal Protection Act established

Kinchela Boys Home and Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls where

they were abused, neglected and forced to do hard labour, farm work and domestic work in

these institutions. Many were also sent to work as unpaid stockmen, farmhands, servants and

nannies in the homes and homesteads of wealthy New South Wales and Sydney families.

In 1915, the Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915 gave the Board authority to

remove Aboriginal children "without having to establish in court that they were neglected"

(Bringing Home Report, 1997, p.35). "No court hearings were necessary; the manager of an

Aboriginal station, or a policeman on a reserve or in a town might simply order them removed"

(Read, 1981, p.6). The Board was renamed the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1940 by the

amended Aborigines Protection Act 1940, which specified that Aboriginal people should be

assimilated into mainstream white society. This purpose was that Aboriginal culture would

disappear.

> The 1940 Act did not give the new Board the same administrative removal powers.
> To remove a child the Board now had to proceed under the Child Welfare Act 1939
> and establish to the satisfaction of a Children's Court that the child was 'neglected' or
> 'uncontrollable'. Once removed, however, the child became a ward of the Board
> (which was not the same as a ward under the Child Welfare Act) and subject to even
> greater control by the new Board. Two systems of regulation and administration thus
> operated side by side: one for non-Indigenous wards under the control of the Child
> Welfare Department and one for Aboriginal wards under the control of the Board.
> (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Bringing Them Home Report,
> 1997, p.39)

The Aborigines Welfare Board was finally abolished under the Aborigines Act 1969. Even though the Board was abolished, the policies of removal of children still remained.

Haebich (2000) in her book, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800– 2000*, provides an overview of the history of removing Aboriginal children from their families and communities in Australia. Haebich's research includes the beginning of Australia's colonies, states and territories. Her analysis comprises 200 years of white occupation and intervention. Beginning in 1800, Haebich notes the theft of Aboriginal children by colonists through the government's systematic removal, incarceration and assimilation state policies. The author concluded that there was no single Stolen Generation, there were many between 1800 and 2000. It highlighted that the children who were fostered "maintained their legal identity and retained their cultural identity as well" (p.541). Haebich noted that these historical removal policies have had many impacts on survivors and communities. She also acknowledged Aboriginal resistance to these policies and the fight for freedom, rights, culture, families and communities.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) Bringing Them Home: Report (1997) focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were removed as children under race-based national and state legislation. The inquiry also examined the past laws, "policies and practices" (p.224). The Report gathered thousands of hours of interviews from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, government and church representatives, former mission staff, foster carers, adoptive families, doctors and health professionals, police and academics. The Report stated that between one in 10 and as many as one in three Indigenous children were affected by removal policies and taken

from their families and communities between 1910 and the 1970s. This vital Report highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have endured human rights violations carried out by the Australian government. The Report noted "the loss, grief and trauma experience by Aboriginal people as a result of the separation laws" (p.242).

The Report acknowledged that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were stolen had experienced significant abuse whilst in the 'care' of the state. Many children suffered harsh, degrading treatment and were often taught to believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture were inferior to white Australia. The Report was a voice which ended the silence, denial and historical forgetting of mainstream Australia. However, the report did not end the ongoing key mechanisms that use administrative violence to remove children and the institutional racism and discrimination that enforces red tape that stops Stolen Generations survivors from accessing their legal identity. These responses to mechanisms of violence and survival are necessary to understand these continuing impacts upon people's daily lives.

Chapter Three

The Impacts of Violence and Colonisation

The chapter examines literature on the psychological, social, and cultural impacts these practices have had intergenerationally, by looking at the different forms of trauma. This includes a focus on the ongoing effects of colonisation on Indigenous people and how these effects continue to affect their ability to reclaim identity, place, belonging and culture. This literature has been chosen as it helps to frame understanding of the Stolen Generations and the effects and continuing social impacts faced by survivors and their families. It is important that this history is understood as it highlights the impacts of removal that continue to affect Indigenous people today, who are living with imposed or no legal identity.

Colonisation and its impacts

Australia has normalised institutionalised racism and marginalisation, exclusion, and exploitation.

Racial codes are always present in whatever we do and think. They are one of the means by which the white naming of Indigenous angers makes it visible and negative, while white anger remains hidden behind words that are presented as benign and neutral. (Moreton-Robinson, 2020, p. 252)

This normalising has resulted in the structural dispossession and destruction of traditional lifestyles and kinship systems (Haebich, 2000). Rapid cultural change, family and community disruption, racism, discrimination, cultural exclusion, poverty, lack of educational opportunities and poor health - these outcomes have become Australia's shameful remnants of colonisation (Dodson, 1991; Dodson, 1995; McKendrick, 1993; McKendrick et al., 2013).

Colonisation has had many negative consequences. One of the most profound has been the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have experienced removal of children or the displacement of entire families into missions, reserves or other institutions (Dudgeon et al., 2014, p. 12). The impact of colonisation on Indigenous wellbeing has been devastating for Indigenous people and communities.

> For the majority of Indigenous Australians, colonial disruptions to domains of family, spirituality, land, and culture have often produced a profound sense of grief and a deep longing to reconnect with their cultural heritage and ancestry. (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p.281)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia have experienced trauma as a result of colonisation, from the associated violence and loss of culture and land, as well as from subsequent policies such as the forced removal of children. In many Indigenous families and communities, this trauma continues to be passed from generation to generation with devastating effects (Atkinson et al., 2014; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015; Peeters et al., 2014; Wanganeen, 2014).

Dudgeon and Walker (2015) suggest that people who experience trauma are more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviours, develop lifestyle diseases and enter and remain in the criminal justice system. Furthermore:

> High rates of poor physical health, mental health problems, addiction, incarceration, domestic violence, self-harm and suicide in Indigenous communities are directly linked to experiences of trauma. These issues are both results of historical trauma and

causes of new instances of trauma, which together can lead to a vicious cycle in Indigenous communities. (p.4)

Cultural racism is an ongoing effect of colonialism. According to Dudgeon and Walker (2015), one way to understand the link between colonisation and Indigenous mental health is through the concept of cultural racism. "The cumulative effects of a racialised worldview that privileges the dominant racial group over others" (p.281) are suffused throughout the culture via institutionalised structures, ideological beliefs, and personal everyday actions of people and passed on from generation to generation (Jones, 1997, p.472).

"Coloniality of power and knowledge" (Dudgeon & Walker 2015, p.282) is another way to understand how colonisation continues to impact Indigenous people and communities. Psychological wellbeing is the "coloniality of power: a model of colonial domination, inherent in European modernity, that defines social relations and identities" (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p.282), "constitutive of the hierarchies, places, and corresponding social roles" (Quijano, 2000, p.533). This belief has provided the ethnocentric justification for colonisation and oppression of Indigenous people. The colonising plan was seen as "right and just" as it sought to "civilise" and assimilate "primitive societies" (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p.282). Further, a growing number of scholars (Ferdinand, Paradies & Kelaher, 2013; Paradies & Cunningham, 2012) draw on theoretical and empirical studies that link colonisation and Indigenous wellbeing outcomes, carefully detailing how the processes of "institutionalised racism have adversely impacted Indigenous Australians" (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p.281).

Another one of these effects of colonisation is collective forgetting. Haebich's study 'Collective forgetting, Forgetting Indigenous Histories: Cases from the History of Australia's Stolen Generations' (2011), notes how the Australian government and nation still suffer the

effects of collective forgetting. The denial of injustices perpetrated against Indigenous people has a long history in white Australia. This can be seen in the

> earlier government policies that sought to force Aboriginal people to abandon their
>
> past and the more recent pressures to forget those uncomfortable aspects that prevent
>
> them from feeling fully reconciled or to identify unconditionally with the nation.
>
> (Haebich, 2011, p.1044)

This collective forgetting was evident in Australia's public response to the 1997 'Bringing Them Home Report', that reported the systematic removal of generations of Indigenous children from their families. The release of the report exposed emotions of shock, grief, guilt, and angry denial that suggested Australia's long-held secret was finally exposed and provoked passionate and angry debate claiming that this history never occurred.

Similarly other research on this phenomenon by Minarova-Banjac (2018) notes that collective forgetting allows states and citizens "to selectively remember, misremember, and disremember to silence and exclude alternative views and perspectives that counter the official discourse" (p.3). This forgetting and ignorance shows how social processes help build dominant identities and histories that include and exclude, and that normalise unequal treatment to the point that dominant groups fail to recognise the discriminatory conditions of others or understand their own role in producing them. Several historical case studies document how knowledge of child removals emerged into public awareness and controversy and then subsided back into forgetfulness and ignorance, leaving the issues of injustice against the Stolen Generations unresolved. This continued collective forgetting allows structural violence and institutionalised racism to continue to oppress Indigenous people through policies.

This is why community-run Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) are so important for local communities, because they are community-led and culturally informed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders persistently experience a significantly lower standard of health in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians. The factors contributing to this disparity are complex and entrenched in a history of social inequality, disempowerment, poverty, dispossession and discrimination. Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) provide a culturally appropriate alternative to mainstream medical services as a means to address this health disparity and also advocate for Indigenous rights and empowerment. (Baba et al., 2014, p.1)

Intergenerational and Historical Trauma

According to David McCallum presenting at The Community, Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN) conference, "Aboriginal Australians experience trauma that is linked to continuing colonising practices in the present", and this trauma has been reproduced over the last "200 years of colonisation" (McCallum, 2021).

Impacts of colonial dispossession on identity and community connection.

The ongoing effects of colonisation have impacted on Aboriginal wellbeing and have been associated with different forms of emotional trauma. Many scholars have come to understand this as intergenerational trauma. In order to understand the complexity of intergenerational trauma we need to first understand that there are many different forms of trauma that contribute to trauma intergenerationally.

Hirsch (2001) identified psychological trauma as having an intergenerational component in which the unsolved effects of trauma are intergenerational (p.12). The mechanisms of transference have been suggested to take place through recounting history (Hirsch, 2001). According to Judy Atkinson's *Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia* (2002) psychological trauma can arise from many events. Trauma is an event or process which overwhelms the individual, family or community, and the ability to cope in mind, body, soul, spirit (Atkinson, 2002, p. xi). Similarly, other scholars have noted that the term trauma is used to "describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people's ability to cope, leaving them powerless" (Kliegman & St. Geme, 2019, p.20).

Trauma has been defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experience. Unfortunately, this definition doesn't always hold true. 'For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience (McKendrick et al., 2013). Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery* (1997) states that traumatic events need not be experienced directly and can include threats from people we have a relationship with. Traumatic events can be one off or involve a series of distressing experiences over time. The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet (n.d.) notes that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the trauma of colonisation came in many forms:

• conflicts, massacres and dispossession of traditional lands and resources

• introduced diseases and starvation

• undermining of traditional identity, spirituality, language and cultural practices through the establishment of missions and reserves and the government policy of assimilation

• forced removal of children from their kin, country and culture to institutions where they were harmed physically, emotionally and sexually

• destruction of Indigenous forms of governance, leadership and community organisation

• discrimination and racism

• breakdown of healthy patterns of individual, family and community life.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still experience trauma as a result of ongoing racism, violence and disadvantage in Australia (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet n.d.).

Historical trauma can be theorised as an "event or set of events perpetrated on a group of people (including their environment) who share a specific group identity (e.g. nationality, tribal affiliation, ethnicity, religious affiliation) with genocidal or ethnocidal intent (i.e. annihilation or disruption to traditional lifeways, culture, and identity)" (Walters et al., 2011, p.181). Such events include "directs attacks on the community, as in the case of massacres, as well as indirect attacks" (Walters et al., 2011, p.181) such as destroying habitat with farming and mining. "Individually, each event is profoundly traumatic; taken together they constitute a history of sustained cultural disruption and destruction" (p.181) directed at Indigenous communities.

Yehuda and Beirer (2008) state the impact of historic and collective traumatic events on survivors and the offspring of survivors have been documented in some cultures, most

notably among descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors (p.122). This form of trauma was also noted by Bombay et al. (2009) - "the risk associated with historically traumatic events can accumulate across generations" (p.22). It has also been linked to Indigenous people globally including First Nation's people in Canada who were affected by the residential schools' system. This trauma is fundamentally the devastating effects that arise when "genocide, loss of culture, and forcible removal from family and communities are all unresolved and become a sort of 'psychological baggage'. These are continuously being acted out and recreated in contemporary Aboriginal culture" (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewsk, 2004, p3).

In Australia Indigenous researchers have also demonstrated the connections between the historical experiences of colonisation and the forcible removal of children to the disadvantage of today's Indigenous peoples and communities. "Aboriginal families today experience the trauma of the varied and multiple impacts of colonisation as being internalised and re-experienced in the lives of the children of the survivors in new and even more traumatic ways" (Atkinson, 2002, p.86).

Jorden et al.'s study (2009) shows that collective traumatic events can be directed at groups based on political, racial, religious, or cultural beliefs, and can be as "random as single natural disasters or those purposely conducted for an extended period" (Bombay et al., 2009, p.22). The resulting trauma is often conceptualised as collective, in that it "impacts a significate portion of a community, and compounding, as multiple historical traumatic events occurring over generations join in an overarching legacy of assaults" (Walters et al., 2011, p.181). Gilbert highlights the Stolen Generations survivors and describes how stolen bodies "exist within the range of Aboriginal identities" (2019, p.233). Gilbert notes

the impact upon the bodies of those individuals removed and how exploring a new concept of body dysphoria might assist develop a fuller understanding of the current experiences of Aboriginal identity and the creation of a soul wound in those removed. (2019, p.226)

"Indigenous people have experienced many colonising and assimilating strategies that resulted in historical trauma and unresolved grief" (Dennis & Minor, 2019, p.1474). The creation of what Gilbert (2019) identifies as a soul wound can lead to ongoing unresolved trauma. Unresolved trauma is a by-product of historical trauma as it is directly associated with the unresolved grief that accompanies continued trauma (Brave Heart, 2003). This collective memory is said to lead to transgenerational or intergenerational trauma. For Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) historical unresolved grief, "contributes to the current social pathology, originating from the loss of lives, land, and vital aspects of Native culture promulgated by the European conquest of the Americas" (p.60). There are substantial symptoms of unresolved loss and grief and post-traumatic stress (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

> For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people colonisation and subsequent policies have created unresolved trauma which has been passed down from generation to generation. Although this contributes to the social and health disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the influence of unresolved trauma is often overlooked in policy and practice. (Australian Indigenous Health Info Net, n.d.)

Historical unresolved grief results from the historical trauma of genocide, and is grief that has not been expressed, acknowledged and resolved. Like trauma, it can span across generations (Brave Heart & Johnson, 2012). Colonisation has had a profound impact on

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people resulting in unresolved trauma which continues to be passed down through the generations. This is seen in the community through lives marked by poverty, lack of educational opportunity, unemployment, poor health, shorter life expectancy, lack of access to services, racial discrimination and ongoing marginalisation. However, there has been studies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who are "working on healing themselves through the incorporation of traditional practices and aspects of western methodologies in healing programs" (McKendrick et al., 2013, p.2) with the hopes that this healing will be passed down.

Transgenerational trauma is defined by Atkinson (2002) in this way - "the prefix trans- is the Latin meaning across or crossing through, beyond, on the other side. Transgenerational trauma is transmitted across a number of generations" (pp. x-xi) - whereas intergenerational trauma means "between or among, together, or mutually together. Intergenerational trauma is passed down directly from one generation to the next" (p. x). Intergenerational trauma is one form of historical trauma, transmitted across generations. I consider the need to relocate trauma structurally and historically within the Australian context. I have chosen this paper because it reflects on traditional conceptualisations of trauma in order to show how trauma theory can open up discussion on the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Previous research has identified that there are "biological, psychological, and philosophical after-effects of trauma" (Lev-Weisel, 2007, p.76). This thesis will contribute to research on the psychological effects of trauma.

Atkinson et al. in their book *Trauma, transgenerational transfer and effects on community wellbeing* (2010) focus on how the effects of experiencing trauma are transmitted within and across generations, and how whole communities can be affected by a single

experience of trauma by a single member of a community. This chapter also presents notions of trauma and theories of its transgenerational transfer, and an explanation of the impact of lived or transferred trauma in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities (Atkinson et al., 2010, p.135). According to Atkinson et al. "the consequences of colonisation are expressed in trauma"and can be linked to "unresolved childhood trauma" (p.143). Atkinson's writing reflects traditional conceptualisations of trauma. I intend to use her work to show how trauma theory can open up discussion on the intergenerational transmission of trauma. The previous literature focused on the trauma of survivors while my study highlights the intergenerational trauma caused from not having access to identification documents. This study will contribute to research on the psychological effects of trauma as defined by Lev-Weisel (2007, p.76), as well as contributing to knowledge of the health, social, emotional and spiritual effects, and it links with the work of both Dudgeon (2014) and Atkinson (2010) who interrogate removal policies and the contributing effects of colonisation for the following generations.

Pat Dudgeon's work on adopted children from the Stolen Generations (2014) discussed the impact of these past forcible removable practices on Australian Aboriginal peoples, both individually and collectively. Dudgeon states that these experiences have damaged the children who were forcibly removed from their parents, families, their communities and subsequent generations who continue to suffer the impacts. The findings highlighted that it is "imperative that psychologists working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today have a deep understanding of the impact of the traumatic history of the Stolen Generations" (Dudgeon, 2014, p. 5). Australia's shameful removal practices have resulted in intergenerational and unresolved trauma and there remains extreme sensitivity to this topic among Aboriginal people.

Each Aboriginal person has his or her own unique story of how forcible removal policies have affected them and their families.

Dudgeon also highlights the importance of working with Aboriginal people in a culturally safe, respectful and appropriate manner. As Dudgeon (2014) states:

Psychologists should work towards becoming culturally competent when working with Stolen Generation survivors. They must listen to their individual stories as they evolve, rather than asking too many questions as this may appear intrusive. They must develop a trusting relationship and be transparent and authentic about the processes of psychological intervention before trying to address any past traumas. With this information, Stolen Generation survivors will determine with whom they wish to work with on a therapeutic or healing level. Above all, psychologists must understand the traumatic history of forcible removal of children and its collective impacts on Aboriginal people, and in so doing assist in healing the past and orienting Australia's first peoples towards full and productive lives. (p.5)

Dudgeon's work is very important and relevant for my thesis because it highlights the importance of understanding Australia's history when engaging in Aboriginal research.

According to Professor Steve Larkin, Chair of the Healing Foundation, children are coming to the attention of the protection system because of their increased vulnerability:

This level of dysfunction is structural and entrenched, and at its heart is generation upon generation of unresolved trauma, caused by two centuries of mistreatment and dislocation. It's not just the people who were directly stolen or abused or removed from their land and livelihood that continue to suffer the consequences, it's their children and grandchildren as well. (Healing Foundation, 2017a)

Larkin further notes that there has been a failure to implement the right policies and services over the past two decades. While progress has been made, there are still many Stolen Generations members battling with emotional scars because they have not been able to heal. My research takes into consideration how these scars contribute to the passing down of inter-generational trauma.

Indigenous Healing and Wellbeing: Reclaiming Identity

Dudgeon et al. (2010) state:

While there are contestations about the definitions of Indigenous identity, it is generally accepted that an Aboriginal person is one who is a descendant of an Indigenous inhabitant of Australia, who identifies as an Aboriginal person, and who is recognised as Aboriginal by members of the community where they live. Indigenous identity is not about the colour of a person's skin or the percentage of 'blood' they have. Many Aboriginal people have both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, but this does not make them any less Aboriginal. Aboriginality is about descent, culture, upbringing and life experiences. There has been considerable discussion about how Indigenous identity has been constructed and imposed, manipulated and used in the creation of assimilationist policies and other destructive practices such as the removal of so-called 'half-caste' children. (p.34)

These destructive practises have led to the reclaiming of identity in later life for many Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were removed.

The reclaiming of one's identity is linked to self-determination (Gooda, 2011) for Indigenous people globally. Clark (2000) states that "Aboriginal identity needs to be self-determined based on our own constructs, experiences, and feelings" (p.151).

According to a speech by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda (2011):

> Indigenous communities are taking control and defining Indigenous identity on our own terms. Doing so harnesses the power of self-identification; of working with and for community; of shedding the one-dimensional labels that arrived with the colonisers and which continue to emerge in insidious ways today. (Gooda, 2011)

Wright Cardinal (2017) highlights the impacts of loss of identity and the concrete processes for reclaiming identity. In her study she indicates "cultural and spiritual teachings and practices, as well as the knowledge of colonisation and its impacts on Indigenous families, communities, and nations, contribute healing and ability to move forward" (p.7) for Indigenous people in Canada who were adopted and had their legal identity changed. Reclaiming identity, "specifically, cultural practices and spiritual teachings, has been a source of healing and well-being for these adoptees" (p.142). Wright Cardinal's study contributes to "the debate on state sanctioned removal of children and names the very real impacts of loss of identity" and "concrete processes of reclaiming identity" (p.169).

> Wright Cardinal (2017) states that:
>
> reclaiming Indigenous identity is both an act of decolonization and a process of being in relationship with one's nation. That is, to reclaim Indigenous identity, one must question colonial constructs of identity and, through alliance with one's community, learn the teachings from the land and from the knowledge holders. (p.58)

Participants in her study expressed the importance of "spending time on their home territory; learning their lineage and family history; as well as learning their nation's teachings" (pp.159-160). Her findings on "connection to place include: the role of extended family; knowing the place of ones ancestors and the land" (p.159), and belonging to community. Reclaiming Indigenous identity is also an act of "decolonization that can be languaged as a shift from hegemonic discourses to spirit-based discourses that centre on healing and wholeness" (Wright Cardinal, 2017, pp.82-83). Reclaiming identity reinforces "connection to a place" (p.134), and vice versa.

Research by Eller et al. (2016) also "shows that such groups are beginning to reclaim their cultural rights and assert their identity" (p. 356) as Indigenous people, reconnecting with family, community and country. Aboriginal people "still remain among the most marginalized and socially excluded peoples on the globe" (p. 356). "Stark differences exist among Indigenous and non-Indigenous in terms of access to economic, political, and social opportunities" (p.356). Indigenous people are continuing to "reclaim their cultural rights and assert their identity" (p.356), thereby creating a positive social and "emotional wellbeing for Indigenous people" (Sonn et al., 2018, p.89). This thesis builds on the importance of reclaiming cultural rights and identity and extends the work to include the families of survivors and pays attention to culture, place, belonging and healing.

Country/Land

Land is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, both individually and collectively. Concepts of Indigenous land ownership were and are different from European legal systems. Boundaries were fixed and validated by

the Dreaming creation stories. Each individual belonged to certain territories within

the family group and had spiritual connections and obligations to particular country.

Hence land was not owned; one belonged to the land. (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p.26)

We see this with Indigenous authors who "position themselves in the introduction by

locating themselves on a map of Australia, indicating where they came from" (Dudgeon et al.,

2010, p.32) and what nation one belongs to. According to Deborah Bird Rose (1996):

Country is a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is

lived in and lived with. Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun,

but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would

talk about a person; they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about

country, feel sorry for country and long for country. Rather, country is a living entity

with a yesterday, today and tomorrow with a consciousness, and a will toward life.

Because of this richness, country is home and peace: nourishment for body, mind and

spirit; heart's ease. (Rose, 1996, p. 7)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people refer to traditional lands as 'Country', and

Country is central to identity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people relate family to

'Country'" (Hampton & Toombs, 2013, p.8), and acceptance by others often relies on being

able to identify ancestral lands. Identity is inextricably linked to Country (Hampton & Toombs,

2013, pp.8-9). "Demonstrating where one is from, what 'Country' and group/people they

belong to, is critical to any Indigenous person in their self-identity and when introducing

oneself to other Indigenous people" (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p.33).

Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see Country as the central aspect

of identity, the invasion and occupation of land did not simply amount to a physical loss of

territory and sovereignty. Occupation and colonialism impacted far beyond the physical on our people. There was also "disruption or loss of language, beliefs and social structures which form the underlying basis of culture" (Hampton & Toombs, 2013, pp.8-9).

Place identity literature suggests that the continuity of identity related to place has significant consequences for wellbeing and strengthens the bonds between people and places (Main & Sandoval, 2015, p.84). "Connection to place is more than membership to their nation" (Wright Cardinal, 2017, p.159). For many Indigenous Australians spirituality and sense of identity are closely tied to connections to land or country. From an Indigenous psychological perspective, country or land is an area or place where people have a traditional or spiritual association (Dudgeon et al., 2014; Ganesharajah, 2009; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015). Several studies have shown a link between feeling 'connected to Country' and a "positive sense of wellbeing among Aboriginal individuals and communities" (Dudgeon, & Walker, 2015, p.280).

My study goes beyond these texts by looking at the impact of not having access to personal records and how this lack of access to documents affirming legal status impacts Aboriginal people's identities and wellbeing.

Belonging

Belonging is tied to identity. 'Identity relates closely to cultural and social identity', Identity provides a 'sense of belonging to a specific group at family, community or national level' (Hampton & Toombs, 2013, p. 6). Being part of an Aboriginal community is another facet of Aboriginal identity. Other Indigenous people know who you are and what family you belong to (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p.33).

A shared sense of belonging and connectedness to family and community is an important part of self for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is

a pride and confidence in knowing 'who you are' and 'where you come from' and a feeling of acceptance for 'who you are' and 'where you come from'. There is also a pride and connection to the language/s, culture and traditions of family and community awareness of the traditional and contemporary aspects of personal and cultural identity, as well as having knowledge of place within family, community and kinship systems as shared by Elders and community members. (Queensland Government, 2016)

Knowing who you are and where you come from gives a key sense of belonging and connectedness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been removed and for their families as well.

Stuurman's paper 'Aboriginal Identity in Contemporary Society' (2004) is written based on Stuurman's experience as a victim/survivor of the Stolen Generations and as a caseworker for Link-Up Queensland. Stuurman discusses the important role services play in reconnecting individuals to their identity. The paper highlights that Link-Up Queensland Aboriginal Corporation presents its services to those who have been adopted, fostered, institutionalised, removed or separated due to past government policies and practices. He states that in each instance that an individual has been separated from family, it also means a fracturing of their identity. The paper identified and recognised the development of coping strategies for those affected. Stuurman notes that the identity of Aboriginal people is linked to family and land. "The land connection is like a bond to family in a parental capacity; the land is our mother and deserves our respect" (Stuurman, 2004, p.2). Family is a part of identity and

culture, and "separation from family is also separation from cultural belonging" (p.2). Stuurman states that culture is the collective expression of identity. This thesis highlights that identity and connection do not just affect an individual but they also impact culturally and generationally.

Culture

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people share a 'similar colonial history and cultural dislocation' (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p.277). "The history and continuity of Aboriginal culture is unique" (p.277) from living in close connection to their country of birth and adapting well to their environment (Berndt & Berndt, 1992; Broome, 1994; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015). Within an Aboriginal ontology, people have understood the world, earth, waters, flora, fauna, and other human beings to be spiritually interconnected (Dudgeon & Walker 2015, p.277) and "'cultural groups' or nations were based on language groups which occupied clearly-defined Country" (Hampton & Toombs, 2013, p.17).

To understand the "contemporary life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, a historical and cultural background is essential" (Dudgeon et al., 2010, p.3). The history of colonisation is devastating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the "resilience and struggle to claim equality and cultural recognition" (p.3) continues to shape our culture.

> There is no single Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture or group, but numerous groupings, languages, kinships and tribes, as well as ways of living. Furthermore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may currently live in urban, rural or

remote settings, in urbanised, traditional or other lifestyles, and frequently move

between these ways of living. (Dudgeon et al., 2014, p. 25)

Maintaining Aboriginal cultural identity and connections to kinship, and reconnecting

with family, community and country is important. In addition passing on knowledge to the next

generation is an essential part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and for

Indigenous people globally. These "relationships remain an important cultural value" (Berndt

& Berndt, 1992; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015, p.277).

This helps to make sure that Indigenous ways of knowing continue and that the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on cultural identity are celebrated, respected

and acknowledged. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors "remind us of the importance

of recognising existing frameworks of healing in Indigenous communities and how culture and

spirituality in relation to social and emotional wellbeing are ongoing sources of strength"

(Dudgeon et al., 2014, p. 26). "The experience of trauma and loss contribute to the impairment

of Aboriginal culture and mental health wellbeing" (Dudgeon et al., 2014, p.19). Not having

legal recognition of one identity may also be contributed emotional repercussions for those

involved.

Healing

Healing is an important aspect when discussing any form of trauma. There are many

methods of healing trauma, both Indigenous ways of healing and Western methods. The

Indigenous ways of healing incorporate the healing power of deep listening in stillness, also

known as 'Dadirri' (Ungunmerr-Baumann). For Elder and scholar Ungunmerr-Baumann

Dadirri is a form of deep, contemplative listening that is nothing less than a personal spiritual

practice. This type of listening in stillness is widely known all across the Australian continent, in many language groups under many names. "When I experience Dadirri, I am made whole again," Miriam describes. "I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of Dadirri is listening" (Ungunmerr-Baumann as cited in Davis, 2015). In the Wiradjuri language the word for meditation, deep listening, knowing and reflecting is Winhangadhurinya. This is used along with Yindyamarra Winhanganha which, as Dr Uncle Stan Grant, Senior Wiradjuri Elder, notes, is a Wiradjuri phrase meaning, 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in' and is a way of living. It speaks of gentleness and kindness, and it is essentially the ethical guidelines of the Wiradjuri people.

In order to respectfully engage with Aboriginal communities, many community organisations have introduced Yarning Circles where community can gather to discuss issues and stay connected to culture. This method is also reflected in healing undertaken by Canada's Indigenous peoples. The importance of Indigenous ways of healing are highlighted by Elizabeth Hawksworth in her article 'I Inherited My Grandfather's Trauma and His Healing Culture' (2018). Hawksworth says:

> Returning to culture is a duty my grandfather believed Native elders had to their communities. He passed this on to me, along with his trauma. In his final years, my grandfather returned to culture and used storytelling as a way to heal from the trauma he experienced as a child and adult. By choosing to tell his stories to me, we both found a way to heal. Using traditional practices has been shown to have a positive effect on mental health for Native people. Natives celebrating who we are, even in the

face of erasure, has helped bring many of us back to our cultures, readying us to fight

harder for what is ours. It makes sense that activities that are culturally affirming

would build mental and emotional resilience. And while trauma can be passed down

generations, so can healing. 'I am telling our story. I am healing my family's trauma

by being exactly who I am - a Native woman who belongs, and has belonged, all

along.' (Hawksworth, 2018)

Western methods of healing trauma have been long used and enforced on Indigenous

peoples worldwide. This has had both positive and negative repercussions because the western

methods are clinical and do not provide a spiritual holistic approach when presented with

Indigenous traumas. There are now many using a combination of both methods, blending

Indigenous healing practices with Western treatment models. Marsh et al. (2015) suggest

"traditional Aboriginal healing methods and the Western treatment model "Seeking Safety"

could be blended to help Aboriginal peoples heal from intergenerational trauma and substance

use disorders" (Marsh et al., 2015, p.1). Also, the use of the traditional medicine wheel has had

a positive effect on the community by "[re]generating the practices to heal" (Walters et al.,

2011, p.188).

Aboriginal spirituality and healing practices are the key to healing following the

experience of trauma and its intergenerational effects. It has been stated that this lies in the area

of 'reclaiming identity' (Smith, 1999; Waldram, 1997). Many authors have argued that

reclaiming Aboriginal identity means recovering traditional values, beliefs, philosophies,

ideologies, and approaches and adapting them to the needs of today (Gagne, 1998; McCormick,

1995; Duran & Duran, 1995; Proulx, 2000; cited in Marsh et al., 2015, p.4). This reclamation

of "traditional culture can encompass both individual and collective identities and can be sought by way of traditional health methods" (Waldram, 2008, p.4).

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) defined traditional healing as:

> Practices designed to promote mental, physical, and spiritual well-being that are based on beliefs which go back to the time before the spread of Western 'scientific' bio-medicine. When Aboriginal Peoples in Canada talk about traditional healing, they include a wide range of activities, from physical cures using herbal medicines and other remedies, to the promotion of psychological and spiritual well-being using ceremony, counselling and the accumulated wisdom of Elders. (RCAP, 1996, p.348)

Incorporating "Indigenous ways of knowing" (Bunda et al., 2012, p. 942) strengthens the healing process. Healing one's spirit is a vital step in the healing process for trauma. Connecting to ancestors and identity is being whole culturally and spiritually. It is vital that we harness the spirit within and around us.

Summary

This chapter highlights the key knowledge and concepts that frame the historical understanding of the Stolen Generations and the effects and continuing social impacts faced by survivors and their families. The literature chosen helps frame this understanding and the implications of structural and administration violence. It is important that this history and its impacts are understood by highlighting the historical polices of removal that continue to affect Indigenous people today, among whose consequences is that many survivors still live with an

imposed or no legal identity. This chapter also identifies the importance of reclaiming cultural

rights and legal identity in order to start the healing process.

Chapter Four

Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss how I conducted the research and outline the broader framework situated within an effort to enact an Indigenous and decolonial approach. I will provide a brief overview of the critique of research as a colonising pursuit with some focus on the writings by leading psychologists such as Professor Dudgeon and colleagues. This is followed by the story of how I went about conducting the research and the various concepts that I stitched together to ensure that the process in the field enacted Indigenous methodologies.

According to Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009):

Indigenous methodologies are a vigorous and active field of knowledge production involving Indigenous peoples from around the world, including Australia, applying one's own lenses, perspectives and understandings to social research and methodologies. (p.2)

The approach that I developed is broadly speaking in line with a qualitative approach in that it centres the voice of people and assumes that through storytelling people convey meanings and experiences, and make sense of their lifeworlds. The process of storytelling in this study is informed by the Indigenous methodology of yarning (storytelling) and the deep listening developed by Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann (2002), which is referred to as Dadirri - Listening Deeply. In Wiradjuri language, respectful deep listening is called Winhangadhurinya and when using Winhangadhurinya it is culturally important to combine it with Yindyamarra Winhanganha, the wisdom of respectfully knowing. This approach is explained in more detail below in the methods section. It was essential for me as a Wiradjuri woman to use both Winhangadhurinya and Yindyamarra Winhanganha as an ethical approach

when working with community and as part of my methodology. This chapter discusses the importance of working to "decolonise traditional methodologies" (Smith, 1999, p.137) in academic research and why we as Aboriginal researchers must continue to work with cultural protocols and respect in our study. The information for this study came from 14 interviews with Stolen Generations survivors and family members as well as Aboriginal community support workers who live across Victoria and New South Wales. They gave accounts of how family and community members have been impacted by living without a birth certificate and by extension other identity documents and how this has affected and continues to affect their lives. Through this process the research seeks to contribute to the literature on the experiences of the Stolen Generations' second and third generation survivors. In this study, the terms second generation and third generation are fluid because Aboriginal families will raise their younger siblings, nieces, nephews and cousins as their own children and grandchildren. We also raise our great-nieces, great-nephews, extended family cousins and great-grandchildren as part of the family. With this in mind, the research refers to children and grandchildren in this context as well. This chapter additionally discusses the vulnerability, resilience and importance of self-care for Indigenous researchers, and the importance of working with awareness of community and the history of research on Aboriginal people.

Research and Indigenous peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people like all Indigenous people globally are among the most studied people in the world (Smith, 1999; Rigney, 1999; Drawson et al., 2017). Research has been used as a tool to poke, prod, measure and test Indigenous people in the name of collecting data to analyse and compare Indigenous cultures and human nature. It must be

acknowledged that invaders (known as white Australian explorers), medical practitioners, academics and travellers who "observed from a distance" have all played a role in the scientific scrutiny of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, it is the research by such people and their institutions that have been responsible for the extraction, storage, and control over Indigenous knowledges (Rigney, 1999, pp.109). In addition, "it is the acquisition of Indigenous knowledges and the ensuring ownership of that knowledge which are the foundations upon which many academic qualifications and careers have been achieved" (Brady, 1992; Williams & Stewart, 1992 cited in Rigney, 1999, p.109). This is why the world's Indigenous people and communities are apprehensive and cautious towards research and researchers.

When referring to the terms trauma and intergenerational trauma, the Aboriginal community may be uncomfortable with this terms' links to psychology. In Australia, social Darwinism and eugenics were used by psychologist researchers to label Indigenous people as primitive and, as a result warranted a series of research projects that supported the Government and Protection Boards racist and assimilation agendas. The practice of psychology had been part of the "colonising process" (Dudgeon, 2010; Dudgeon & Bray 2016; Dudgeon & Pickett 2000; Rigney 1999) that has "objectified, dehumanised and devalued those from culturally different groups" (Dudgeon, 2010, p.39) in Australia. Furthermore, it has "often been enlisted to enact or justify practices of assimilation and oppression" (p.39). Inappropriate use of information gathering methods and procedures have led to distorted and incorrect messages about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This was acknowledged at the Australian Psychological Society Congress with a formal apology in 2016. The apology was given by the Director of the Australian Psychological Society, Tim Carey, who acknowledged the exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by psychological researchers and

decades of mistreatment through exploitative and disrespectful practices that contributed to the erosion of Indigenous culture. Carey stated that treatments were developed that "both implicitly and explicitly dismissed the importance of culture in understanding and promoting social and emotional wellbeing" (Wahlquist, 2016) and for this Carey stated that the Australian Psychological Society:

> sincerely and formally apologises for its "silence and lack of advocacy" on behalf of Indigenous Australians in the face of policies such as the forced removal of children that led to the Stolen Generations and for "conducting research that has benefited the careers of researchers rather than improved the lives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants" (Australian Psychological Society, 2016).

The apology was an important step in acknowledging the wrongs that were done in the name of 'research' even though today Indigenous psychological research is seen as a potent psychology of resistance as it theorises and resists the "psych-politics of neo-colonial oppression and control, as the forefather of Indigenous psychology, Franz Fanon argued so eloquently and passionately (and as W. E. B. Du Bois argued before him in *The Souls of Black Folk* 1903)" (Dudgeon & Bray, 2016, p.153) by "de-territorializing the disabling 'double consciousness' of the colonised which is central to the restoration of the biophilic force of Indigenous people and their lands" (Dudgeon & Bray, 2016, p.153). It must be noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will always be suspicious when it comes to any form of research due to the historical Western research frames that treated Indigenous people as "objects of pathologising inspection and diagnosis rather than as subjects and agents in their own right while Indigenous science and knowledge systems have been silenced and

marginalised" (Dudgeon & Bray, 2016, p.157) with the intent to promote the Governments and Protection Boards racist and cultural genocidal agendas.

That is not to say that Indigenous people have rejected research and its different methodological practices outright. Unquestionably, some research and methodologies when done correctly have benefitted Indigenous communities.

Indigenous people now want research and its designs to contribute to the terms self-determination and liberation struggles, as defined and controlled by their communities. To do this Indigenous people themselves must analyse and critique epistemologies that are commonplace in higher education. (Rigney, 1999, pp.109-110)

However, because our communities are still marginalised there is always a fear that history will repeat itself, which is why research today must continue to embrace new ways of doing Indigenous research that is accountable and respectful and partakes in "lasting partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and research institutions" (Ewen et al., 2018, p.2). It is important for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous researchers to continue to use methods that are culturally appropriate and framed in ethical engagement and self-determination. Unfortunately, the history of colonisation is still felt today with the "experiences of trauma and loss, present since European invasion, a direct outcome of the disruption to cultural wellbeing. Trauma and loss of this magnitude continue to have intergenerational effects" (Dudgeon, Milroy, & Walker 2010, p.24). We can also see this in the institutional racism and silence in policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today. Indigenous psychologies have been described as an

approach to psychology that emphasises content (i.e. meaning, values, and beliefs) and contexts (i.e. family, social, cultural, and ecological). Importantly, culturally based resources such as content and contexts ought to be explicitly incorporated into psychological research design, to improve the relevance of research findings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. (Hovane et al., 2014, p.513)

My purpose in this study is to support continued discussion on the significance of Indigenous methodologies and to support the view that Indigenous academics have the right to determine what are appropriate methods when working with community, thus undermining racist oppression in research and promoting change to a more holistic, empowering and self-determining outcome in research as a whole.

Indigenous Methodologies

Indigenous research methodologies differ from the western approaches because they flow from a place that is centred around family and community. They flow from our knowledge and are significant and specific for each place. While they are "aligned with several western qualitative approaches, there are distinctions, including a relationship with the person telling the research story" (Lambert, 2011, p.3). In "western models, traditionally, the research project and the data are separated from the researcher, the researcher is an onlooker" (p.3) while in Indigenous models, the researcher is included in the research process. The researcher is both insider and outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This is "a notion of the space between that allows researchers to occupy the position of both insider and outsider rather than insider or outsider" (p.54).

This allows the researcher's "voice and story to be heard and at the heart of the research and why the researcher wants to do that research" (Lambert, 2011, p.3). Indigenous researchers' "agenda intentionally builds community capacity, respecting values of community, research that leads to self-determination, and to a community relationship that is long term" (Lambert, 2011, p.10) so it is important to not just collect the data and never go back. It is important for Indigenous researchers to make sure that the "community owns the research data" (p.10) and that the research "moves the community towards empowerment and that it does not contribute to the marginalisation of people of that community or contribute to stereotypes" (p.10).

I am aware that as an insider and outsider these affect my position in the research, as both enquirer and as subject of the research. This is a common concern faced by Indigenous researchers in qualitative research. By sharing my history, I am able to engage on a community level and not just on a research level. Råheim et al. (2016) note that "the researcher role is highly debated in qualitative research". "The researcher-researched relationship" can be problematic because "the dual role as both insider and outsider, characteristic of qualitative approaches, seemed to lead to power relations and researcher vulnerability" (Råheim et al. 2016, p.1). However, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) points out that many of the issues raised by Indigenous researchers are already addressed in the research literature in relation to both insider and outsider research. Smith notes that "most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene" (p.137). Smith also highlights that "feminist research and other more critical approaches have made the insider methodology much more acceptable in qualitative research" (p.137).

According to Smith:

Indigenous research approaches problematize the insider model in different ways. Because there are multiple ways of both being an insider and an outsider in Indigenous contexts, insider researchers have to think critically about processes, relationships, quality and richness of data and analysis. So too do outsiders, but the difference is that insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes, and so do their families and communities. (p.137).

Martin (2003) has discussed Indigenous-centred methodologies and summarises the shared positioning of these in four theoretical principles:

1. Recognising our worldviews, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival, which serves as a research framework.

2. Honouring Aboriginal social morals as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and in the lands of other Aboriginal peoples.

3. Emphasising the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experience, lives, positions and futures.

4. Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands. (Martin, 2003, p.3)

Indigenous people have always done research that matters to us by incorporating our own knowledge. Indigenous researchers have moved from Indigenous communities into academia, "challenging colonial institutional relations and practices that have constituted Indigenous peoples as objects of research rather than as authorities about their own ways of knowing, being and doing" (Coburn et al., 2013, p.21). Therefore, given the research focus, and the importance of cultural safety alignment and the objective of gathering robust data I

have also used the Indigenous methodology of yarning (storytelling) during the interview process, and I have engaged in the technique of listening deeply as first discussed by Ungunmerr Baumann (2002) who stated that the Dadirri - Listening Deeply technique is important to an ethical process in research. I made a respectful request to acknowledge Dr Miriam Rose appropriately in this study as her writings and teachings have inspired the ethical approaches in my work, and permission was given to me on 12 February 2019 by the Miriam Rose Foundation to use and make reference to the name Dadirri.

I give credit to Miriam Rose Baumann as follows:

Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann is an Elder from the remote community of Nauiyy in Daly River, Northern Territory. Miriam wrote about the Aboriginal qualities and concepts of Dadirri, which comes from the Ngangikurungkurr language which refers to the deep spring within us, also deep inner listening and quiet still awareness. An inner silence, listening to the land, being in rhythm with it. Miriam says that Dadirri is a 'Gift to the Nation' and invites all to come to explore and understand Dadirri further.

This study acknowledges Ungunmerr-Baumann's Dadirri - Listening Deeply as an interview technique of deep listening. Dadirri is a concept of inner, deep listening that is shared by Indigenous groups in Australia. Deep listening advises that as researchers we first need to listen quietly, in order to gain trust and respect. Deep Listening is also central to Aboriginal spirituality. Indigenous scholar Judy Atkinson in her book *Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines* (2002) used Dadirri - Listening Deeply as a research methodology and highlighted the importance of deep listening for healing and positive change. Atkinson referred to Dadirri as an Indigenous philosophy that tells us about proper processes of investigation. Dadirri is "used

to inform ethical behaviour in research and to help ensure Cultural Safety in research design" (p.5).

This study embraces my own cultural Wiradjuri processes and methods. In the Wiradjuri language the word for meditation, deep listening, knowing and reflecting is Winhangadhurinya. For Wiradjuri people this is practiced as the respectful deep listening and is combined with Yindyamarra Winhanganha (Edwards-Groves et al., 2018; Sullivan & Grant, 2016), a Wiradjuri phrase meaning, "the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in" (Grant as cited in Edwards-Groves et al., 2018, p.229) and which is a way of living. Yindyamarra speaks of gentleness, kindnesses, politeness and doing things slowly. Yindyamarra Winhanganha is essentially the ethics of the Wiradjuri people and is a part of our knowing and doing. According to Wiradjuri Elder Dr Uncle Stan Grant Senior this is known simply as the Wiradjuri way. It also ensures the self-determination of the Wiradjuri people on Country. For Wiradjuri people and the Wiradjuri Nation Yindyamarra Winhanganha protocols are to be upheld both on and off Country.

The Indigenous methodology known as yarning or storytelling is a feature of many Indigenous cultures, where oral traditions are used to pass on knowledge and share information. However as emerged in a conversation at an informal Aboriginal postgraduate meeting led by Professor Tracey Bunda on 20th November 2019 at the Moondani Balluk Academic Unit of Victoria University it must be noted that there are insider/outsider tensions around yarning, because not all Aboriginal communities identify yarning as positive, and it can be seen instead as negative gossiping and telling untruths. As a result it is important for me to clarify that when this study refers to yarning it means a respectful and truthful storytelling conversation.

Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) note "yarning is an Indigenous style of conversation and storytelling also known as narrative as a method for gathering information during the interview process" (p.37). Gathering life stories and sharing the experiences of participants have been healing in the sense it has broken down the ongoing silence surrounding the continued effects of colonisation for Aboriginal people in Australia. These stories replace the myth of a post-colonial Australia as well as other colonial narratives. Yarning highlights stories of what Indigenous identity is and how it is maintained from Indigenous perspectives and is thus a powerful reminder of the resilience of our people. In this way it contributes to the decolonisation of research methods as well as to the ever-increasing Indigenous research and informs the rightful approaches to Indigenous ways of knowing research.

As we have seen from many Indigenous scholars such as Atkinson, Ungunmerr-Baumann and Smith it is important for us as Indigenous researchers to take the opportunity to create our own approaches to research and data collection (Wilson, 2008; Smith, 1999) because doing so counters the colonial narratives that devalue Indigenous knowledge and ways of doing and then replaces them with a stronger Indigenous discourse.

By employing my own cultural Wiradjuri processes and methods. I am working to "decolonise traditional methodologies" (Smith 1999, p. 137) throughout this study. I am aware as an Indigenous researcher of the importance of adopting decolonised research methodologies. Wiradjuri and Indigenous methodologies embrace our "Indigenous ways of knowing" (Martin, 2003 cited in Bunda et al., 2012, p. 942). Martin in her 'Ways of Knowing' study (2003) highlights Indigenous ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing by re-describing research methods and also highlights the strength and position of being an Aboriginal person in the research space, Martin acknowledges the Indigenous knowledge systems that shape a

framework for doing Indigenous research with the aim to re-search and re-present the worldviews of our people, as "the basis from which [to] live, learn and survive" (p.205). By incorporating 'knowledge systems' and 'traditional knowledge' into research that involves Indigenous people, researchers are increasingly aware of the importance of adopting decolonised research methodologies. This highlights "the important matter of ethical approaches to research with Aboriginal communities" (Philips & Bunda, 2018, p.89).

Within this broader framework, the research has used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research involves disciplined inquiry that examines people's lives, experiences and behaviours, and the stories and meanings individuals ascribe to them (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; NSECHR 2007-15). It explores the subjective meaning of people's experiences. As Hancock (1998) states:

> Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena and so aims to help us to understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are. (p.2)

Storytelling was used to gather information; Storytelling is a key methodology for Indigenous and other marginalised communities (Smith, 1999) which is why I employed yarning (storytelling) and the interview techniques of deep listening. My research focus is on people's subjective experiences which has required that I rely on different lenses and sources of information aligned with Indigenous research goals and that I note the "insider and outsider positions" (Breen, 2007, p. 164) and tensions. Using the yarning methodology and engaging in the technique of deep listening, Winhangadhurinya, ensures valid and reliable results when working in community. This work and the methods of gathering data can inform both Indigenous and most importantly non-Indigenous researchers of the appropriate way in which

to engage and deliver an effective approach for researching with the Aboriginal community. It is also important for Indigenous researchers to undertake research from our own perspectives. This allows us to support and shape Indigenous knowledge our way through our methodology. The Indigenous approach is the driving force of the qualitative part of this study.

Participants have given their accounts of how family members who were Stolen, fostered out, adopted and institutionalised had their formal birth certificates removed and replaced with new white identity documents and assumed names in order to achieve Australia's assimilation goals whose "purpose was to distance the children from their families and communities" (Bringing Them Home Report 1997, p.22). This study shares their families' accounts and accounts from support workers of the impacts of living without a birth certificate and formal identity documents. It also showcases how family members had their birth certificates removed when fostered out or placed for adoption, resulting in their birth identity being removed and replaced with a white family's identity, and how this has affected their lives.

Entering the field and conducting informal and formal conversations

Over the duration of the project, it was important for me to build relationships with the relevant services and agencies. Prior to commencing my fieldwork, I contacted Aboriginal Community Organisations and Aboriginal support workers, including Link-Up workers and Bringing them Home workers. This was important because the support workers have insights and a greater understanding of the impacts that affect the Stolen Generations.

I went out to agencies that have done a lot of work supporting Stolen Generations. I spoke to people from these different agencies so they could provide me with additional

background information, and from these discussions this study was able to develop some of the key ideas.

I also spoke to Aboriginal community and to possible participants in Victoria and New South Wales to have an informal yarn about the study I was conducting to ensure that Aboriginal community was aware of my research. Working with my own Country's protocol to reach out to people in organisations and in the community, I was able to do network building and information gathering in place along with the more formal data gathering in the form of interviews. Going into the field was necessary because for Aboriginal people it is extremely important to build relationships of trust and to understand what it means to be in place.

I visited and used online archive databases such as the Ballarat Archives Centre to search for information regarding the children's homes and orphanages in Victoria. In addition, over the course of the project, I searched the Public Record Office Victoria database as it holds records from all State, independent privately run and religious children's homes in Victoria. This database was used to look for articles and photos in order to search for any photo evidence of Aboriginal children in care in children's home in Victoria during the 1950s and 1960s. The Koorie Records Unit, which holds the Aboriginal records within the Public Record Office Victoria collection, is also an important resource for people trying to trace their family history.

Additional archive material that I was interested in came from promotional newspaper articles for boys' homes in Victoria with photos of the children in the homes, because I was aware that my father's image as well as that of other boys from the homes had been used to solicit donations for the homes. I was interested in how my father was represented in the boys' home promotional newspaper article. My intention was also to see if there were any other Aboriginal children used in the boys' homes promotions and how they were represented. What

I discovered is that the young boys who were in the homes (also referred to as orphanages) were not described as Aboriginal children, and their Aboriginal identities were erased and excluded from the public narrative. I also noted that the children were not named and only referred to as boys. What I noticed was that the erasure of Aboriginal identity was evident because there was no reference to difference and their Aboriginality was absent from the records.

I also examined Victorian local, state and national newspapers that made reference to Aboriginal history and the promotion of the Harold Blair Aboriginal Children's Holiday Program between the 1950s and 1970s. Through this program children were taken to be adopted into white families in Victoria. In a local newspaper the Ringwood Mail in 1968 was this newspaper article with the headline 'Eastern Suburbs Play Host to Young Aborigines' (p.10, Figure 4) which promoted the hosting of the Harold Blair Aboriginal Children's Holiday Program to local families and gave the profiles of children who were in the program. The white family who received my father stated in their documents to adopt my father that they had read a promotional article in their local paper, the Ringwood Mail, about hosting Aboriginal children under the Harold Blair Aboriginal Children's Holiday Program. They contacted the newspaper to get the contact details of the people who were organising these placements and requested a boy aged 10. When they received my father, they stated they wanted to keep him. My father was never part of the program. The program name was used to hide children that were stolen (Bringing Them Home Report, 1997).

The article below is the article that was cited by the adopting family. The article highlights the use of the Harold Blair Holiday Program as part of the colonial systems (Porra, 1999) that created the mechanisms and employed the local Aboriginal community

organisations to aid in the sourcing of children. Note in the article that the Aborigines Advancement League participated in bringing the Aboriginal children from rural areas to the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Eastern suburbs play host to young Aborigines

WELCOME visitor to Ringwood East over the holidays is 11 year old aboriginal schoolgirl, Rene Campbell.

She comes from La Perouse, Sydney and is one of a family of seven.

Rene was brought to Melbourne by the Harold Blair holiday project and this is her first big trip away from home.

Host family is Mr. and Mrs. B. Buchanan of Carcoola Rd. and Mrs. Buchanan says Rene is a delightful young person and fits in perfectly.

☆

And a special welcome for two other aboriginal children holidaying in the district—Cheryl and Rex Hood from Gippsland.

Cheryl, aged 10, is staying with a family in Pearwood St. and her 13 year old brother Rex is with one in Patterson St. These are but two of the 75 children from Gippsland, Lake Tyers and Orbost brought to Melbourne for a holiday by the Aborigines' Advancement League, Blackburn Branch.

About 90% of the children are stationed with families in the eastern suburbs.

☆

Figure 4. Ringwood East Plays Host (Source: Ringwood Mail Newspaper, 1968)

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Another example comes from the Australian Jewish News that promoted the hosting of children throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Their article read:

> The Harold Blair Aboriginal Children's Project requires host families to care for Aboriginal children ten years of age and over, for a period of five weeks during the Christmas holiday period. About 150 children, from all over Australia, will be visiting Melbourne as part of this scheme, and families desiring to participate should apply to H.B.A.C.P, P.O. Box No. 27, Surrey Hills, Vic. 3127. (1975, p.12)

Moreton-Robinson (2015) identifies whiteness with systematic possession and dispossession. She uses the concept of "possessive logics to denote a mode of rationalization" (p. 12). This notion "focuses on demonstrating how white possession disavows Aboriginal sovereignty through racist techniques, conventions, laws, and knowledges, each shaping and affecting the lives of Aboriginal people" (pp. 20-21). Moreton-Robinson links race, sovereignty, and possession through "themes of property: owning property, being property, and becoming propertyless" (p. 21). This insight into my father's story and the promotion of hosting Aboriginal children is an apt example which highlights how the notion of white possession is linked to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being deemed property and led to the stealing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia.

I was also able to use the Public Record Office Victoria's 'Finding Your Story: A Resource Manual to the Records of the Stolen Generations in Victoria' to understand what resources are available to survivors and families:

> Finding Your Story provides a comprehensive and cohesive resource of government and non-government record and archival collections in Victoria relevant to the Stolen Generations and their families. It seeks to assist in breaking down the barriers that

surround access to records. Finding Your Story is useful and practical because it has

been written and presented in a clear, concise and culturally appropriate manner

achieved by extensive consultation and input from Koorie user groups. (Public Record

Office Victoria, 2005, p.3)

However, when no records exist, this process can be difficult for people.

The State Library of Victoria, the National Library of Australia and the Find & Connect

web resource holds historical resources, photographs, and documents that contain information

that is already published or in the public domain relating to the institutional 'care' of children

in Australia. This includes photographs of Victorian children's homes and orphanages

including the Salvation Army children's homes, the Box Hill Boys' Home, the Bayswater Boys'

Home, the Tally Ho Boys' Training Farm run by Wesley Central Mission and the Ballarat

Orphanage (Ballarat District Orphan Asylum).

Another source I accessed is 'Finding Records' published by the Department of Health

and Human Services (DHHS) Victoria (2019). It is an online resource with over 200 guides

describing the Department's child protection, youth justice, disability services and mental

health services records. It also has

over one million paper-based historical records of former wards of the state, Care

Leavers, Forgotten Australians and Stolen Generations (children, young people and

adults) (that) have been appraised and indexed by the Department of Health and

Human Services. (DHHS 2019)

Audio-visual material and the written reports of Stolen Generations survivors'

testimonies from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

(AIATSIS) data base have also been used. These include news reports, film, video and audio

recordings relating to the 1997 Bringing them Home Report and the written testimonies in the report. I also utilised the 2007 Apology to the Stolen Generations by Kevin Rudd and Tom Calma's response to the Apology on behalf of the Stolen Generations Alliance and the National Sorry Day Committee in order to develop further knowledge to understand the history and implications of past assimilation policies for survivors, families and communities. This also helped to answer my research questions and aid the reliability of my data. It then in turn supported the importance of using Indigenous methodologies.

> Auto-ethnography uses the researcher's personal experience as data to describe, analyse and understand cultural experience. It is a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. (Ellis et al., 2011, p 2)

This is a form of qualitative research in which I am able to use self-reflection and writing to explore my personal experience and connect this autobiographical story to the cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings.

Formal conversations

I conducted life story conversations with 14 participants aged between 18-76 years, living in Victoria and New South Wales (see Table 1). I have also shared my own family's experiences. In this next section I also highlight some of the tensions and challenges that arose for me in conducting the fieldwork and interviews. These are an important consideration for Aboriginal researchers developing approaches that can contribute to self-determination and that are in line with an Indigenous approach.

Table 1. Participants and generational status

Participants	Generations
William	Stolen Generations Survivor
Kate	Stolen Generations Survivor
Leah	Second Generation and Support Worker
Norah	Second Generation and Support Worker
Jane	Third Generation
Emma	Third Generation
Kristen	Second Generation
Renee	Third Generation
Maggie	Fourth Generation and Support Worker
Shay	Second Generation and Support Worker
Mary	Third Generation and Support Worker
Cole	Second Generation and Support Worker
Belinda	Aboriginal Support Worker
Jaz	Fourth Generation and Support Worker

On the 10th of September 2019, I also formally interviewed 3 participants who have worked in Aboriginal community organisations in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne about their experiences working with families who were trying to access their birth certificates.

On 26 September 2019, I travelled to regional Victoria to Ballarat to have conversations with the local Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC). Ballarat was known for having one of the highest rates of Stolen children as the State used the many orphanages in the area to place Aboriginal children in state care. This resulted in children being made wards of the state to justify the institutionalisation of the Stolen children. Non-Indigenous children, now known as the Forgotten Australians, were also placed in these orphanages and suffered

horrific treatment. It was important for me to visit the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC, Figure 5.) to see what services are being provided and are needed for the Stolen Generations survivors and their families in the local community. What I learnt was that BADAC has Stolen Generations workers who support survivors using specialised databases to find family records and who have also worked to try and register births, so far only one birth application for register being successful. It was also acknowledged that there are many intergenerational impacts that have affected families due to the Stolen Generations, and the support services they offer today reflect that.

Figure 5. Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) (Source: BADAC)

While I was in Ballarat, I also visited the Ballarat Archives Centre as it holds a wide range of records relating to the town of Ballarat and its children's homes and orphanages. I read through the local Ballarat newspapers from the 1950s and 1960s as I was interested in articles on the homes in the area.

Many Stolen Generations survivors were displaced from their Country, families and communities and placed in these white controlled homes. Ballarat was one of the sites that Aboriginal children were displaced to. It was important for me to go to these sites in order to see and understand where and how people were displaced and how this has impacted the local community.

During my trip to Ballarat, I spoke to an Elder who is a Stolen Generations survivor. He relayed a story about his life that has been previously published and is publicly available. I was very grateful to hear firsthand his story about his experiences in the homes. When I spoke to this Elder, I learned about the experiences of people in this context and about the different ways and practices that have impacted people who were Stolen.

This story, the story of Uncle Ted Lovett, Gunditjmara/Djabwurrung Elder, appeared online in the 2019 Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll:

In 1955, at age 14, Ted and his non-Aboriginal friend of the same age went to Mildura to go fruit picking, but they were picked up by the police and locked up. The non-Aboriginal boy's parents were notified and told to collect him, however, Ted's mother was not notified. Ted commented: "From Mildura I was sent to the Ballarat Gaol with adult prisoners and then went to Court and was made a State Ward. For the next seven years I was in and out of boys' homes including Turana Boys Home, Bayswater Salvation Army Boys Home, and Langi Kal Kal, Youth Training Centre. The treatment in the Boys' Homes was unjust and inhumane. I was treated cruelly in the homes; no child should have been there. I would escape but was just sent back again." (First Peoples – State Relations, 2019)

His story reflects that he was held by police and then made missing after being placed in the boys' homes. This is another example similar to the institution's absences or erasures of the records, images and names of Aboriginal children in their care. These are examples of administrative violence.

On the 1st of October 2019, I attended the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO, Figure 6.) in Collingwood to interview an Elder who has worked in Linkup Victoria and Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES). The focus of this interview was for the participant to share their experiences working with Stolen Generations families who are living without documentation and searching for their identity. This interview gave 30 years of experiences and insights into the issues of the absence of documentation for survivors and how workers have supported, navigated, and overcome these roadblocks to find the families of Stolen Generations survivors.

Figure 6. The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) (Source: VACCHO)

On 10th October 2019, I then travelled to Griffith, New South Wales and spoke to my family and the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations who I invited to my

aunty and uncle's house in Griffith, New South Wales, (Figure 7.) Their home was used as the

home base for my project when conducting interviews in the area. My aunty and uncle are well

respected Elders in the community and participants felt culturally safe in this space. We were

able to sit around the kitchen table, have a cuppa tea and my aunty's famous scones, and talk

about my study and also talk about engaging with possible participants whose family members

had been affected by the Stolen Generations.

Figure 7. Homebase: the view from the front of my aunty and uncle's home in Griffith,
New South Wales

Figure 8. Aboriginal Medical Service, Griffith, New South Wales

It was also important to engage with these local organisations as they employed support workers that have assisted Stolen Generations survivors and their families. Even though I already had my participants it was still important to me that my intentions were shared to keep the local community informed of my intentions and project.

Figure 9. On my way to Narrandera and Wagga Wagga

Over the next week, I travelled around the Riverina. I went first to Narrandera which is over an hour away from Griffith to talk with my family and my Wiradjuri Elders about the importance of strengthening culture through Wiradjuri language. I also travelled across to Wagga Wagga on the 11th of October to interview an Aboriginal support worker, who highlighted the high rates of Aboriginal children whose birth has not been registered and linked this to the intergenerational impacts of Stolen Generations. I also travelled to Darlington Point to visit Warangesda Mission (Figure 10.) with my Elders, and to Hay to have informal conversation with my family and Aboriginal community support workers about my study.

Figure 10. Warangesda Mission, Darlington Point, New South Wales, Australia

Figure 11. Darlington Point, New South Wales, Australia

Figure 12. Darlington Point, New South Wales, Australia

Figure 13. On my way to Hay, New South Wales

I travelled to Hatfield and Balranald to learn about the upcoming community-healing centre that will be run by a Wiradjuri Elder who I had previously interviewed in Bendigo Victoria in 2018, and I was able to yarn to my family and local community. These were various informal interviews where many of the interviewees also worked in Aboriginal community support roles, and I was able to capture their information on community members they have worked with who were living without documentation.

Figure 14. Balranald, New South Wales, Australia

This approach has allowed me to use information that came from interviews with Stolen Generations survivors and their family members as well as Aboriginal community workers. Specifically, I have conducted interviews and gathered information from Aboriginal people who are Stolen Generations survivors as well as their children and grandchildren, who are referred to in this study as the second and third generations, in order to show the ongoing effects from their parents or grandparents not having access to their legal documentation (birth certificates). In addition there were interviews with Victorian and New South Wales Aboriginal community workers.

In the next section I will discuss the tensions and challenges that I negotiated in the process of story gathering informed by an Indigenous framework. This is followed by details of how I managed and constructed meanings from the stories that I gathered.

Reflections on ethics and my approach

This next section not only looks at ethics it is also looks at story gathering and the tensions that arise. In order to conduct the interviews I had to follow my own community cultural protocols as well as applying for and gaining ethics approval from Victoria University Melbourne, Australia for this study to conduct these interviews as my research involves Aboriginal people who are considered 'vulnerable participants' due to the "historical, social and cultural context" (National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007-15, p.62).

According to Reynolds (2010), ethics are not "fixed and static but are fluid and living" (p.24), "we breathe life into our ethical engagement by continually being open to new learning and teachings from historical contexts and our lived experiences" (p.24). Ethical protocols and principles must be upheld when working with Aboriginal people in research. "Indigenous peoples have inherent rights, including the right to self-determination" (AIATSIS, 2012, p.4). These rights include the rights to full participation in any processes, and the right to control and maintain culture and heritage. These principles are "not only a matter of ethical research practice but of human rights" (p.4). The study recognises and acknowledges the continuing "Indigenous ownership of the traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and intellectual property rights in the materials on which the research is based, and protects the privacy, integrity and wellbeing of participants" (pp.6-7).

Integrity is important personally and is vital for researchers conducting research because in interacting you are recording people's life stories. It is important to be respectful, honest, objective, and trustworthy. As an example the Indigenous Psychologists Association (AIPA) cites the UN Declaration in their code of ethics: "Indigenous psychologists support the

purposes and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and demonstrate a conscious commitment to cultural maintenance for Indigenous people" (Pearlman & Caringi, 2009, p. 153). In significant ways, the de-colonising practice, theory and science of Indigenous psychology is a form of cultural maintenance insofar as Indigenous psychology seeks, broadly speaking, to preserve culturally appropriate healing and strengthen the capacity of people to restore and replenish self-determination at every level of society from child-rearing to land rights. Globally Indigenous psychology was recognised as a discipline with the establishment of the Indigenous psychology task force of Division 32 (Society for Humanistic Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2010. Indigenous Psychology is an intellectual movement across the globe, based on the following factors:

1. A reaction against the colonisation/hegemony of Western psychology.

2. The need for non-Western cultures to solve their local problems through Indigenous practices and applications.

3. The need for a non-Western culture to recognise itself in the constructs and practices of psychology.

4. The need to use Indigenous philosophies and concepts to generate theories of global discourse. (Dudgeon & Bray, 2016, p.154)

The Principles "reflect the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as they are guided by the over-arching principle of the basic right of self-determination" (p.154).

In conducting the interviews, I have followed my own community's cultural protocols given that many of the interviewees are from my nation, Wiradjuri Country, and from Melbourne, Victoria where I live. This has been reflected in my engagement with community

in both New South Wales and Victoria. I have first met with families and participants and Elders and community organisations to have informal conversations to discuss my intentions for the study. This needs to be done first, in order to build trust and relationships with community. I have spent time in community to ensure I have worked with cultural knowledge and respect and flexibility. I have travelled to the Riverina region of New South Wales and have spent one week visiting the surrounding towns including Griffith, Darlington Point, Narrandera, Hay and Wagga Wagga. I have also travelled to Hatfield and Balranald. It was common practice for the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board to remove children from these rural towns and send them to cities such as Melbourne and Sydney for fostering or adoption or to place children into State run or privately run children's homes, institutions and orphanages which were often run by religious and community organisations who were paid by the Australian Government to house the children.

All interviews have been audio-recorded with permission and transcribed to preserve the participants' own words. The transcriptions were then given back to participants for their review and approval. Participants were advised that they could take out any information that they wished to not share and to make any edits they saw fit. Each participant indicated whether they wanted to use their own name or an alias in this study. This whole process was to ensure that participants have full control over their stories. This is reflected in the consent forms that the participants signed to give their approval. Once approval was granted, I began to collect the family life stories of the participants. Interviews were conducted at a time and place that was suggested by each participant who participated. Interviews varied in length, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes. Once completed participants were given an audio copy of their interview story and a written transcription.

This study recognises the importance of ethical and culturally safe conduct in research. That is why it is important that I continue to engage and follow up with updates to the participants as this is a sign of cultural respect and gives my study integrity. It also provides a process of empowerment (Fredricks et al., 2011; Freire, 1970; Labonte, 1996; Wallerstein 2006). Analysis of the interviews has been on the meanings and the connection of the main themes the participants have identified. Analysis has also looked at the underlying themes at an interpretive level.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this level of thematic analysis "goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations and ideologies that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (p. 84). Thematic analysis was the initial process used however, due the use of storytelling the process had to shift to the use of critical narrative analysis. The participants involved in the study have been able to have input into the analysis of their data and by doing so let me, as the researcher, be accountable to the community. Indigenous research methodologies are designed to do the following:

> Ensure that intellectual rights of Indigenous peoples will be observed; Protect
> Indigenous Knowledge from misuse and misinterpretation; Demystify knowledge
> about Indigenous peoples to tell Indigenous stories in our own voices; To give credit
> to the true owners of Indigenous knowledge; To communicate the results of research
> back to the community. (Lambert, 2011, p.12)

One distinction between Western and Indigenous research methods lies in this purpose: research done in collaboration with Indigenous peoples can not only reveal knowledge, but can also decolonise, rebalance power, and provide healing (Brewer et al., 2014; Drawson et al., 2017; Debassige, 2010; Ghys & Gray, 2012; Hall et al., 2015; Smith, 1999; Walker, et al., 2014).

Indigenous people attempt to tell both "stories of pain and stories of healing" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 96) in order to reconcile the traumatic effect of protectionist and assimilationist policies on their lives (Barney & Mackinlay, 2010). It also shows the determination of Indigenous people "to tell the story of the past, present, and transgenerational trauma of the Stolen Children so that the same mistakes will not be made again" (Barney & Mackinlay, 2010, p.1). Stories illustrate the ways trauma continues through generations of Indigenous people in Australia and the ways Indigenous people use storying to help heal traumatic experiences and "the trans-generational trauma of colonization that continues to affect Indigenous people in Australia" (Barney & Mackinlay, 2010, p.2). The government policy of forcibly removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families contributed to the trauma that is still felt by the following generations. These "trauma trails" (Atkinson, 2002), are deeply embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences, histories, memories and life stories. Today we continue to attempt to reconcile the devastating effect of protectionist and assimilationist policies on our lives (Atkinson, 2002; Barney & Mackinlay, 2010; Drawson et al., 2017). This study hopes that the stories shared by families can contribute to an understanding of how Australia's colonial history continues to affect many lives today.

Being mindful

I was aware of the need to be mindful of community needs during my engagement as this is my cultural responsibility. I had to be respectful of rural communities who were in drought and to be mindful of how this can contribute to spiritual distress due to the lack of water in communities at this time and the impact of bush fires in these areas.

Professor Tony Birch (2016) highlights the holistic impacts on Indigenous people and communities that are impacted by climate change. "Indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Impacts are already being experienced through dramatic weather events such as floods and bush fires" (p.92), which is why I waited for the rural communities to be ready to do the interviews and I choose to carry them out in the cooler months after the wet season had begun.

I was also mindful that when I did go back home to NSW, which I do throughout the year, I made sure that my research was not the focus of my visit and that during this time I was present and connected to country, family and community. Many of these times I was attending funerals.

Indigenous Researcher Vulnerability/ Resilience and Self Care

The previous section highlighted that when having Indigenous participants engage in research there is a need for ethics approval as Indigenous people are deemed vulnerable due to the historical colonial oppressions that continue to impact lives today. In this section however, the research explores the challenges associated with the existence of vulnerabilities for Indigenous researchers due to being emotionally involved with the research topic. It is also important to acknowledge that this vulnerability occurs and is exposed during fieldwork and the data gathering process. The research locates this consideration of vulnerability within a broader discussion about Australian and Aboriginal socio-political perspectives on Aboriginal identity.

It must be noted that even when one is positioned as the researcher there is an expectation that the researcher is objective and above emotional involvement in the research

with an immunity to vulnerabilities. However "sensitive research can impact on both the researcher and the researched" (Downey et al., 2007, p. 738). In reference to the research topic, it is important to acknowledge the wounds and ongoing silences that surround Stolen Generations survivors and families who struggle to obtain legal documents of identification, further adding to the pain and frustration. Such is the case for my own family. The research acknowledges the vulnerability of the Aboriginal researcher undertaking research that investigates sensitive Aboriginal matters. At the same time, the researcher recognises that this has allowed for a deeper understanding of the research topic through an interrogation of the continued impacts on the lives of family members too. The wounds remain open and raw for families and communities who desire the identities of their family members to be legally recognised. The absence of such recognition creates a void for Stolen Generations survivors who still suffer with the need to feel whole. This wholeness cannot be fulfilled because of the continuing theft of legal identity through birth certificates/ identity documents, exacerbated by the lack of policies to aid survivors during the process of applying for birth certificates. The research is therefore highlighting the existence of ongoing colonial tactics that have structured and normalised government systems that continued to suppress and dispossess Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. Consequently, the ability to heal is never realised and unresolved historical traumas continue to contribute to the ongoing traumas of intergenerational trauma and intergenerational grief.

The complexity of this research topic raises multiple facets of Aboriginal researcher vulnerability. Specifically, when the topic is a part of everyday community dialogues of cultural identification there are links to dialogues about the importance of belonging and sense of self. This is even more heightened when interacting with non-Indigenous people during

fieldwork as these "intergroup relations" (Sonn, 2004, p.12) have ongoing challenges associated with developing cultural safety for Aboriginal researchers.

Aboriginal researchers are faced with numerous vulnerabilities when doing research, and this includes the risk of being culturally unsafe when doing fieldwork. As Indigenous researchers we ensure that we take careful consideration for safeguarding a holistic and culturally safe research environment in order to minimise potential risks for participants. This approach can at times overshadow the wellbeing of the researcher. It is important to note that when working with vulnerable participants and their families we need to be aware that "feelings of vulnerability may be reflected back to the researcher" (Davison, 2004, p.390).

This vulnerability is also exposed in the roles that community diversity plays within families, communities and organisations structures. According to Henderson et al. (2002):

> Researchers can find themselves between conflicting family groups or perceived to favour some families or organisations over others. The challenge for outsiders to understand and address this, and for insiders to work between them while living in these communities. (p.485)

Henderson et al. (2002) acknowledged that diversity exists not only across groups but within the groups. This is commonly reflected within Aboriginal families and communities where non-Indigenous family members, carers and workers can create cultural safety issues for Indigenous researchers during fieldwork and can affect the initial engagement and expose the researcher to culturally unsafe issues, thereby leaving the researcher feeling vulnerable. Vulnerability is heightened because the interpretive frames of race, ethnicity, class, and gender are the lens through which dominant cultures can be recogised and are embedded in fields of power relations during the fieldwork and data gathering process. Because this process is

mediated by social forces such as politics, as well as the "historical patterns of oppression and colonisation" (Kirkham et al., 2002, p. 229), the position of cultural safety is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. This can lead to finding ourselves in situations in which non-Indigenous family members, carers and workers can undermine or challenge our own cultural safety.

Therefore, we should be mindful to put our own processes in place in order to not be taken off guard. We must also be aware of this in our investigations and be conscious of individual subjectivity within the "shifting constructions and reconstructions of culture" (Kirkham et al., 2002, p. 229) and identity. This research has identified that there is a need to re-frame questions as participants are recruited into the study. Although it is expected that cultural safety is upheld during the research process, it is such responses by non-Indigenous people that have made me realise that doing research, however well intended, can foster feelings of being culturally unsafe, not just for the participants but for the researcher. As Indigenous researchers we can find ourselves exposed to the power of colonised language, which exposes us to being culturally unsafe. The research acknowledges that when engaging with Aboriginal participants, researchers will be also engaging with non-Indigenous people as well and power differentials can be affected.

The research acknowledges the colonial legacy of language and its ongoing colonising power. Indigenous and non-Indigenous responses are differentially engraved by colonial histories. Indigenous people have been displaced and racialised. Non-Indigenous people as members of the dominant group have had their voices privileged. Such realisations "challenge us to consider how we are always operating in multiple contexts, how in essence we are always in the field, countering the material effects of colonisation in everyday life" (Katz, 1994 as

cited in Kirkham et al., 2002, p.230). Paying attention to how cultural meanings and how our "subjectivities are negotiated within contexts of social and historical realities" (Kirkham et al., 2002, p.230) highlights our vulnerability as Indigenous people in and out of the research space.

Indigenous researchers can face some challenging environments. We must be careful about our own vulnerability, in feeling culturally unsafe in our own research. The research has recognised that a power of colonial relations exists within Indigenous research spaces and this can cause vulnerability to both the researcher and participants, and in the in-between spaces where an understanding of the history of colonisation and its social powers are reflected in the contextualisation, and this is problematic when trying to ensure cultural safety for participants and the researcher. An important consideration for this research and for myself as the researcher is how cultural safety is constructed both in research and in practice, as Indigenous researchers tend to do research that is relevant for community (Martin, 2017; Castellano, 2008; Smith, 1999) in order to highlight issues that need attention and most importantly that require an Indigenous and community perspective. The rawness and the unresolved-ness highlighted in the research topic is additionally connected to being an Aboriginal researcher and engaging with Aboriginal research participants from my communities. There is a responsibility for the research to be done the correct way, the need to privilege the voices of participants and highlight the impacts on families.

Resilience and Self-Care

This research uses the definition of resilience proposed by the Healing Foundation:

Resilience is an individual or collective inner strength. Resilience is about

experiencing and identifying adversity and learning how to cope. Developing

supportive relationships, maintaining links to culture and community. (Healing

Foundation, 2018)

There is a resilience in exposing vulnerabilities that are found in the research topic for

the researcher. Resilience is something embodied by Indigenous people globally, and this inner

strength enables us to prosper within the research space. As Indigenous people and as

researchers we face the ongoing struggles of oppression and colonisation in concert with our

communities. This does not go away when you are in the bubble of academia, it is intensified.

This research has continued to explore the importance of resilience for Indigenous researchers

and highlights the "successful adaptation despite risk and adversity" (Johnson & Wiechelt,

2004, p. 568) and achievement in spite of the vulnerabilities associated with the research topic.

It is essential for Indigenous postgraduate and early career researchers to develop skills to

manage issues and vulnerabilities that can impact on the researcher as this then builds and

reinforces resilience in the researcher.

For many Indigenous academics and researchers there are feelings of being

uncomfortable with the notion of being an 'expert' in your field of research, and this is

something that one can struggle with, particularly in academia where the value of a

qualification is the be all and end all to knowledge. However, this is not the case for Indigenous

people as the knowledge from Elders is deemed higher than any academic qualification.

Privileging our voices is an act of resistance thus reinforcing our resilience within the

mainstream research space.

Due to the research topic, it must be taken into account that the researcher is in contact

with individuals and families who have experienced the significant impact of trauma. This can

contribute to what is known as "secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout"

(Figley, 1995; Pearlman & Caringi, 2009; cited in Caringi et al., 2017, p. 186). Self-care is an important step for creating resilience for the researcher. It should also be noted that caring for oneself holistically is an act of decolonisation itself. By taking care of ourselves it assists the mind, body and spirit and reinforces our ability to deal with situations that can leave us vulnerable. Also, ensuring that one has strong ties to family, friends, and community helps with the process of debriefing and finding the cultural, social and emotional support needed to bounce back from obstacles or disappointments, thus building our emotional resilience throughout the research process. This study acknowledges that there is a need for further research in this area.

Analysing stories

This research used standpoint theory, a theory found in some academic disciplines which is used for analysing inter-subjective discourses. This body of work proposes that authority is rooted in individuals' knowledge (their own perspectives) and the power that such authority exerts (Henwood & Pidgeon 1995; Moreton-Robinson 2013; Nakata 2007; Zevallos 2018). As an Aboriginal researcher I have analysed my data from different standpoints as no single standpoint can represent my full understanding of my research. I note that Aboriginal standpoints are distinct and diverse, as a Wiradjuri woman and Aboriginal feminist, my standpoint privileges and embraces my ways of knowing holistically, my culture, spirit, kinship and social realities. I also come from a standpoint of understanding from a lived experience as a child of a Stolen Generations survivor and have insight into the impacts of the absence of birth certificates. By employing different standpoints, I have embraced a decolonising standpoint for this research.

As part of my process and ethical obligations, interview transcripts were given to each participant after transcription. I informed the participants that I would provide the draft thesis chapter to them once completed to review and collaborate on if they wished. The procedures for analysing all the textual data followed the steps of a conventional content analysis approach to the stories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) as well as critical narrative analysis. First, I read the transcripts and re-listened to the recorded interviews of participants' personal family stories. Second, I began to organise the codes into the historical context of the Stolen Generations as well as my earlier research. These broad codes included words such as stolen birth identity, birth certificates, documentation, children's homes, missions, foster care, adoption, loss and grief, supports, family and healing. Thirdly, I began organising the codes into themes. The main themes were used for categorising and analysing data. I reviewed each story to identify the strongest examples to demonstrate each theme and to ensure that the themes were represented across the participants' stories. I also noted similarities in the experiences of the participants as they searched for documentation and the lack of support from government services. In analysing the personal life-stories of family and community and the impacts of the absence of birth certificates today, the aim was to identify the shared impacts from the absence of documents in the narratives of Stolen Generations families and communities across the shared stories. There are three parts to this study - interviews, gathering life-experience stories, and the analysis of these stories. Through the transcript review I organised them into five themes. In the analysis of stories and the transcript review and editing by each participant there were conversations between each participant and myself to discuss the format and content of the stories, as well as how the stories will be shared.

Overall, once data saturation was reached, when further coding was no longer possible, I began to start interpreting the data. Data saturation is also recognised when there is enough information to replicate the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012), and when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained (Guest et al., 2006). Failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted and hampers content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The data analysis section of this thesis and any reference to each participant's story has been reviewed by each participant prior to being printed in my thesis. The study included gifting an audio copy of their story and written transcript to the participants. I invited participants to review my analysis and themes. Collaborating and ensuring that each participant's feedback is taken on board is an indicator of the trustworthiness of my process and interpretation. Additionally, my main focus in the study was on the intergenerational impacts and healing journey of the Stolen Generations survivors and families. Initially I was going to write about families without identity documents and its impacts. Then I realised that I needed to talk with community service providers. However, when asking about the service they provide for the Stolen Generations they all shared their own Stolen Generations family story and experiences. It became apparent that all interviewees had their own healing journey when finding family.

I developed key themes and subthemes that convey the effects of oppression and a summary of how this continues in the lives of people who had no access to identity documents appears in Table 2. The second theme in particular conveys the continuity of trauma because of administrative violence and how it is evident in the stories of subsequent generations.

The themes are:

Theme 1: Being made Nobody. Not having a legal identity is linked to feeling invisible. Stolen birth identity and imposed legal identities continue to deny one's connection to Kinship, Country and by extension one's Aboriginality.

Theme 2: Intergenerational Grief. Also known as intergenerational sorrow this is a recurring theme in this study and is felt today by the children and grandchildren of survivors as well as families and communities.

Theme 3: Fear of History Repeating/ Intergenerational Fear. There is a very real acknowledgment of fear, of Australia's history repeating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Stolen Generation survivors, families and communities have acknowledged that the historical policies still exist. They have been renamed but still have the same agenda of removal.

Theme 4: Belonging/Practices of Recovery and Healing, with subthemes of historical mindfulness, collective healing, finding mob, intergenerational healing, and healing centres. This theme explores the absence of birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors and notes how the intergenerational impacts are understood and how these are addressed in ways that can ameliorate and reunify families.

Table 2. List of Themes and Subthemes in the Findings

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Being made Nobody	Stolen birth identity Birth certificates, Attempting to recover Documentation Administrative genocide
Theme 2: Absence of Birth Certificates and Intergenerational Grief	Navigating administrative violence Removal of Stolen Generations identity documents and intergenerational grief Conscious grief Sorry business and intergenerational grief Acknowledgment of grief Historical unresolved grief
Theme 3: Fear of History Repeating/ Intergenerational Fear	The legacy of colonisation Intergenerational fear of removal
Theme 4: Belonging/Practices of Recovery and Healing	Historical mindfulness Collective healing Finding mob Intergenerational healing Healing centres

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the history of research and the impacts of psychologist researchers on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia by highlighting the methods of social Darwinism and eugenics in psychology research that were used in the justification of the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, thus creating what we know today as the Stolen Generations.

The research method used a qualitative approach, as well as autobiographical storytelling to discuss my family history as a child of a Stolen Generations survivor. During the interview process the research has also used the Indigenous methodology of yarning (storytelling) to gather information. The research also engages in respectful deep listening, Winhangadhurinya, and this chapter has explained why it is culturally important to combine Winhangadhurinya with Yindyamarra Winhanganha, the wisdom of respectfully knowing. Storytelling was used to gather information from Aboriginal people who are second and third

generation survivors and from Aboriginal community support workers. Information came from interviews with 14 participants, with Stolen Generation survivors and family members as well as Aboriginal community support workers who live across Victoria and New South Wales giving accounts of how family members and community members have been impacted by living without a birth certificate and by extension other identity documents and how this has affected and continues to affect their lives.

I have worked to "decolonise traditional methodologies" (Smith, 1999, p.137). I am aware as an Aboriginal researcher of the importance of adopting decolonised research methodologies. By including Indigenous methodologies, those Indigenous ways of knowing (Martin, 2003; Bunda et al., 2012) that incorporate knowledge systems and traditional knowledge in research that involves Indigenous people, researchers are increasingly aware of the importance of adopting decolonised research methodologies. This highlights 'the important matter of ethical approaches to research with Aboriginal communities' (Philips & Bunda, 2018, p.89). It allows participants to be the owners of their knowledge, to be the "subjects rather than objects of research, to decide about our present and future, and to determine our place in the world" (Porsanger, 2004 as cited in Lambert, 2017, p.13).

The research has explored the vulnerability of the Indigenous researcher and the challenges associated with Indigenous researchers being emotionally involved with their research topic. The study also looked at how cultural safety can be undermined, thus exposing one's own vulnerability during fieldwork. The research also highlighted that there is a need for resilience for Indigenous researchers in exposing vulnerabilities and the importance of self-care for Indigenous researchers conducting Indigenous research because caring for oneself holistically is an act of decolonisation.

Chapter Five

Stories of Administrative Violence and Suffering: Absence of Identity Documents

Introduction

The focus of this study is on the importance of Aboriginal members of the Stolen Generations and their families who have experienced issues obtaining their legal documentation. In this chapter Stolen Generations members, their families and Aboriginal support workers have shared their stories about the absence of birth certificates and the impacts that the absence of birth certificates has had on their lives and how it has impacted on identity, culture, belonging and healing.

The absence of birth certificates is part of a broader context of oppression and dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. Birth certificates are part of a western system of monitoring, registering and recording populations in Australia. In relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the absence of birth certificates has been used to deny, control, erase and produce non-persons. This has aided the Australian Government, Aboriginal Protection Boards, Christian organisations and not-for-profit children's homes to steal and traffic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. I explore the production of non-persons and its impacts further in the section below on Being made Nobody.

In this chapter I highlight and discuss the stories that were shared with me. This is important to the overall thesis which is examining questions regarding the absence of birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors and how the problem of intergenerational trauma among Indigenous people is understood, because of the historical conditions, specifically the forced separation of Aboriginal children from their parents and family members, that led to this

trauma. It also examines how do these individuals and family members who were personally affected by these separations identify themselves and how are these problems to be addressed in ways that can ameliorate and reunify families? Birth certificates and similar documents are not straightforward to obtain due to structural mechanisms that are enacted today through the framework of violence. The efforts to restore and link people back to country and family involves getting certificates.

The key aim of this thesis is to highlight the production of non-persons, or persons unable to secure an authentic identity in legal terms. In the literature, the law is almost completely absent from the production of Aboriginal citizenship. There is no law relating to identity, and the law used is ambivalent or ambiguous. This was noted by McCallum in his book *Criminalizing Children: Welfare and the State in Australia* (2018) and Katherine Ellinghaus in 'Absorbing the "Aboriginal problem": Controlling interracial marriage in Australia' (2003). Ellinghaus explores the role of law in family and marriage issues. Most of the functions of institutions dealing with Aboriginal peoples are to do with discipline. Removal of children is a common way of imposing control over Aboriginal peoples, as explored in Chapter Two.

In this chapter, I report on the analysis of the stories shared by Stolen Generation members, their families and Aboriginal support workers who have experienced or witnessed the impacts of the absence of birth certificates on their communities and families. Understanding how families reclaim their legal identities provides an important lens for the understanding of how families continue to need to right the past wrongs of former policies and how by reinforcing their red tape government systems continue to play a role in the lives of individuals, families and Aboriginal support workers today.

This study has also highlighted what is being done at a community level to assist families with finding documents. The shared stories are also to be understood in relation to Aboriginal perspectives about the past, present and future. This study also notes that our past is always present (Bell, 2017). The stories were positioned as "counter-stories" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). It was important that I carefully navigated how I interpreted and represented those stories. This study is intended to honour the voices of participants and their families. The lived stories of families and their stories of healing and reclaiming identity are important to the participants who want their stories to be shared and heard, in order to raise awareness, to help others and remind them that they are not alone, and to effect positive change. They also expressed trust in me that I would share their stories in a culturally safe and respectful way.

Being made Nobody

'Being made Nobody' is not having a legal identity and is linked to feeling invisible. It is also a product of being Stolen and having one's legal birth identity removed and a white imposed legal identity issued. This theme along with its sub-themes emerged from the data from participants reflecting on their experiences of the removal of birth certificates and other documentation that would link them to their birth, heritage, cultural community and all that this entails. These topics arise from the analysis of interview data about the impacts of the removal of birth certificates and how legal identity was influenced by this process. Specifically, the question is what the implications are from not having access to birth certificates and Aboriginal identity documents? Three subthemes were developed from the participants'

stories: stolen birth identity, birth certificates and documentation, and administrative genocide. I discuss each of these topics in turn and provide illustrative excerpts from the interviews.

Stolen Birth Identity: *"...she was really treated a bit like a family heirloom really, as goods and chattels"*

The context of lack of identity documents is that for the Stolen Generations the forced removal policies mean that birth identity and the opportunity to be raised in one's birth culture with the inheritance that this entails can be understood as stolen. Stolen birth identity also occurred when children were removed in other settings such as hospitals and their birth identity and Aboriginality were concealed or erased. As a result, children's births were intentionally not recorded to make it easier to give new identities to children when adopted, fostered or placed in children's homes. The outcome of this was that many children were given imposed non-Aboriginal identities through these adoptions. This is a difficult and painful reality for those adopted and for their families who are trying to affirm their Aboriginal heritage and identity.

Kate, a participant who is in her early 50s, shared her story of being abducted as well as sharing her family's three generational history of being abducted, and talked about the various mechanisms of institutional violence and having their identity removed. Her two stories demonstrate the violent process of being removed against their will through "abduction" or "kidnapping".

> I'm Stolen Gen myself and adopted in Adelaide, I was three weeks old. It really
>
> started with my grandmother being abducted in 1920 from Central Australia. And her
>
> story didn't fit the Stolen Generations policies cause first it's 1920 she's considered

traditional full blood. It was against British law then that she should be taken away

from her family. But she was abducted by an anthropologist, and she was enslaved in

that family for 30 odd years. The first 8 years no one in the government

Commonwealth or State knew she was there.

The same participant gave details of her great-grandfather's efforts over eight years to bring her grandmother home. This excerpt from Kate's story conveys different levels of institutional violence and cultural dispossession and the roles of both state and other actors in these processes of dehumanisation (Dudgeon, 2010) and thingification (Marx, 1962) - of being made 'heirlooms', 'goods', 'chattels'.

My great-grandfather had requested to the government to get his daughter back and

after 8 years, the South Australian government thought we better go and investigate.

They made the decision that she could remain with this family. Just who cares what

the father said basically. Not long after in 1933 the abductor the anthropologist who

stole her passed away. And the South Australian government intervened and said well

you know she doesn't need to go back to her family in actual fact we'll give her to his

sisters, so she was really treated a bit like a family heirloom really, as goods and

chattels. As a result of that, the sisters ended up making decisions to what happened

to my nan's children and one of those was of course my mother. At the age of two

weeks they took her from my grandmother and placed her in Colebrook Home in

South Australia. She was there under the control of the United Aborigines Missions

for the next 26 years of her life. During that time, she gave birth to my older sister,

myself and my younger sister. We were all taken away, we were individually

separated across two states and all adopted out to other non-Aboriginal families. We

found each other when I was nineteen, so the three sisters all came together with our

mother and also with our grandmother.

Another participant, William, in his early 60s shared his story of being Stolen, of being grabbed, kidnapped and 'adopted to a white family without my knowledge'.

I grew up in a small town in NSW with my mum and dad and I am the youngest of

seven. I come from a big family and grew up surrounded by cousins, aunties and

uncles. We were the only Indigenous family in town. My mum passed away and one

day when my dad left for work, my 19-year-old cousin and 14-year-old sister and I

left for school, when two black cars pulled up and grabbed us. I was kidnapped from

my family and sent to Victoria and adopted to a white family without my knowledge.

But these adoptive parents put me in to the care of the State because I would run

away to get back home. I didn't even know I had been legally adopted until an adult.

When I applied for my birth certificate to get my drivers' licence. I found that my

name had been changed upon the adoption and the "adoptive parents" were

identified on my birth certificate as my only parents.

These two powerful excerpts convey disregard, dispossession, the violence of white possessiveness (Moreton-Robinson, 2015) and the logics of elimination in action (Wolfe, 2006). Additionally, for the participants, having birth parents erased from documents is a painful reminder of being Stolen. Through processes of remembering and oral history, the mechanisms of violence are relayed and made visible. This erasure is framed by symbolic violence and the permanence of cultural violence (Galtung 1969; Galtung 1990). Several participants told stories about the role of birth certificates within the process of dispossession, which can be understood as part of the mechanisms of colonial violence and its effects.

Birth Certificates: *"I found that my name had been changed"*

By not having identity documents, there is an underlining pain that remains for many who are trying to recover birth certificates. Without access to this document, the chance to reunify with family is difficult for many. Participants have shared their experiences below of the neglect evident in a system intent on erasing Aboriginal people. This is a difficult situation for people to navigate because people need a birth certificate but at the same time birth certificates are within a system that wanted to make people invisible.

On the lack of identity documents, participant Kate spoke about the impacts of not being recorded formally:

> *I'm frustrated that I haven't really been recorded. I really haven't been recorded how I was born in a formal way. It is still a bit like we adopted her when she was 3 weeks old, but what about the first three weeks of my life. And the kids always say mum you know you weren't even counted as a person under British law of course you are still counted as fauna and flora.*

Attempting to Recover

Kate discussed her personal journey of retracing her family history and shared her difficulties locating birth certificates for three generations, herself, mother and grandmother.

> *Retracing the steps and the history of our family. We had to go and locate birth certificates and death certificates and of course there is no birth certificates for my grandmother, she was born under a tree on the Tod River. My mother, I got access to her birth certificate in South Australia 3 years ago which was a horrendous experience. I took her into Births, Deaths and Marriages in Adelaide and it was just*

such a harrowing experience my mum never seen her birth certificate she didn't know

she had one. And then I had to go and jump through all these hoops with her to get

the paperwork sorted and she finally got a birth certificate, two years ago which I put

in a frame and ended up giving it to her for a present. It didn't have much

information, very similar to my own experience.

Another participant shared how they were recorded:

I found that my name had been changed. And my NSW birth certificate had been

removed and replaced with a Victorian birth certificate. And the adoptive white

"parents" were listed as my birth parents.

Documentation: *"I have looked for documents, but they are not there"*

There are many other documents such as adoption files and freedom of information

files that have been hard to access for Stolen Generations survivors. Many are unable to access

important documents that would aid in family reunion. One participant, Kate, shared the

importance of having support when looking for documentation:

Some people might not know that they have had a different name. I think that's a real

challenge for people, because you think who you are, but you're not.

Kate went on to share her birth certificate story:

But what I did have was a copy of a birth certificate, but it said that I had a different

name. It wasn't a formal birth certificate; it identifies information that I have a

different name. My kids look at it and say oh my god mum there's not much

information on there. It's really simple it has my mum and my dad's name, (my

adopted). It's like they really didn't think, it's an afterthought about how they would

register who I was as a person.

This was reflected in William's story:

When I got my documents, I found out that I have 5 different names and 3 different

birthdays. Which one is me? The papers said I was in only some of the Boys' Homes

and didn't list all the Boys' Home they moved me around to.

Kate said:

How do you apply for a passport without all of the other relevant information?

Another participant Kristen in her late 60's asked:

I have looked for documents for my mum, but they are not there, what do you do?

The same participant talked about her frustration of trying to apply for a Common Seal:

"A Certificate of Aboriginality, with a common seal, can be issued by any

incorporated Aboriginal organisation if satisfied that a person is Aboriginal after

applying the Commonwealth Government definition" (Aboriginal Affairs NSW,

2015, p.11).

I identify as Aboriginal, but my mum was Stolen. I don't know where we are from. I

can't get a Seal cause they asked for her birth certificate, but she doesn't have one.

Many from the Stolen Generations were not formally registered therefore when people

are asked to provide paperwork to support their claims of Aboriginality and family ancestry

these are near impossible for them to produce. This then can lead to feelings of exclusion and

feeling a lack of connection to their community. For people who are unable to find legal

evidence of their connection to their heritage it can be difficult for them to be approved for a

Common Seal. Not being able to produce documents that result in not being formally recognised can bring concerns about their family, identity and culture being legally erased.

Administrative Genocide: *"It denies me, my family and our Nation's existence"*

Being erased from history is not a new phenomenon. In Roman times, this was called *damnatio memoriae*. *Damnatio memoriae* is a Latin term for "condemnation of memory" (Waymer & Heath 2019. p.1), and was a punishment imposed by the Roman Senate to erase all traces of a person existence by sanctioning and removing their documents from official records in Rome. This sanction aimed to remove the person's identity from history as if they had never existed, in order to preserve the honour of the city (Blake, 2013; Machado, 2007; Murray, 2018; Varner, 2004). According to Waymer & Heath (2019) *damnatio memoriae* helped "elites to redefine the "memory" of the Eternal City" (p.1). In the case of Australia this was done to intentionally erase Aboriginal people from Australian history through the non-recording and the erasing of their records. This historical practise has led to a history of the colonial legal system failing to recognise and properly record Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in order to cover up cultural genocide in Australia.

This study has shared that not having a legal identity is linked to feeling invisible. This is not new for Aboriginal people in Australia. As previous chapters have noted the history of eradication and assimilation has led the wider mainstream community to deem us as not 'really Aboriginal or that we have died out' in the last 230 years of colonisation.

The notion of invisibility is felt by many who were Stolen. Many have discussed the feeling of being "nobody", and this no-oneness is felt in both as an emotional and a legal notation, that living without a birth certificate one is deemed and "feels invisible". This invisibility is a

symptom of administrative violence. This violence aided what I term administrative genocide, processes and practices that were used to intentionally wipe out our history and Aboriginal heritage as conveyed by Wolfe (2006) in his argument about the settlers' logics of elimination. This is a strong subject highlighted in this research and it is reflected in the notion of not recording one's birth or recording the births falsely under a white alias - thus promoting the politics of White Australia. The research extends to administrative genocide's ability to wipe out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and identities through the administrative violence used to enact assimilation. The research also includes the notion of what I call administrative assimilation that assigned and promoted new white identities in order to ensure that in the future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be wiped from the records of history, thereby embracing the outdated notion of an historical terra nullius in Australia. The legal fiction of terra nullius continues to be embraced by the administration and archival records in government departments, as relayed by the participants.

William shared:

When I first seen the birth certificate, which should have been an adoption certificate. But it wasn't, it listed two white people, a man born in England and a woman born in Scotland as my birth parents. This document made me a different nationality, it made me white.

The understanding of administrative genocide and administrative assimilation demonstrated through William's story highlighted the government's ability to erase his nationality, family history and legal identity. Having his family name and his birth parents effectively erased from any official records was a huge injustice and was immensely painful. This story also highlights the legal erasure of Aboriginal heritage.

The same participant also stated:

If they take that identity away, you haven't got a family, you haven't got nobody. Who

are you at the end of the day? It denies me, my family and our Nation's existence.

Receiving formal recognition of his legal identity and his birth name would mean he could restore and reverse the erasing of his Aboriginal parents and by extension his Aboriginality in a legal sense. It was important that his heritage and birthplace that linked him to Country and culture was legally recognised for himself and his family. So, he went through the court process to reinstate his original birth certificate to reflect his birth name and parents.

Below he shares his experience:

I was lucky I was supported through the court process by my family. It's hard, you go

through a lot of stuff, and at the end of the day you've got your family, they're the

backbone of you, and it keeps you strong. Having my parents recognised was

important. Cause the government took away who they were, they took away their

parental rights and existence.

This outcome was able to overturn the administrative violence and legally reinstate his parents' existence.

Cole, a participant who worked in a New South Wales Aboriginal Medical Service linkup program as a Bringing Them Home Worker, shared that:

The most heart-breaking thing as a Bringing Them Home Worker and as an

Aboriginal Man, is having to hold family reunions at a cemetery. This has happened

more times that I can count. Most graves are unmarked. And the names many have

been buried under are not what their parents named them.

Administrative violence has lifelong consequences for the Stolen Generations and has even affected how people are formally recorded on their death certificates and headstones. This is upsetting to the family, who cannot change these documents due to a lack of original documentation. This was also a concern for my family when my dad did not have his birth certificate.

Kate expressed her concern of not having an original birth certificate.

I don't have an original birth certificate, only a document that states it's a birth certificate with my adoptive parents on it.

Another issue that Stolen Generations face with documentation is that their Freedom of Information documents and adoption files have been blacked out. Documents that have been blacked out are common for people who have requested their information. 'Blacking out' personal information in documents by government departments is called redacting information, and the removing of information from documents is deemed necessary by organisations, where what is believed to be confidential information is removed from a document before final publication. This was reflected by Kate who requested her adoption file:

It's pretty harrowing, you need to know what or where it was or that, those words in that paragraph, or what that sentence was to assist you to find the next thing that you looking for. It's just frustrating that somebody in government, somebody in places that can wipe names out, I don't know, I kept asking these questions are these names blacked out now? Or were they blacked out back then? So, who is doing that?

Kristen shared a similar story stating: *When I got my documents there were pages completely blacked out, I can't trace my history.* Kristen continued: *My mum's birth certificate*

or lack of, is something I am still trying to work out. I am trying to find my Mob, it makes you feel like you have no culture.

Kristen's daughter, Renee, a third generation participant, shared her journey of trying to find her grandmother's history. She highlights the break in the storyline and the implications of this for personal and cultural identity and belonging. Renee stated: "*We cannot trace our background because she does not exist. But I will keep looking. Not having a culture is something I think about, not belonging to a Mob.*"

A sense of belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is inextricably tied to "connection to family and community, land and sea, culture and identity" and this "has been identified as integral to health and wellbeing from an Aboriginal perspective." (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020, no page number).

Shay an Aboriginal community support worker, gives her insights into the importance of Aboriginal people having access to documents:

Accessing documents should be allowed and people should be able to get that information and especially if they were adopted out or anything like that, it's a person's given right. It's red tape. I think it should be up to the individual to access their documents or not.

The blacking out of documents is a process of erasure, and is another layer and form of violence that is inflicted on individuals and families that causes distress for people searching for links to their past and identity as well as looking to reconnect with and reclaim their ancestral and cultural inheritance. Not knowing one's past and heritage can create a sense of not belonging and can perpetuate a type of invisibility, both legally and culturally.

This legalised invisibility is felt by participant William who shared his story. William noted: *Before I got my birth certificate I didn't exist, the name I was living under was not legally registered, so legally I was no one*. The same participant described the impacts of not having his birth legally registered within the state system at the time: *I was born on Country. This denies not only my identity but also my family's and denies us as Wiradjuri people*. Here William has referred to his sovereignty and how the impacts of administrative violence can make his sovereignty legally invisible and reinforce the notion of terra nullius. According to Langton (2020), Aboriginal sovereignty is the official recognition of Aboriginal people already existing and having cultural and land connection.

Leah, a second-generation participant and an Aboriginal support worker, identified other issues that identification documents (ID) have on community.

> *I am lucky to know who my family is, and unfortunately, I am aware that not everybody can say that. Not having ID affects their feelings of belonging to community and feeds into lateral violence within community. I have witnessed people being questioned about not having ID documents that can prove who they are and that they are Aboriginal.*

Leah has identified an ongoing impact faced by Aboriginal people living without identity documents today and has highlighted this as lateral violence. "Lateral violence occurs when oppressed group members take out their anger and frustrations, due to their experiences of oppression, on members of their own group" (Whyman et al., 2022, p, 290). Whyman et al. (2021) highlight that "the process for obtaining a Confirmation of Aboriginality Certificate can be experienced as laterally violent for some" (p.10). According to Bombay et al. (2014) "lateral violence can occur within oppressed societies and include bullying, gossiping, feuding,

shaming, and blaming other members of one's own social group as well as having a lack of trust toward other group members" (p.2). This stems from ongoing experience of oppression as part of settler colonialism (Bombay et al., 2014). It is rooted in colonisation and "intergenerational trauma and ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination" (Dudgeon et al., 2014, p.401). Clark et al.'s work (2016) explores the effects of lateral violence within Indigenous communities and how it impacts on identity and wellbeing by highlighting four themes, "the predominantly covert and insidious nature of lateral violence; the relationship between racism and lateral violence; challenges to identity as acts of lateral violence; and the destructive effects of lateral violence on wellbeing" (p.43). According to Clark et al. (2016) these four themes can cause psychological distress. Clark et al.'s work intends to increase the awareness of lateral violence and its effects in order to assist in preventing lateral violence within communities. My study has noted that the absence of documents and lateral violence are part of the ongoing legacies of oppression that continue to affect individuals and families today.

Chapter Six

Legacies of Oppression: Absence of Birth Certificates and Intergenerational Grief

Navigating Administrative Violence

In this chapter I focus on the stories that people have shared and I have also identified numerous themes related to navigating the challenges of birth certificates and the mechanisms of administrative violence. For Aboriginal community support workers, navigating administrative violence and supporting people without identity documents can be difficult. Aboriginal community support workers and community engagement officers have also witnessed Stolen Generations survivors being challenged about their ID. They have continually witnessed the reinforcement of government agencies' policies and red tape that contributes to the maintenance of the notion of being no-one. This occurs for instance when trying to register their births. Community support workers have also seen a high number of unregistered births of children today. Shay, an Aboriginal Community Engagement and Support worker, stated:

> *I have been in my field for 7 years, I support Aboriginal families with parting*
>
> *programs and helping them get back on track. I am the only one in New South Wales*
>
> *with this program and we support families whether they are single or not and if they*
>
> *have got to have a child under the age of 5 and a lot of our parents don't register*
>
> *their children so we have to help them with that and their Centrelink payments. And I*
>
> *put them through our play group, parenting play groups and any parenting programs*
>
> *they need.*

Shay helps support community members and their children to engage with their local community and supports people who are trying to navigate government institutions' paperwork. She gives insights into why she believes that registrations are low in her community:

One reason that some parents are not registering their children is because I think they get confused with the paperwork they get from the hospital. That's what I found in my line of work. They are taking their paperwork into Centrelink instead of sending it off to Birth Deaths and Marriages and somewhere along the line it gets lost in Centrelink. Centrelink don't keep the papers or they don't mail them back to the address they are supposed to go or anything like that. That paperwork ends up getting lost. And if it's not explained in the hospital where that paperwork is supposed to go, cause a lot of our people can't read and write so they just automatically think take it to Centrelink. That's what I have come across lately.

Shay speaks of the bureaucratic systems, Centrelink and the Registries of Birth, Death and Marriages, that are unavoidable for Aboriginal people when applying for documentation. Shay suggests that these bureaucratic systems have let down the people they are meant to support. Shay also highlighted how people are not knowledgeable when dealing with these bureaucratic systems and are not supported by workers in these organisations with their paperwork remaining unchecked, not submitted and in most cases missing. This has also contributed to administrative violence and the continued absence of birth certificates is the result. This has also aided the lack of accountability by these institutions.

Hodgetts et al. (2022) discuss the ongoing "issues of injustice in the consumption of the time of low-income community members accessing welfare support" (p. 60) and highlight that there are "considerable psychological and procedural challenges for persons and communities seeking assistance" (p.60) so the relationship people have with government services is problematic and inefficient. Hodgetts et al. (2022) refer to this as a theft of time, and stealing

people's time is a form of oppression that is occurring because these systems fail people, and this is linked to the administrative violence that impacts upon people within these systems.

Furthermore, Shay talks about the magnitude of the issue of the absence of birth certificates and how this can be addressed with community-based information. However, the issue is more complex for members of the Stolen Generation.

We have had my people in the community present without a birth certificate. Not only Stolen Generations but younger mob who have not registered the birth of their children. So I organised a community event and families could come and register births. I have run two open days where people can come, and they were quite successful. The first one was at a high school and we had about 80 families come in and register their births with us and it ended up being around 180 applications for birth certificates. The second one I ran was at a Community Centre and we had 28 families came in and there were 56 applications. This was helpful, and many births were registered. However, Stolen Generations who attended were unable to register their own births due to not having appropriate identity documents. The red tape is unacceptable, as the government are the ones who did this to Stolen Generation survivors but are unable to give them their birth certificates. It is humiliating for the Stolen Generations members and their families. Probably about half of our families are affected by Stolen Generations.

Shay has highlighted that there is a clear ongoing need for birth registration support in her community. She has also shared that for the Stolen Generations it can be humiliating when applying for their birth certificates due to the bureaucratic red tape being demanded. This humiliation and pain has resulted from practices that make people feel like they are 'no-one',

and this was also noted by others in the study, by the Linkup service workers and Bringing Them Home Workers, who have witnessed firsthand the heartbreak of going through the process of linking Stolen Generations survivors to their families.

Shay went on to explain that the need for support is widespread, as she is seeing all ages coming forward to access assistance with a birth certificate application:

The ages are all over, a lot of adults are now coming forward because we have the driver program running, and a lot of adults are needing their birth certificates to be able to apply for these driving programs and people either have had them before and have lost their birth certificates cause they have heaved around so much so they want to reapply cause some can't afford it and some of them are not even registered.

Shay then shared how she navigates the 100-point ID check for registering a birth:

What makes it difficult in getting the 100 points is other identification, because some of them don't have a Medicare card or do not have an ID card so they aren't able to apply before some of them don't have the birth certificates (not registered) and this is what we find challenging when trying to assist with getting a birth certificate.

"Structural violence is considered the most lethal form of violence due to it being more difficult to discern" (Hammad & Tribe, 2020, p. 1805), "because it is embedded with issues of power, by standing and social injustice" (Hammad & Tribe, 2020, p. 1796). This has produced circumstances where people do not have equal access to identification that is required to fulfil their basic needs.

Shay stated that the process was difficult because people cannot apply directly through the Registry of Birth Deaths and Marriages, and her program has to go through the New South Wales Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program:

Once we had the program come out, they take all that paperwork to where they are in

Armidale New South Wales and then they forward it all (the paperwork) through to

Birth Deaths and Marriages. It's a problem because I am still waiting for birth

certificates from 18 months ago. It's a sad story. The families are relieved that the

service is there but it's the waiting for it to come back is the frustrating part. This

program is funded by Birth Deaths and Marriages and they are receiving the money

to have this paperwork done but somewhere along the line it's not deemed a necessity

or it's not put on a rush. I don't understand how Birth Deaths and Marriages are

being paid and not handing the birth certificates over.

Shay gives insight to another issue facing families she supports when applying for their

birth certificate:

The problem is there is no communicate once Birth Deaths and Marriages receive the

paperwork. They are not sending any information back to say if they have received

the paperwork, its complete silence. There is also no other communication from BDM

saying you are missing any info on paperwork. It's a struggle, it's fighting a losing

battle.

The lack of communication and unresponsiveness of Birth Deaths and Marriages can

be viewed as deliberately ignoring people's applications thus reinforcing the notion of

invisibility and being made no one. Shay then shared a story about supporting a new mother

whose paperwork to register the birth of her newborn baby has gone missing. She now has

another obstacle because the hospital refuses to reissue evidence of the child's birth.

I was supporting a family where a single mum who had a baby took all her paperwork

to Centrelink and her paperwork to register her child's birth is now at Centrelink

somewhere. Now I am applying to Centrelink to get this paperwork so she can register the birth and can get her own Medicare card and have her child put on it. I have even rang the hospital to get the paperwork reissued, and I was told they (Base Hospital) only give the documentation once. It's fighting a losing battle.

According to Winter and Leighton (2001) structural violence is an invisible form of violence "that alerts us to the powerful cultural mechanisms" (p. 1) that are created, normalised and maintained "over generations" (p.1). This maintenance of violence over generations is evident in the story with the legal identity of the newborn baby being withheld.

Many people are surprised to learn that not all births of Indigenous children in Australia are registered, and that Indigenous peoples are encountering difficulties in obtaining a birth certificate. There is an expectation that a wealthy and developed nation such as Australia would have systems in place to ensure universal birth registration. In recent years, the problem has been well documented in law journals, but reform has been slow and patchy. (Gerber & Castan, 2009, p.11)

Shay then stated that change is needed to stop what she describes as red tape in government services:

It should be a direct line, for example when we fill out the paperwork, just like when non-Indigenous people fill out the paperwork to get a birth certificate, we should be able to apply straight through to Births Deaths and Marriages instead of going second hand to other programs and it should be automatically funded by the government. And it should be done exactly the same way as non-Indigenous people and then they will get their birth certificate back in 7 days. Why do we have to wait 18 months? It's disgusting.

And we are finding that paperwork keeps going missing. Why are they? We have to

send our paperwork to the Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program

in Armidale, New South Wales, then they send it to Birth Deaths and Marriages and

when we go to ring up they (Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate

Program) have either changed employees and the new staff have no idea about where

the paperwork is. There is no paper trail or no record of it or it's lost in someone

else's email and they don't have access to it. It doesn't matter the   age I am finding

the same issues across the board.

Shay also highlights how not having a birth certificate impacts on Aboriginal children's

everyday life: *Children can't even play sport without their birth certificate.*

 Gerber and Castan's work (2014) also give insights into the difficulties that young

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience because they are unable to obtain a

birth certificate:

Stories range from young people not being able to participate in competitive sports

because they cannot prove their age, thus making them ineligible to play in - for

example - an under 16s' netball team. And youths in remote locations getting into

trouble with the law for unlicensed driving, because without a birth certificate

they cannot get a driver's licence, and without public transport, driving is the

only way of getting around. (Gerber & Castan, 2014, p.11)

These insights highlight people's everyday lived experiences of "social exclusion"

(Gooda, 2011, p.8). This exclusion and being made legally invisible creates significant social

disadvantages for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially the youth living in

remote areas, and is a result of the ongoing structural violence within Australia.

Shay then went on to share another impact on her community, obtaining Aboriginality papers. She highlighted that Aboriginality papers are also impacted by lack of legal identity. She found that even though many people do have their Aboriginality papers if they are from and live in the local area, if people are not known to the community and are not living and from the local area, they are told to go back to their Country to get their Aboriginality papers from their area. However she noted that this can be problematic because if people are not known to the local community and cannot prove their legal identity and their family history, they will not receive their Aboriginality papers. Shay went on to state that "*We shouldn't have to prove we are Aboriginal*".

This can be complicated for community too because of the impacts of the Stolen Generations. According to Birch (2021), there is a complexity to Aboriginal identity and there is also a pain suffered because of a lost connection to identity:

> What we do know, as a result of family testimony and oral histories, is that some members of the Stolen Generations have no original record of their existence. They have access to documentation relating to their new lives as adopted children, but no access to their birth name or home community. Additionally, in some instances original records have been destroyed, ensuring that an Aboriginal person wanting to trace their family faces near impossible odds. (Birch, 2021)

People not having the original record of their existence is an issue for many of the Stolen Generations trying to reconnect with their family and communities. Birch (2021) has highlighted that many of the adopted children are forced to live with an imposed legal identity.

Shay has highlighted the ongoing issues she is facing as an Aboriginal support worker with the process of trying to register births and says of this "*It's a struggle, it's fighting a losing*

battle". She also highlighted the frustrating circumstances for community having to wait for their birth certificates for over 18 months without any answers from Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program and from Birth Deaths and Marriages New South Wales. Shay's frustration was due to not being able to follow up directly on her clients' progress. In her opinion these services expect the Aboriginal community to just keep waiting without knowing if they will ever receive their documentation. Essentially their lives remain on hold. Shay also shed light on the role the local Centrelink and the local Base Hospital play in enforcing what Shay sees as red tape and in contributing to the missing documents for Aboriginal people when it comes to their documentation for registering a birth. There is a clear example of structural violence and administrative violence reflected in these everyday encounters with government welfare systems and in the barriers that Aboriginal people are facing when trying to register their births.

Cole also shared his experience and the toll searching for family members has taken on him as an Aboriginal worker:

> *I was sick and tired of not being able to trace family histories through government databases and archival information. And when I was able to track down someone's family, most of the time I was having to hold family reunions at gravesites.*

Unfortunately, the majority of these reunions are at unmarked graves of both Stolen Generations members and their families. This is due to the legacy of Australia's colonial history where Aboriginal people who were buried were not considered worthy of formal recognition and consequently this led to people being completely ignored or forgotten.

Another participant, Jaz, who worked with Births, Deaths and Marriages, saw firsthand the struggles and emotional pain for the Stolen Generations who were trying to register their births:

I have worked with a lot of Stolen Generation survivors, and I found it difficult to register births due to the department's ID requirements. As an Aboriginal support worker, I am powerless to register Stolen Generation survivors. And I can see how this affects them.

For Jaz as an Aboriginal worker, she felt powerless against the embedded structural violence within the Birth, Deaths, and Marriages government structures and witnessed the systemic barriers Stolen Generations survivors suffered within the system she works for.

This is an apt example of the continuity of colonial oppression seen through the coloniality of power exercising its dominance (Quijano, 2000). The administrative violence and the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) are seen in the context of the Stolen Generations and the reality of people not being able to register their births.

The absence of records that renders people invisible and untraceable in the context of settler colonial systems, histories and ancestries is also felt by some of the first, second and third generations.

William shared this story:

My dad served in the war. My great-grandfather and great- great-grandfather, along with my great-uncle served together in WW1 and WW2 but we can only find records for my great-uncle's service, theirs doesn't exist.

Another example of the practice of non-recognition and invisibility is reflected in what is known as 'The Invisible Warriors' who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have fought for Australia in all wars throughout the last century, from the South African Boer War of 1899 onwards. Often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enlistment and presence have been administratively invisible. The services generally have not identified soldiers as Aboriginal on enlistment records, and the Memorial has not noted a person's Aboriginality in the photo captions in its collection. Aboriginal soldiers were left in South Africa by the Australian government as the Aboriginal soldiers could not return to Australia because of lack of identification (Kerwin, 2010; Kerwin, Hatton, & Van Issum, 2016; Maynard, 2015; Pianegonda, 2014).

According to Kerwin (2014), the then prime minister Edmund Barton wrote to the head of the colonial forces, Lord Kitchener, that 50 bush trackers would travel to South Africa on the ship Euryalus. But there is no record of the trackers' names and they were not on the passenger list. The soldiers were not formally recognised as Aboriginal and were consequently erased from Australia's war history. Kerwin states that because the men were not officially enlisted, at the end of the war they were left to find their own way back to Australia. As a result of the Immigration Restriction Act, which came into effect in 1901, these men had to pay their own way back and get permits to get back into the country (Kerwin, cited in Pianegonda 2014). At that time Aboriginal people, including the police trackers, had to have permits to move around Australia. As Kerwin notes, the trackers were kept out of Australia by legislation that was a precursor to what later became the White Australia Policy (Kerwin, 2010; Kerwin, Hatton, & Van Issum, 2016; Maynard, 2015; Pianegonda, 2014).

There has been a long colonial history of administrative violence in Australia rooted in logics of elimination and white possessiveness. Moreton-Robinson's (2015) concept of white possession, the possessive logics (p.12), can be linked to child removals and stolen birth identity, thus highlighting that these practices of violence are related to the logics of possessiveness with people being deemed objects and property.

> Knowledge and power are produced in and through these concepts in relation to possession. You cannot dominate without seeking to possess the dominated. You cannot exclude unless you assume you already own. Classification therefore ascribes value and identification, which manifest in racial markers like blood quantum and skin colour. Thus, white possession is a discursive predisposition servicing the conditions, practices, implications, and racialized discourses that are embedded within and central to white first world patriarchal nation-states. (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p.24)

This chapter illustrates the various mechanisms of administrative violence that have led to administrative genocide in Australia. These are only some examples of their impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within white systems and on the affirmation of identity within and by Aboriginal communities.

The lived experience of no-oneness is brought forward to one's consciousness, each time one's identification is needed or one's lack of legal identity is questioned. Services can re-traumatise individuals through institutional practices such as questioning that make already vulnerable individuals feel forced to explain and justify why they do not have ID. This feeling can also be experienced by children and grandchildren of survivors. Participants in the study have highlighted that even though past policies have used administrative violence to erase

Aboriginal people's legal identity in Australia and in some cases even hid peoples birth identity through the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from families in order to fulfil Australia's policies of assimilation, it had however failed to erase Aboriginality completely. The participants have continued to change the status quo. The participants continue to embrace their birth identity and continue to make their own connections to community, despite government organisations denying their legal identity.

Family is the fundamental part of one's identity and this is reflected in the stories of the Aboriginal families and Aboriginal workers who participated in this study. Due to colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity has been intentionally disrupted, but people have been able to reclaim a sense of identity even though it might not be reflected legally.

The history of colonial legal systems failing to and wilfully not recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, directly impacts people's ability to participate in civic society. The reality of this form of exclusion further marginalises people and communities. The creating of nullifying systems within government structures has promoted the fiction of *terra nullius*. Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Stolen Generations were not counted in the Australian census until 1967, this directly influenced births not being registered before this time.

Removal of Stolen Generations Identity Documents and Intergenerational Grief

There are many intergenerational impacts that have resulted from the Stolen Generations, and these include the issue of some people still not having access to birth certificates today. This chapter highlights how intergenerational trauma is linked to people not

being able to access legal documents and having issues getting birth certificates today, and the pain this has caused Stolen Generations survivors and their families.

The intergenerational effects of the absence of identity documents have led to the theme of intergenerational grief, and this comes from conversations with interviewees about their families' life stories in the absence of documents, family histories, grief, and loss. From these conversations subthemes emerged in this study of conscious grief, sorry business, historical unresolved grief, and acknowledgment of grief. I discuss each of these topics with quotes from the interviews.

This study's discussions of grief from colonisation contributes to the insight on cultural genocide in Australia. The Aboriginal grief and loss that comes from colonisation has resulted in historical trauma. Historical trauma is defined by Brave Heart and the Takini Institute as the "collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide" (1998, p.1). Grief was touched on in Theme 1 and in the literature review. However, this theme discusses the data that highlights the notion of grief being passed down intergenerationally in more detail. Intergenerational grief is a recurring theme in this study and is felt today by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, as well as the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Stolen Generations survivors.

Conscious Grief: *"sadness of what was done to my family will never go away"*

There are intergenerational impacts from the removal of family members, and this is compounded by the absence of identity documents, that have made people legally non-

persons. This absence of documentation has also had implications in terms of people trying to connect to family, community and to Country.

Grief is an emotion that we all face at some point in our lives. Sorrow comes in many different forms. While most people associate grief with death, people will also grieve different types of "losses" - "the loss of a relationship, a job, the loss of a home or other possession, as well as the absence of certain elements that we think are necessary to make us "whole", can also cause grief " (Blair, 2017).

For some, without this wholeness grief is never fully healed. It is important to note that grief is different for every person and a "time limit cannot be put on it" (Thomson, 2011, p.1). This was revealed by Leah, a second-generation interviewee's response to her feelings of her father's removal:

> *Growing up listening to the stories of my father's removal, I felt a sense of pain, that I still feel to this day. My children also feel that pain of their grandfather's removal.*

Likewise Emma, a grandchild and third generation participant shares: "*The pain and sadness of what was done to my family will never go away.*" A conscious deep sorrow/grief is carried on some level by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Indigenous peoples globally that have experienced colonisation and forced assimilation (Short, 2003; MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015; Wolfe, 2006). There is an acknowledgement of heartache and pain in knowing our colonial history and living with the impacts of dispossession. Maggie who is in her late 60's tells of her sadness at her lost family history when her great-grandmother was taken:

> *Great-grandmother was "found" walking in the bush in Mildura as a young girl and she was taken to Cummeragunja Station. There are no documentation on her only that*

she was in Cummeragunja. She had no birth certificate, nothing. She married a Yorta

Yorta man; we say we are Yorta Yorta because that is all we know. But if she was

"found" in Mildura she would be from that area. There are many different clans

there, we just don't know, we can't trace it.

Not being able to trace her great-grandmother's history and country is a reminder of the

impacts of early dispossession and colonisation in Australia. Kate too shared how the process

of finding her mother was traumatic:

Looking back at the process of when I first had access to the information. Really, I

talk about it now as it was, like I understand it. But I do now. But back in the day, you

know, first meeting my mum at the age of 19 and in the next 11 years really, the next

11 years is all really a bit of a blur for me, you know it was a very traumatic and

horrible experience of my life.

The same participant noted how it was important for her family to understand her

traumatic experience and the family history of being Stolen. "*My kids definitely know our story*

and I think that's important." The grief of being Stolen can be passed down through the

generations and there is a sadness that is felt when one's family's ancestral history has been

intentionally hidden or erased through the policies and practices of colonisation and

assimilation. This acknowledgement of grief is ongoing for families, and this is a reality for the

families of many Stolen Generations survivors today.

The same participant went on to share:

I thought do I just go and get my name legally changed by deed poll or something. Or

do I just go down the process of looking for an original (Aboriginal) birth certificate.

The three of my kids have all expressed that I should get my other birth certificate. I

don't know if I had one. My kids definitely know our story and I think that's important

but if I had not been doing the honours last year and wrote my book, it might have

been a completely different situation where I would of said actually that's exactly

what I wanted to do. But my kids and all my family including those in Alice Springs

know, know our story. I feel for families who don't, who are not in the same situation

as me, who has written a book and researched, you know what I mean.

Sorry Business and Intergenerational Grief

The grief experienced from loss affects the whole person, including one's mind, body and spirit, as well as the relationships one has with family and community. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people refer to the death of a person and grief as 'sorry business'. It is important to this study to understand grief within the social, cultural and historical context in which it takes place.

Intergenerational grief has occurred because our sorry business was never reconciled when it comes to our history of colonisation. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this grief can be held on to and passed down generationally. Intergenerational grief reminds us that there is unfinished business for us and makes us aware of the importance of cherishing our ancestors, our families, our communities and our collective history.

Grief can also occur because of the long-term effects of Australia's assimilation agenda that has resulted in the Stolen Generations, as well as the grief from cultural separation from land, language and traditional knowledge for many communities across Australia. According to Thomson (2011), if this grief stays unresolved, it may be passed on through the generations of a family.

European colonisation of Indigenous nations has severely impacted the health of Indigenous peoples across the globe. Much of the burden of ill health suffered by Indigenous people today can be traced directly back to colonisation. (Rix et al., 2018, p.257)

This has led to "epidemic proportions of chronic disease, higher levels of morbidity and mortality, and poorer health outcomes compared to non-Indigenous populations" (p.257), which is why we as Aboriginal people have experienced higher rates of loved ones passing away at a relatively young age. This is evident in my own family; it is rare that family make it past 50 years old. During my PhD I have lost many people of all ages from my immediate family members, as well as extended family members, community members and mentors who have supported me through this study. I have not had one year where multiple people have not died. This is my reality as an Aboriginal woman, and I am aware it is a reality for all Indigenous peoples globally. Sorry business has been a part of my PhD journey and I have had to openly share in this.

When attending funerals, there were experiences arising from the removal of legal identity. There have been cases of a person being buried under a different name, not their birth name. My family and community in going to attend the wake after a funeral have also experienced being turned away from venues in rural areas for not having a formal photo ID. The venue's conditions of entry are a photographic driver's licence or a proof of age card issued by a Government department which is scanned upon entry. This is very upsetting and can bring up trauma and grief for the individual and families related to processes of erasure and removal.

Acknowledgment of Grief: *"never been ashamed of the pain and grief"*

There is an acknowledgment of grief for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This acknowledgment can foster a sense of community connection and understanding, because it is a shared history that has become a part of our identity. The data from this study has highlighted that each participant has a connection to this shared history as all the participants were either directly or indirectly affected by removal policies, and this has led to many choosing careers that support community. Future generations need to know and understand our stories, including our stories of loss and how we have dealt with them (Wingard & Lester, 2001).

As Shay shared: *Well, see most of us have all been through some sort of trauma from that (Stolen Generations) or we have somebody we know of that have been through it or we have had relatives that have been through it*. When discussing the impacts and grief in the community, Shay, who also has experience in counselling, stated:

> *It's trauma and there's triggers that bring stuff up and it doesn't matter how old you are, when you are a part of that system there is always triggers. And the government should be subsidising and covering the cost of our people wanting to have counselling.*

Shay also acknowledged the impacts of trauma in her community: *We have suicide prevention happening here as well, because a lot of our people are committing suicide, because they just can't handle what is happening*. When asked if some of what's happening could be due to people not feeling connected to family and belonging to community Shay replied:

> *Yes, community and family especially being so far apart from each other and then getting brought to cities when they should be in like Brewarrina and that, like*

especially if they have been put into foster care and they are being brought into cities

and being fostered out to long distance relatives instead of being in their own town, in

their own country. They grieve.

According to Dudgeon et al. (2016), when it comes to historical trauma, suicide

prevention and grief and healing,

the first step in re-establishing strong healthy communities is to acknowledge and

understand the devastating and enduring impact of the colonial legacy on Indigenous

people's contemporary lives. It also requires an understanding of the various

pathways necessary for healing from historical trauma, using both cultural and

contemporary understandings and processes to support social and emotional

wellbeing. This includes dealing with loss, grief and disconnection, trauma and

helplessness, powerlessness and lack of control. It requires self-determination and

community governance, reconnection and community life, restoration and community

resilience. (Dudgeon et al., 2016, p.18)

Leah, a participant in her 30s, talked about a different effect when feeling connected to

her family history and having an understanding of the effects of her father being Stolen,

My father has never been ashamed of the pain and grief that he experienced when he

was Stolen. He used this as a strength to educate our family and others. This was a

part of his healing and our family's.

The Aboriginal community support workers in this study have embraced strength-based

approaches that value Aboriginal knowledges and ways of being in promoting healing,

resilience and wellness. The importance of connecting to culture, caring for country, and

nurturing families, kinship and community has been vital to the social and emotional health of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Since invasion, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander people, and Indigenous peoples globally,

> have been forced to give up language, culture and understandings through generational impositions that separated individuals, families, and whole nations from their original knowledge systems and social structures. These traumatic events have disintegrated family and community relationships, structures, and traditional lifestyles. The profound impacts of colonisation have been further compounded by the enduring history of successive failed government policies and practices. (Durie, 2004; King et al., 2009; cited in Rix et al., 2018, p. 255-256)

My family and I feel a sense of grief because our primary language is English. I recall my grandfather telling me when I was young to never speak our language in front of anyone who is not family "cause it's bad luck". When I became older, I realised we were told not to speak the language as a form of protection. My grandfather believed he was protecting us as he told the story about him and other children being punished when speaking our language on Cummeragunja Mission. They had their mouths washed out with soap and a scrubbing brush. My grandfather was a fluent Wiradjuri speaker and was able to speak the languages of the surrounding Nation languages including Ngiyampaa, as well as what was called back then Pidgin English. As both my grandparents have passed away, my family and I are very grateful that we have my grandfather's, grandmother's and great-aunties' voices recorded singing songs

in our language, and this is important for us to pass down to our future generations.
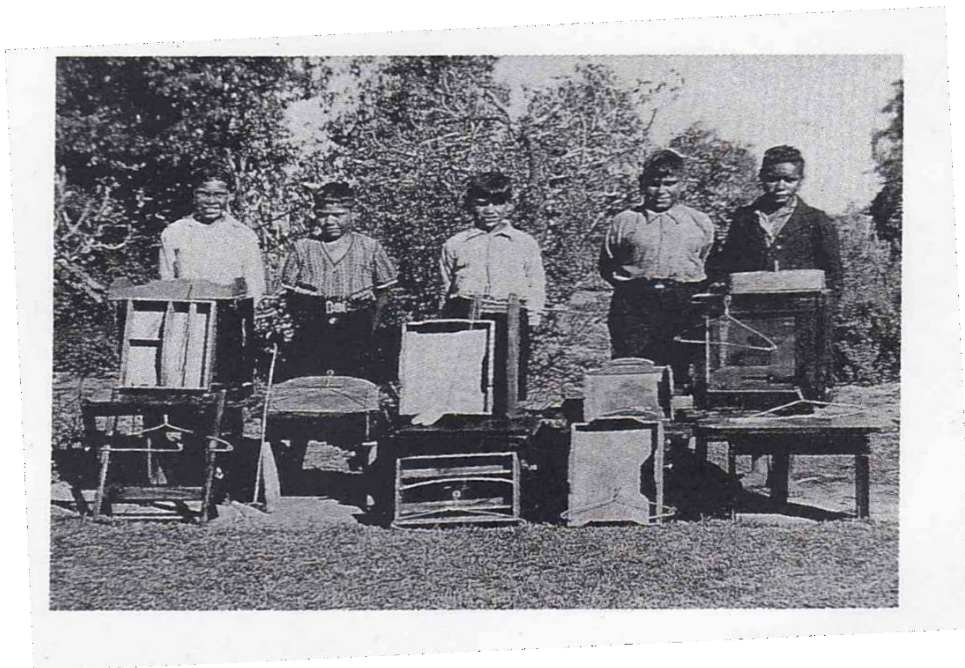

Figure 15. School Carpentry class – Cummeragunja Mission Station, New South Wales

L-R: Ken Briggs, Laurie Atkinson, Micky Morgan, Frankie Joyce, Thomas (Tommy) Lyons my grandfather, (Source: AIATSIS Collections Jackomos Collection n.d.).

Figure 16. School sewing class – Cummeragunja Mission Station, New South Wales

Front row, far right, second from end, Lucy Lyons, my grandfather's sister and my great

aunty, (Source: Museum Victoria n.d.).

The time of the photos in Figure 15 and Figure 16 is between 1935 and 1938. A year later in 1939 the walk off at Cummeragunja Station happened. They were protesting against the poor living conditions on the mission and poor treatment by the station manager (Attwood, 2021). My grandfather referred to the station manager as a bad man who did bad things and treated everyone poorly.

The removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and "their detention in government-controlled and Christian church-run residential schools were reinforced through government policy in Australia" (Walter & Anderson cited in Rix et al. 2018, pp. 255-256). Sonn and Fisher (1998) note that race-based policies and cultural removal are mechanisms of oppression.

Participant Cole spoke about his grandmother, who was placed in the notorious Cootamundra Girls Home in New South Wales:

> *When she left Cootamundra Girls' Home, there were signs saying* act white, be white*, the signs on the door were a part of that assimilation process. So she just did that. It needs to be acknowledged to make sure it doesn't happen again.*

It is important that this history is understood and continues to be acknowledged as families still live with the ongoing impacts today. Strength also comes from this acknowledgment and sorrow, because the mourning of our ancestors and the impacts of colonisation allows us to celebrate the maintenance and renewal of culture. This sorrow is a part of our journey as Indigenous people and this type of grief honours our ancestors, our people, our communities and our strength and resistance in our journey to maintain our connections and our identity as a people. We grieve because we know what we have lost and we celebrate and show respect for what we have today: we are still here and that is what is powerful in itself.

Our ancestors fought for our survival and paved the way, from the frontier wars to the fight for

Aboriginal rights. This is our proud legacy which we continue today.

Other researchers have discussed other impacts of historical unresolved grief and

historical trauma. Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) describe the concept of "historical

unresolved grief and historical trauma among American Indians" (p. 57), outlining both the

historical as well as present social and political forces which exacerbate it. Brave Heart and

DeBruyn note that there is an abundance of literature on Jewish Holocaust survivors and their

children that is used to explain the intergenerational transmission of trauma, grief, and the

survivor's child complex. However, there is limited research on Stolen Generations survivors

and families' intergenerational transmission of grief. Unresolved grief is still felt today. This

can be seen when Stolen Generation members and families who are trying to move past the

emotional trauma of removal are faced with re-traumatisation when asked for identification

documentation from organisations. This can be a continued reminder that one is not in control

of one's own life.

Kate spoke of these effects:

As you apply for a passport and they ask you those questions it's like I didn't know

what to do, how do you apply for a passport. The interesting thing is my kids looked

at their passports, their birth certificates and they compared it to mine and compare it

to my mothers. My mother's is very clear who her mother was with no father listed

and mine is really related to my adopted name not my birth name, but it didn't say

that I'm adopted.

Re-traumatisation is a conscious or unconscious reminder of past trauma that results

in a re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. It can be triggered by a situation, an

attitude or expression, or by certain environments that replicate the dynamics (loss of

power/control/safety) of the original trauma. (Zgoda et al., 2018, no page number)

Re-traumatisation can occur for Stolen Generations when asked for identification,

recalling the impact of past government policies. This is embarrassing and upsetting for those

involved. There is an inability to find closure due to processes out of one's control. This

occurred when community members applied for the Redress scheme in New South Wales, and

Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales requested photo identification and other primary

documents, knowing full well that the community were unable to provide such documentation.

Another example of this is when a company requests a new employee to supply a birth

certificate or passport to Human Resources (HR) for their contract.

Below participant Norah gives insight to this reality.

I see this within my work role when I fill out work contracts for new employees. I have

had many Stolen Generations Elders unable to provide a birth certificate or photo

identification e.g. passport. Firstly, I had to speak with my Manager to explain the

situation. The Manager advised to send through the contract information without the

birth certificate knowing HR would reject it. And once rejected we could have further

discussions of what the next process would be. This was a difficult process for me and

my new employee as HR was very dismissive to Stolen Generations members who

presented without documentation. It took over a month going back and forth with HR

and my Manager to resolve this issue. For those who have been adopted they were

force to do a change of name and this can bring up a lot of pain. I have made sure

that I support Elders during this process. I have created awareness in my role for the

need for leniency and understanding toward Stolen Generations survivors' lack of

documentation. I still have ongoing issues with HR. However, I continue to fight to

make this process as easy as possible for Elders.

Because many Stolen Generations survivors were born before 1967 they were not classed as citizens and not seen as human in Australia which is why paperwork documenting Aboriginal people was recorded poorly and, in most cases, not recorded at all. There is also an inability to track government documents to prove one's legal identification. This is discussed in further detail in Theme 1.

Like Australia experiences with colonisation, Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) refer to American's experience of massive losses of lives, land, and culture from European contact and colonisation resulting in a long legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations. This was a result of children of massacre survivors, children of boarding school survivors, who had passed on the trauma to their descendants. Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) note, in order for healing to begin,

> It is critical that we concentrate on healing the next seven generations. It's important
>
> that we incorporate our ceremonies in the healing process as well as develop Native
>
> research on historical trauma and its interventions. Our historical trauma, including
>
> individual current lifespan trauma, must be acknowledged and validated (p.56).

Brave Heart's work is focused on healing from the historical unresolved grief that many Indigenous individuals and communities are struggling with. Historical unresolved grief is the grief that accompanies the trauma. This historical trauma response is a constellation of features in reaction to massive group trauma. Brave Heart highlights, this is observed among Lakota and other Native populations, Jewish Holocaust survivors and descendants, and Japanese American internment camp survivors and descendants (Brave Heart, 1998, 1999, 2000).

In Australia this historical unresolved grief results from the stealing of children, the loss or interruption of family, culture, language, country and identity. Even when one has returned to family there still remains a historical pain that one's family has endured; this type of grief is carried with the knowledge that these policies that allowed removal are still in effect today under different policy names.

Cole shared an experience of working with a client who was impacted by the Stolen Generation removals:

> *I experienced it mainly relating back to my clients, for instance one of the clients was removed from their family and sent to an institution where there were other babies, removed from their families. And then at eighteen/ nineteen she had a child of her own and then had that baby removed from her. And then, seeing those effects of losing her baby had on her, she developed mental health issues and baby withdraw. And I guess this person was lucky she had a family reunion with her son, her son was about 40 years old. It's sad but good. Knowing this man grew up not knowing his biological mother his siblings and meeting them at the age of 40, I can see the impacts on the mother, that it had lasted for years, she is still affected by it. I don't know how she is going to get over that.*

Unfortunately, this story is common for many families who have had multiple generations taken away. It is crucial that support workers have an understanding for the intergenerational impacts when reuniting families. Because it is not just the client but their whole family that has been impacted.

Cole also noted how Stolen Generations has impacted Aboriginal families intergenerationally as he has witnessed this through his work:

Basically, a family had been searching for a family member, at least for five generations, they have been searching for this one person. Basically, I tried to find them since day one and the search is still going on today. Even though I don't work there anymore I still keep an eye out. It is always in the back of your mind to keep an eye out to see if you can find this person, unfortunately this person may not be alive being that long ago in the 1930's, it's a possibility. The other thing is they needed answers, did this person have children? Do we have a cousin out there that we don't know about? Is there a cousin out there that don't know about us? It has impacted on this one family, for five generations, the parents and children, their children and their children and their children.

Cole was able to highlight that Stolen Generations survivors' families never give up on finding their family's members who have been Stolen and how this is carried and passed down intergenerationally, in hopes that they will be able to reconnect to their family members who are still out there. Cole also demonstrated that reuniting families is not just a job and even though he is no longer working at that organisation he continues to "*keep an eye out*". It is "*always in the back of your mind*".

Fear of History Repeating/ Intergenerational Fear

According to Langtiw and Heidbrink in their work on black youth in the U.S. and Haitian-descendant youth in the Dominican Republic (2016) "the act of removal is a form of structural violence through racialized policies and practices that specifically target people of color" (p.42), thereby normalising how "the cumulative impact of structural violence inflicts betrayal and trauma upon individuals and communities, eroding trust, violating a state's

obligation to its citizenry, and ultimately, denying humanity" (Langtiw & Heidbrink, 2016, p.40). This study has used Langtiw and Heidbrink's understanding of structural violence and racialised policies and extended it to the Australia experiences of racialised structured violence used in past and current policies that have eroded trust. The fear of history repeating itself is a consequence of trauma, and this trauma is related to the fact that people do not have trust in the system and do not think that they are able to trust these systems due to the past violations of trust which led to the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. According to Gerber (2012), there is a continued "distrust of authorities - there may be a general suspicion of authorities amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples stemming, in part, from the policies that led to the Stolen Generations" (no page number). This distrust has led to an intergenerational fear of history repeating.

The theme of Fear of History Repeating/ Intergenerational Fear was developed through the process of analysis and the organisation of the data that showed from the interviewees' conversations how the history of removal continues to repeat in Australia today. From the analysis and organising of these conversations subthemes emerged, subthemes which include the impacts of the legacy of colonisation and the intergenerational fear of removal that families continue to live with today. In this section I discuss each of these subthemes with quotes from the interviews.

Everyone responds to trauma differently. Despite individuals' great ability to adjust, "it is well established that childhood experiences of trauma can have serious and long-lasting effects" (Van der Kolk, 2007, p.224). My previous themes have discussed the structural mechanisms that allowed administrative violence to enact policies that have resulted in

intergenerational trauma. This type of trauma is often reflected in my data with people sharing several stories of such trauma. This chapter shares what respondents said.

The fear of history repeating has resulted in an intergenerational fear being passed down. This is not without merit as this theme explains how historical policies have inflicted historical traumas that influence the emotional health of individuals and communities. This study highlights that there is a real need for acknowledgment that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Stolen Generations survivors and their families are living with the fear of history repeating, and to acknowledge that historical policies with the agenda of removal still exist but have just been renamed. To justify removals today these policies come under the guise of protection. Historical trauma refers to a complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Crawford, 2013; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Gone, 2013).

Intergenerational trauma and fear are a result of the history of oppression and are evident in people's stories as well as in the wider literature. The legacy of colonisation still lingers today. According to Thorpe and McKendrick (1998), historical, social, cultural and political factors continue to impact the emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people and because of this their "psychological distress is associated with issues beyond the control of individuals" (p.4). Institutional racism is embedded in systems that include laws and regulations and are unquestioned social systems of race. McCallum (2006) notes that "race, comes to be constructed in terms that allow legislators and administrators to make discriminations within Aboriginal populations in order to manage them" (p.29). According to McCallum:

That race was constructed in terms of the requirements of administrators was undoubtedly visible in the eyes of the Aboriginal children themselves. From the late 19th century, while non-Indigenous families became the object of attempts to strengthen familial ties and make parents responsible for their children's health and upbringing, a series of measures of racialised 'person formation' (Hacking, 1986) was taken by the legislature, the judiciary and the bureaucracy whose objective was to separate Indigenous Australian children from their parents and try to break up the bonds of family and community that had focused on the Aboriginal Mission stations since earlier in the century (2006, p. 29). … In the early 20th century, informal powers were used to shift Aboriginal children from foster care and into reformatories, bypassing any court hearing, and was one of the single most important causes of the criminalizing of young Aborigines. (McCallum, 2008, p. 6)

Furthermore, McCallum highlights:

the critical role of courts in overseeing decision-making by those who exercise administrative powers over Aboriginal people. Assurances contained in the present Children Youth and Families Act (2005) in Victoria that decisions about the removal of Aboriginal children will be made by a representative of an authorised Aboriginal organisation are insufficient if the place of a court is usurped in providing oversight and accountability in the exercise of powers in sites of extra-legal decision making over children. (p.6)

This history of oppressive practices and the use of informal powers has resulted in the fact that "unresolved grief, depression and post traumatic disorders are common in Aboriginal communities" (Thorpe & McKendrick, 1998, p.4).

Thorpe and McKendrick (1998) have identified that healing requires that individuals, families and communities have access to appropriate mental health and wellbeing programs. However, the "sorrow and trauma will continue unless the underlying issues are addressed to allow Aboriginal people to achieve social justice and equal human rights" (p.4). The fight for social justice and the acknowledgement of history has been recorded by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's voices that highlight the history, loss, racism, and deep hurt through academia, art, literature, poetry, songs, performance, etc. where each genre highlights the expressions of grief, loss and survival. One example of this is in the powerful song *Took the Children Away* by Aboriginal Gunditjmara/ Bundjalung singer songwriter and Stolen Generations survivor Archie Roach (1990) which is about his experience of being Stolen and the grief that is carried not just by the survivors, but by the family and community. "Sadness is never far below the surface. Themes of dispossession, racism, loss, grief, and anger are evident even in writings expressing celebrating Aboriginal identity, survival, achievement and love of land" (Thorpe & McKendrick,1998, p.5).

Whereas other reports such as The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC, 1991) and the Bringing Them Home Report National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997) provided documentary evidence of the transgenerational impact of trauma and loss amongst Aboriginal communities and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2014) noted the impacts and the Victorian Aboriginal Community State Redress Submission Paper (2015) too was important because it highlighted that the government and other institutions had also committed cultural abuse.

Mohatt et al. (2014) have stated that historical trauma functions as a public narrative for particular groups or communities that connects present-day experiences and circumstances to the trauma. For cultural groups with significant shared histories of trauma and who experience present-day marginalisation, as is the case for many Indigenous peoples across the world, a narrative of historical trauma may be a highly salient factor that sustains emotional and psychological wounds, thus functioning as a cultural narrative that inhibits psychological growth and collective aspiration (Chandler & Lalonde 2009; Crawford 2013; Gone 2013).

Dispossession, destruction of traditional lifestyles, rapid cultural change, disruption of families and communities, discrimination, cultural exclusion, poverty, lack of educational opportunity and poor health have been the legacies of colonisation (McKendrick, 1993). The impact of these traumas is chronic and intergenerational. Intergenerational grief, trauma and loss relate not only to family and kinship but also to land (McKendrick & Thorpe, 2014, p.90).

The concept of Country is important to understand, "Australian Aboriginal people use the word Country in a very different way to the way it is used in Standard English" (Rose, 1996, p. 7). For Aboriginal people, "Country is a living entity with a consciousness" (p. 7).

Furthermore Rose (1996) explains:

The notion of caring for country is quintessentially Aboriginal. Nowhere in the world is there a body of knowledge built up over so many millennia. Nowhere are there so many living people who continue to sustain that knowledge and engage in associated land management practices. (p. 84)

Jaz, an Aboriginal support worker and from the third and fourth generation, shared how her family's life has been affected by the Australian Government policies that removed

Aboriginal children, and how her family's connection to Country was impacted by her family's fear of removal.

> *Well, my great granddad came over to Australia as a Cameleer in WA, in the 1800s, he married a Yamatji Wangi woman from Meekatharra. They had four children. The four of them had a constant threat to be removed from their parents. Fearing that the government would take the children away, great granddad took them back to British India in the 1930s to save them. When they found it was safe my granddad and father they came back to Australia.*

Australia's removal policies had many intergenerational impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For Jaz, the intergenerational impacts her family has suffered were immense due to her family being forced migrate and leave their family and home in the 1930's in order to 'save them' from the Western Australian government.

According to Braithwaite et al. (2019) forced migration results from injustices that led to the displacement of people who are fleeing their countries and their homes. For Jaz this displacement has taken its toll on cultural identity. Jaz explained how these policies have affected her and her family:

> *The effects of the policy had impacted on my granddad, down to my father and then to myself and brothers and sister in many ways. This includes loss of connection with family members, community, loss of cultural practices and language. My granddad and father were unable to reconnect with the majority of the community when they returned to Country.*

For Jaz's family living with the constant fear of removal had resulted in her family leaving Australia and their Country. This displacement, as it has for many who were away

from Country, has led to intergenerational repercussions that have impacted on belonging and connection to family, community, and culture. "Sometimes return migrants are unable to re-establish ties or reconnect with their communities" (Roberts et al., 2017, p. 20).

Intergenerational Fear of Removal: *"I worry about policies because they are still here"*

This fear of history repeating for communities is from the continued oppression and surveillance that is used as justification for the removal and adoption of children today. This is reflected in statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) which shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up 40% of the children living in out-of-home care. These statistics are significant as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are only 2% of the Australian population.

When speaking with participants, many shared that they were concerned about filling out government documents, school forms, and attending health care services and hospitals. Many community members are fearful of ticking the box asking if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This is due to the fear of surveillance and discrimination. Government and organisations require Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to identify on forms by ticking a box. This information is meant to record statistics, to see if Indigenous people are more or less affected by various issues and for health and education outcomes. However community see it as monitoring one's daily life. The government is still seen as the mission master counting heads. For some, being asked how they identify can trigger painful emotions associated with removal, racism, discrimination and stereotyping. Identifying on forms can create fear.

This fear is also reflected each time there is a Census, again with the questions asking people to tick the box if they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Along with the questions asking how many people live in a home and for the names and birth dates of adults and children, this is deemed as another form of surveillance that brings concern. However, those who do tick the box are aware of the possible consequences.

Shay, an Aboriginal Support Worker, tells of the fear families have of removal, *"There is more kids in the system than there was in the Stolen Generations and the support that they're given is crap"*. Shay also stated *"we see it in different ways, many families are not registering the birth of their kids"*. Shay explained that there is fear in her local community of having the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) New South Wales involved, stating *"it's a scary thought for them."* She went on to explain:

> *It does trigger, especially Aboriginal people, because that is the first thing they think of if the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) gets involved in New South Wales, they think automatically that their kids are gonna get taken.*

Shay shared her own family history,

> *It does hit close to home, dad told me when I was 32 that I was taken off mum and given to nan until mum and dad got married, because I was born out of wedlock. I would have been a part of that system.*

Shay explains that her parents were scared that she was going to be removed from them because she was born out of wedlock and her mother and father were in an interracial relationship in a small rural town in New South Wales Australia, and if her grandmother had not taken her, she would have been taken by the government. According to Archibald (2006):

Children of mixed parents with light coloured skin were most vulnerable because [t]he

attitudes and policies of the time - which were supported by the legal system as well as

by influential members of the Church - meant that ... the older and traditional Aboriginal

people would die out and that the so-called half castes (assisted by their white genes),

would become integrated into the white industrial classes. (p. 19)

Shay understands why the fear of removal exists in community because her own family

have lived with this fear. Shay also shared that she has a family member who is a Stolen

Generations survivor, and their removal has had a huge impact on her and her family and still

does to this day.

This is not just an issue of our past. It is happening today. While the intent of child

removal today may be different to that experienced by the Stolen Generations, the

effect is the same: a loss of identity and the exacerbation of intergenerational trauma.

(The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2020, no

page number)

Similarly, another participant, Norah, an Aboriginal Support worker, teacher and child

of a Stolen Generations survivor, shared her fear of the effect of removal policies on her future

family:

I get worried about when I have kids and being pregnant, how I will be treated by

hospital staff? I know I will be treated badly and monitored for being black. I

remember when the NT (Northern Territory) was removing kids, when a mother had

two children under the age of two years old, child services wanted to remove them.

Norah is referring to the passing of the Northern Territory Intervention in 2007 that set

policies to monitor Aboriginal children. According to Davidson (2017) "the number of children

receiving child protection services in the Northern Territory could be a humanitarian crisis, with rates more than doubling since the 2007 intervention" (no page number). This fear is understandable because over a ten-year period since the Northern Territory Intervention the number of Aboriginal children in care doubled.

Grandchild of a survivor and third generation Emma shared her feelings about feeling monitored and about other Aboriginal students being monitored when attending high school:

> *I worry about policies because they are still here, when I was in school, I seen friends who are Aboriginal who were sick or in hospital had DHHS called on them for not being at school and I have a lot of white friends who have done the same thing and DHHS wasn't called on them. I worry because I see it. It is always on the back of my mind when I was sick and had to take a day off.*

According to Gerber (2012), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often marginalised by mainstream services. Emma also noted having to be aware of being judged by mainstream services:

> *I am aware of it, which is why I want to work with youth to prevent it from happening. My mum has taught me that you are always being judged and to be mindful of that. I am also mindful of using mainstream services.*

Because of Australia's colonised history, there is a lot of distrust about using mainstream services, and this along with a fear of racism and judgement are continued barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing these services.

Jaz, an Aboriginal support worker and third and fourth generation, shared her fear of removal policies due to her family's experiences of the historical removal policies that displaced her family from country:

To me coming from my background I have the fear of removal policies and due to

these policies, we have been displaced. But I still proudly identify myself as an

Aboriginal woman and will pass it on to my kids.

Even though Jaz lives with a fear of the current removal policies she remains defiant and continues to identify as Aboriginal.

Participant Leah shared her story of supporting a family who were dealing with the barriers from current removal policies:

Through my work I have supported many families over the years whose kids are in

out-of-home care, and there are many families who still worry that their kids will be

taken and put into the system. It saddens me cause this is the reality for us as

Aboriginal people. I worked with a grandmother who was trying to get access to her

grandchildren who were in out-of-home care it was hard for her to get access to see

them cause the white foster family didn't want her to, even when she was ill and

passed away, they still did not want to bring the kids. This hurt the whole family. The

grandmother was a member of the Stolen Generations.

Leah was able to share the intergenerational impacts for families she supports and the pain that was still ongoing for a Stolen Generations survivor attempting to see her grandchildren in out-of-home care. The same participant shared her own personal story of coming face to face with that fear:

I have lived in my property for over 5 years and in that time, I have received multiple

previous tenant's mail, always returning them back to sender. One day, I got home

from work early. I heard a knock at the door I opened the door, and it was two child

protection workers asking if I was this other person. I recognised the name they said

as I had received mail for that person over the years. I told the child protection

workers that I do not know that person and I told them that I have lived in my

property for over 5 years with my two children. The two child protection workers

dismissed what I said and continued to ask me several times if there was a

grandmother that lived in my house. I told them over and over that I live with my two

children, and that there was no grandmother and no children by that name who lived

here. Thinking back in that moment I didn't know how to respond I was overcome

with fear and my heart was racing.

Even Leah, who is a support worker, and families who have never had child protection involved still acknowledge the fear that the historical race-based removal laws still exist and the possibility of these laws being able to remove children at will.

Norah shared conversations she has had with her own family, friends and community about not feeling safe to use services:

I have had community, family and friends tell me that they have avoided services.

They told me that they didn't want to use any "Aboriginal services", as they were

concerned that services would stereotype them and monitor their children.

This continuation of fear has come from the stealing of children and has led to families avoiding services to avoid discrimination and monitoring. Community, where many of the Elders are Stolen Generations survivors, and community groups such as Grandmothers Against Removal have expressed this fear and concern. They have played a significant role in speaking out about child removal policies today. Grandmothers Against Removal use their advocacy and platform to educate about and protest against child removal. They have expressed the opinion that the community is still not safe from the historical policies that still exist. They have shed

an important light on the injustices and the polished up racist policies that are still used to control and assimilate our children into white homes.

Grandmothers Against Removal advocated heavily against the introduction of the amendment to the Adoption Act 2000 (NSW), which gives the government the right to place our children up for adoption without parental consent:

> This is going to totally annihilate Aboriginal culture, said Aunty Hazel Collins, a founding member of Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR). "This is genocide in the first degree, and it should be abolished." "Nobody has the right to sign off on an adoption when that child is not an orphan," she added. "That child has parents, grandparents and family that want them back." (Aunty Hazel Collins cited in Gregoire 2018)

Unfortunately, this amendment was passed in 2018, and other States and Territories in Australia are looking to introduce a similar amendment to their Adoption Acts. Leah shared her experience as an Aboriginal support worker working with families affected by this Act:

> *I have worked with families whose children have been removed and are in out-of-home care. There is a policy that has been passed in Victoria that families and the general public are not aware of. Children who are currently in out-of-home care for more than two years will not be returned to their families and can legally be adopted under this new policy. Families that are not aware of this policy lose their legal right to their children. The children are able to be adopted without having parental consent. DHHS is not informing them of the Act, so I am.*

Leah has highlighted that the Aboriginal families that she works with and other community members were unaware of Victoria's changes in policy that allow Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander children to be adopted without parental consent. She deemed this lack of communication an intentional action by Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services workers because they did not directly inform the families they work with of the changes in their policies. This is a blatant disregard of families who have children currently in out-of-home care and has ignited a fear of another Stolen Generation occurring. During the course of this study I attend a morning tea at Victoria University's Footscray Park campus where two Elders spoke about their grandchildren being in out-of-home care. The Elders told the group that they were unaware of this new change in policy and only found out through the community. They were both very concerned that their grandchildren could be adopted out without their knowledge or consent. It is also important to note here that many children are in the care of grandparents and this policy does not acknowledge the rights of the grandparents.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has moved to justify their actions by pointing out that culture is not disrupted with the removal and adoption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) out-of-home care agencies have introduced what is call a cultural support plan program to assist children in care. According to the DHHS (2008) a cultural plan is one part of a holistic approach to planning for vulnerable children and young people in out-of-home care. The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (CYFA) established cultural support as essential for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care to maintain and strengthen Aboriginal identity and encourage their connection to their Aboriginal culture and community. Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations are funded by the DHHS, the department responsible for the provision of cultural planning, and are responsible for supporting care teams to develop cultural plans, check the plans for accuracy and appropriateness from a cultural perspective and sign off on them.

However, if the case worker responsible for creating and endorsing the cultural plan leaves or cannot complete a child's cultural plan, that plan, even if it is not completed, is given to the child once they are of age and in many cases their family information is missing. Consequently, this leaves cultural plans as a tokenistic gesture. I have spoken to families who have children in out-of-home care and these families have stated that they do not have a cultural plan. It was also brought to my attention that once children are adopted the adopted family is not responsible for ensuring that a cultural plan is continued. This can be deemed as an intentional destruction of identity and culture.

Maggie, a participant who is an Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) worker and third generation, talked about the need to watch over DHHS involvement with Aboriginal children and that due to the high rates of children in out-of-home care a committee was established to do this:

> *The Alliance for Aboriginal Children and Young People. We ended up forming the Alliance and working on what we needed to do to ensure that people kept children safe and have the support around it because it's a horrible job. Like it's the worst job out there, that's what I reckon. But we need that support because we would see our families going through hell with DHHS and what could we do? Sort of toothless tigers if you like. So, we formed the Alliance and we've got 14 Aboriginal Co-ops across the state of Victoria as members of that alliance and you know that just helps us with where we are today. You know with the Aboriginal children's forum, so we have been able to basically demand that we get funding in, to support our children in out-of-home care.*

Maggie has described how families continue to struggle with DHHS interventions and as a result the Aboriginal Community Organisations have responded by establishing the Alliance for Aboriginal Children and Young People in order to keep an eye on the DHHS and hold the DHHS accountable when they are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families across Victoria. The Alliance also advocates for funding to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

Participant Leah shared her incredible work supporting families who were facing intervention from the DHHS and protection workers, who would stand over families. Leah advocates for the family's rights through this process:

I would make sure that Child Protection knew that we knew that there were protocols that they had to follow and that families had rights. And if they wanted to access a family, they would have to go through Lakidjeka.

Lakidjeka is an Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) that provides advice on the best interests of Aboriginal children and young people when Child Protection are making decisions regarding children. This includes providing support when Child Protection are responding to notifications of Aboriginal children. This service covers the whole state of Victoria except for Mildura and Swan Hill. These statements from Leah and Maggie highlight the importance of having Aboriginal community support workers, as they monitor the situations and the actions of DHHS workers and provide an important voice for families in these spaces.

The fear of history repeating for communities comes from the continued oppression and surveillance that has been used as justification for the removal and adoption of children today. The discussion on this theme has highlighted interviewees' conversations about how the

history of removal continues to repeat in Australia today. From these conversations subthemes emerged - the impacts of the legacy of colonisation and the intergenerational fear of removal that families continue to live with today - and this section discussed each of these topics with quotes from the interviews. The fear of history repeating has resulted in an intergenerational fear being passed down and the conclusion is that this is still a matter for concern as this theme clarifies how historical policies linger today.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the intergenerational impacts from the removal of family's members are impacted by the absence of identity documents. This has affected people trying to connect with family, community and country. The themes in this chapter have discussed the importance of recognising and acknowledging the intergenerational impacts of not having identity documents that has led to the intergenerational grief that is felt today by the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Stolen Generations survivors as well as by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

This theme came from conversations with interviewees about their families, life stories, family histories and work within community. From these conversations the subthemes of conscious grief, sorry business, historical unresolved grief and acknowledgment of grief emerged. I discussed each of these topics with quotes from the interviews. The collective historical loss and grief has impacted at many levels on the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. This theme highlights the lived reality of Stolen Generation survivors and families. This insight highlights the social and emotional challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities today.

Chapter   Seven

Surviving and Recovery

In this chapter, I report on the analysis of participants' stories of surviving and recovering that were shared by Stolen Generations members, their families and Aboriginal support workers who have experienced and/or witnessed the impacts of the absence of birth certificates on their communities and families. These stories shed light on the effects of past policies on one's wellbeing. This chapter discusses the theme Belonging/ Practices of Recovery and Healing identified in the study. I have discussed this theme and its subthemes with quotes from the interviews.

For the theme Belonging/ Practices of Recovery and Healing this research draws attention to the importance of identity and a sense of belonging and how in turn this is important for the wellbeing and healing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations survivors and their families. This study highlights that the reclaiming of legal identity, culture and community is important for one's healing.

Table 3. List of themes and subthemes for Surviving and Recovery

Theme	Subthemes
Theme 4: Belonging/ Practices of Recovery and Healing	Historical mindfulness Collective healing Finding mob Intergenerational healing Healing centres

Belonging/ Practices of Recovery and Healing

The Belonging/ Practices of Recovery and Healing theme comes from narratives of belonging and practices of recovery and healing from interviewees' conversations about

healing, self-determination, empowerment and connection, and in these conversations the interconnected subthemes emerged - historical mindfulness, collective healing, finding mob, intergenerational healing and healing centres.

Historical mindfulness is having the historical understanding of the impacts of the history and colonisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Australia. Historical mindfulness is structured by empathy and respect and embedded within our being and the way people use this to work to support their communities. Historical mindfulness is also supported and is interconnected to collective healing, as through this mindfulness people were not only able to provide support but knew it was important to give back to their communities.

Collective healing is a particular type of practice that is about ways of working with community. This includes everyday forms of support and solidarity - sharing resources, finding documents, connecting people to family, working in a holistic way, going above and beyond one's roles and assisting out of work hours - and these are linked to community obligations.

Finding mob allows for the reclaiming and restoring of connection to culture, country, family and community and is an important foundation for healing. "Culture is an important social and emotional wellbeing factor for Aboriginal peoples in Australia, particularly regarding recovery from colonization" (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 1833). Finding mob can have a positive intergenerational impact on healing.

Intergenerational healing is the process and outcome of collective healing process and practices. This speaks to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples doing for and with each other. This understanding and support are based on cultural obligations and are not restricted by Western boundaries.

Healing centres are important for restoration, and it is important for people to have access to healing centres. According to the Healing Foundation (2020b), healing centres support healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Healing centres are specific places made by and anchored in Aboriginal systems, cultures and spaces. They are culturally informed and culturally safe spaces that support healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a holistic approach that can be an important contribution to connection and wellbeing. This study has framed these restorative themes of recovery as acts of resistance (Maddison, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

I discuss each of these themes with quotes from the interviews. This research draws attention to the importance of identity and belonging and connection to place and how in turn these are important for the wellbeing and healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations survivors and their families. This theme emerged from the stories that the participants conveyed. The findings have noted that healing is about having a sense of belonging and giving voice and validation to the oppressive mistreatment suffered by survivors, and then finding ways to deal with the subsequent trauma and grief.

Healing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has been practiced from the beginning of our societies. It was evident in the transcripts that as participants reconnected with families, communities, culture, spirit and connection to country it gave a sense of belonging and pride from knowing their connection to ancestors and their families' histories. Many of the survivors and their families still face the struggle of having their identity legally recognised. The repercussions of this can have an impact on one's sense of belonging. Kinship, country and culture are central to identity and with this comes belonging and healing. Many cannot start their healing process without past wrongs being recognised. "Healing is about

recovering identity, dignity and well-being. It is about finding and reconnecting with family, community, culture and country" (Aboriginal Affairs NSW 2015, p.48). For survivors of "the Stolen Generations and their families healing is always on their minds and in their hearts" (p.48).

This was reflected in the second generation responses about healing, Leah from the second generation and a community support worker state; "*Healing to me is having connection to identity and culture. It is our connection to belonging.*" In addition, another participant from the second generation shares: "*My family and my connection to my culture is my healing.*"

For the second generation belonging and healing come from their connection to family and culture. Being on Country has also been noted as healing for participants in this study who have described it as "*needing to go back home to re-energise.*" Being on Country has been noted "to provide lasting health benefits" (Burgess et al., 2009; Burgess et al., 2008; Gray, MacNiven & Thomson, 2013; Nelson 2010 cited in David et al., 2018, p. 14) as it provides a holistic connection to mind, body and spirit. For my family and I who currently do not live on Country, we return to Country as often as we can because being on Country is important for our connection and for our spirit.

According to Kirsten Gray, CEO of the NSW Reconciliation Council:

Healing moves beyond the physical and individual. It re-centres us culturally and reconnects us to who we are and where we belong. It gives us the strength to deal with the past so that we might build a better future for ourselves, our communities and our families. (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2015, p.50)

In previous research conducted by Australia's National Health and Welfare Statistics and Information Agency, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009) measured the

social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It highlighted

that family is the core unit for Indigenous people and sharing customs through generations is

essential in keeping their sense of identity alive (Whap, 2001). Throughout history there have

been a number of events and policy decisions, which have threatened family ties among

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as "the removal of some Indigenous

children from their natural families and the introduction of custodial care. These events affect

and shape the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australians" (Australian Institute

of Health and Welfare, 2009, p.8). However this study has recorded how there are new policies

which continue to effect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, as noted below by

Leah, a second generation participant and Aboriginal support worker:

> *In my role as a support worker, I have seen children in Victoria removed by Child*
>
> *Protection Officers. Indigenous children have been placed with non-Indigenous*
>
> *families, with instructions to keep siblings apart as well as not allowing access to*
>
> *their whole family, including parents, grandparents and extended family members.*

The importance of cultural identity was discussed with participants "in recognition of

both the importance that many Indigenous people place on a sense of belonging at the

community level and connection to country, and the detrimental effects that a break in this

sense of belonging could have on social and emotional wellbeing" (Australian Institute of

Health and Welfare, 2009, p.8). This was also noted by the Australian Indigenous Health Info

Net (n.d.): "The pathway to healing is through cultural activity and connectedness to country".

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people healing and culture are inextricably linked.

Today there is a resurgence in the use of traditional healing. Embracing and applying

ancestral "cultural knowledge" helps to "address trauma and restore and sustain holistic

wellbeing" (Indigenous Health Info Net, n.d.). Thus strengthening "pride in cultural identity, connection to country, and involvement in community are critical elements of traditional healing programs" (Indigenous Health Info Net, n.d.).

Communities and healers have accessed traditional healing practices which include using "bush medicines and spiritual healing" (Indigenous Health Info Net, n.d.). This is essential when connecting to culture. Organisations in Australia are "learning from and incorporating traditional healing methods into their healing work" (Indigenous Health Info Net, n.d.). According to Caruana (2010),

> Nurturing a sense of 'cultural distinctiveness' is integral for spiritual, emotional, [and] social health and wellbeing and is also an important part of strengthening communities. This can be facilitated through the recovery of language and traditions, art, dance, stories, traditional food and medicines.

It is also important that health care providers deliver a holistic approach when treating Indigenous health. This study has noted that Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) and local community organisations play a crucial part in the connection and holistic health and healing of communities across both Victoria and New South Wales. This study highlights that community organisations listen to and understand community wants and needs and are committed to providing a service in a culturally informed and holistic way. Participant Belinda, an Elder and Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, stated:

> *So, I really want to add that this is why we have partnerships and remind mainstream that Aboriginal health is everyone's business. And not just the Aboriginal Controlled Organisations (ACO's) business. It's everyone's business, it's a human right to have 100% good health.*

The same participant noted:

Starting out as a Hospital Liaison Officer like the other hospital liaison officers, the

program was very new, and it was very political and ah there was a number of

stresses for all of us hospital liaison officers. But as we grew into our position and

worked in the community and networked. Working alongside non-Aboriginal health

professionals in a hospital setting it was about education and cultural respect and to

empower our clients to get 100% healthcare service whether they were admitted into

hospital or attending a clinic in mainstream agencies. At that time in my early

employment they were not exposed to Aboriginal issues or Aboriginal affairs in

general.

Participant Leah, a support worker and second generation, stated:

It is important for mainstream services to be open to a holistic approach when

providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs while

accessing their services and to come on board and understand community needs. This

is done through education, breaking down barriers within their services. Listening to

families' needs and linking them into relevant services to support their healing

journey. These services also engage with mainstream to promote cultural appropriate

care for the community accessing their services.

Similarly, Cole, an AMS worker and third generation, said:

You've got to keep pushing to make sure that you've got to do what we need to do and

make sure that we have the vision of community in our sights and also you know

continuing on about our culture, we've got to make sure we keep it in everything we

do you know. And have that understanding of how we want to work and make sure we

do it in a culturally safe way.

Australian and international research suggests healing programs should be specific to local regions and groups (Milligan, 2019), and that they are best delivered on "Country by people from the same cultural group as participants as this allows programs to be tailored to local cultural practices and concepts of spirituality" (Dudgeon & Bray, 2017). Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations throughout New South Wales and Victoria and across Australia support this approach.

Self-determination: *"Self-determination is important, it is a right"*

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 1.

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law (UNDRIP, 2007, pp.7-8)

The right for Aboriginal people to have access to identity documents is a necessary part of self-determination. The right to self-determination promotes healing for families as historical policies removed people's self-determination. Many of the participants mentioned self-determination. Below are some excerpts from the interviews.

Norah, an Aboriginal support worker and second generation, shared:

Self-determination is important, it is a right. Being denied the right to access records

and birth certificates, this takes away self-determination not only for the person

involved but also their families because it denies our connection.

The same participant spoke of the impacts of not having access to removal documents:

Being denied the right to access records and birth certificates takes away self-

determination. Receiving documents that have been blacked out and poorly recorded

also affects families and also takes away identity, culture and connection. There is a

need for documents to be released without being blacked out. An example of this was

also in my own family I have also seen this through my work when assisting members

of the Stolen Generations. I have seen the impacts of trauma this has created not only

for the person but also for their family members. Their identity and self-determination

was legally removed through the blacking out and the non-recording of information.

The same participant shared her experiences of community healing when working with

community who were looking for their documentation:

When assisting families, the journey for them was painful. However there was a

healing element to knowing that they were being heard. Families expressed that they

felt culturally safe while sharing their experiences and documentation because they

connected with me as my parent is a member of the Stolen Generations. Community

will not share their experiences with you openly if they do not feel safe and heard. But

also, are more open to people who have lived the shared experience.

Norah gives insights into the importance for people of feeling safe and heard when she

is assisting them. She also highlighted that she has bonded with people through their shared

lived experiences (Fine, 2006; Smith, 2012) and that this connection has allowed them to feel culturally safe and supported.

Participant Maggie referred to the term self-determination in relation to Aboriginal led organisations:

Aboriginal Organisations have the highest employment of Aboriginal people in comparison to mainstream. And out of those positions some move on, in to mainstream but it's the Aboriginal organisations that maintain Aboriginal employment and self-determination. And you noticed that right across Victoria and New South Wales.

Ongoing employment of Aboriginal people by Aboriginal Organisations has created positive outcomes and has supported the right for people to be self-determining.

For participant Leah self-determination is linked to claiming identification with community. She has seen this in her support work:

In a mainstream hospital I sit within the Aboriginal Health Unit space providing cultural support to families who attend the hospital. While sitting in this space I have had several Stolen Generations community members come in to have a yarn and advise that they would like to identify that they are Aboriginal and would like it to be added on the hospital database, and to ask how they can access their family history. They want to change their status on the hospital database to reflect who they are and their Aboriginality.

Aboriginal Community Organisations have been supporting community who are looking for their identity and have identified that this is an important part for a community to be self-determining.

Maggie went on to highlight the support work her organisation does for Stolen Generations:

We have Stolen Generations workers. They do a lot of support work, with the Elders that are Stolen Generations. They have been in the orphanage here. We are trying to develop the program to expand out to the second and third generation of Stolen Generation cause those people are affected too. I think it is the way their families were treated and the lack of skills those kids were given in the orphanages is appalling. And we have gone through the Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse, so we have been through that as well. We had some clients that were in that position and that were in the orphanage, so we have had to support those families too. Cause you know that's just horrendous stuff. I think that the families that we have helped have a positive outcome for them and their families as it is off their shoulders. For them, they have spoken about it and somebody's recognised it, you know, and I think it is a bit of a load off. You can see a different step in their walk, you just sort of notice that they are bit different than what you used to see. You know and that's good.

The Bringing Them Home Report also noted the importance for Stolen Generations survivors to feel heard and have past traumas acknowledged.

Kinchela Boys recalled being referred to by numbers not called by name, having their possessions burned when they arrived at the home and their heads shaved. Healing now takes many forms for these men as they attempt to find ways to take more control over their own lives and deal with the traumas that have passed to the next generation. Healing is about having that mistreatment recognised and validated and then finding

ways to deal with the resulting trauma and grief. (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2014,

p.48)

'Healing is helping… restore the identity of our people. Where do you come from?

Where do you fit in? If you don't know that, how do you know who you are?' Aunty

Lorraine Peeters, Winangali Marumali and Cootamundra Girls. (Aboriginal Affairs

NSW, 2014, p.48)

Historical Mindfulness

Aboriginal Community Support workers in this study have noted their

understanding of the impacts of the history and colonisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people and communities in Australia. The role of Aboriginal Community Support

workers and the way in which they work is very important for restorative and positive outcomes.

Using their collective experience (Henriques, 2014), they work with understanding, without

judgment and work holistically, I call this process having historical mindfulness, where

historical mindfulness is a historical understanding of the history of colonisation and a structural

awareness of settler colonial systems and the understanding of how past policies, dispossession,

oppression and trauma have impacted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations

survivors, families and communities. When practiced, historical mindfulness embodies an

important way of working and way of being for the participants through building on humility

and respect when supporting Stolen Generation survivors and their families, and it also supports

and assists in recovery and is interconnected with collective healing.

This concept captures the experience of Indigenous peoples globally and is a shared experience of colonisation that has led to historical grief. Duran and Duran (1995) suggest that historical trauma can become "normalised within a culture because it becomes embedded in the collective, cultural memory of a people and is passed on by the same" (p.4). Historical trauma has not been reconciled in Australia and therefore the grieving process has been disrupted. The pain, shame and guilt of removal remains in families and communities.

What this study has identified is that grief is still alive within the community today, and the data shows that generationally the notion of grief has been disrupted. The study shares there are different levels of grief and that this historical mindfulness of grief reminds us that our collective grief has been redefined by us. Thus this type of grief is seen as a way we understand and honour our past. Through honouring our ancestors and their resilience, strength and knowledge we ensure that this history is never forgotten and has become a lasting legacy for future generations. "We know we cannot live in the past but the past lives with us" (Charles Perkins, as cited in Henty-Roberts 2000, p.1).

Collective healing: *"you can help people find out who they are and where they belong"*

> Collective healing moves away from treating people individually to a model where individuals develop their own skills and capacities to empower healing in themselves and their families and communities. Whatever form it takes, collective healing is supported by bringing people with similar experiences together, often with their children and grandchildren, in a safe space where they can share, get to know their own story, build understanding and skills, and take positive steps towards a better future. (Healing Foundation, 2019)

This research has noted that the way collective healing is being done throughout community and community organisations is through the work of first, second, third, fourth, fifth, even sixth generation Stolen Generations family members. The people I have interviewed have discussed how their family members have all been impacted by the Stolen Generations in one way or another. Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) and Aboriginal Community Organisations play an important role in healing and connection for Stolen Generation survivors. Healing requires a culturally safe space and support to enable an open and constructive discussion dealing with sensitive issues (Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2015, p.10). Aboriginal community workers as well as community members all play a role in assisting Stolen Generations members and their family with finding their mob.

One way people are assisting in recovery is by finding and naming forgotten Aboriginal Soldiers. The following is an example of this work. Uncle Roger Penrith is a proud Wiradjuri Man and Elder from Griffith New South Wales, Australia. He is also a Director of the Clontarf Foundation and a member of the Aboriginal Servicemen's Honour Committee and has worked tirelessly to recognise all the Aboriginal soldiers who served their country and to name the forgotten soldiers. He has also volunteered his work to the Griffith War Memorial Museum. The Aboriginal Servicemen's Honour Committee is trying to have a memorial statue, recognising Aboriginal people who served in the Australian armed forces, erected in the Memorial Park in Banna Avenue, Griffith New South Wales. Uncle Roger said *"I love doing volunteer work and it is my way of giving back to the community"*. During my conversations with Uncle Roger, he had shared with me that the databases were lacking in their documentation of Aboriginal Servicemen. He also explained to me that he would ask community to share their stories of family members who went to war, and by doing this he was

able use the community's collective memory (Halbwachs, 1950) to fill in the gaps, the absences, that were created by administrative violence and so was able to identify and name past Aboriginal soldiers. What he found was that some soldiers were listed under different names or nationalities, and many were not listed on any registry or in the military service records at all. For the Riverina area of New South Wales Australia, World War I and World War II had a massive impact on the small towns and communities because every family had family members enlist, families had their loved ones sent overseas to fight and many never came back. For those who did come home their service was not recognised by the Australian government, as they were not considered Australian citizens and still had no rights in the country they fought for. This is why it has been so important for Uncle Roger to highlight and give recognition and acknowledgement by sharing the stories of Aboriginal soldiers.

Another way people are assisting in recovery is by connecting people back to family, community and culture. Participant Cole works as a Bringing Them Home worker and shared this:

> *We worked with other services when referring clients on to these services and we try*
> *and help Stolen Generations members reunite with family and community, country*
> *and culture.*

The participants have expressed that healing is worked through in different ways. For instance people have been able to connect to family through services such as Link-Up and by using digital technologies to find their family history.

There are many services that can assist with accessing documents and help with tracing Aboriginal family history. The AIATSIS Finding Your Family website is a national online resource with a guide to tracing Aboriginal family trees. In New South Wales Aboriginal

Affairs NSW offers a service called Finding Your Mob, while in Victoria it is the Public Record Office Victoria's Koorie Records Unit for Aboriginal people and Link-Up Victoria to go to for researching family history. However, Indigenous family tree researchers encounter difficulties because written records can be hard to find, and information is scarce because few records were kept and the records kept are poor. Community has adapted the way they search for their family histories with many going online.

Social media also plays an important role with connecting families and communities, as "it provides a platform for people to do activities such as posting questions and answers, discussions, messaging, storytelling as well as sharing experiences. It allows rapid communication and interaction among people as the distance barriers have been minimized" (Din & Haron, 2012, p.1043). People are also using social media and their social networks to connect to their personal family histories and to trace family trees. Thus social media is playing an important role in terms of reconnecting families and communities through active research and investigation by online communities. Social media has assisted with connecting people to community, culture, identity and belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and for Indigenous people globally. Collective knowledge is shared on the social media platforms and is used to connect people to family and community. Social media has taken family histories that were passed down through oral traditions to a written form.

Organisations such as Link-Up have embraced social media. Link-Up is a program where social workers and community support workers would previously use government databases to link the Stolen Generations to their families. Unfortunately accessing information through these data systems can take a long time as paperwork may be missing or family members may have already passed away, thus creating roadblocks for the workers. However,

when social media is used, in many cases where someone posts a name or location on a community page, this information is then viewed by community and within a short timeframe a response is given. Thus social media can play an "important role in knowledge sharing" (Din & Haron, 2012, p.1049). According to Carlson & Frazer (2018) "social media is deeply entangled in the lives of many Indigenous people, offering them opportunities to connect" (p.1). Furthermore, Carlson & Frazer (2018) state social media has become an invaluable tool that helps people "find and share their identities" (p.1).

Cole shared how social media played a vital role in finding a missing family member who was Stolen. This is his own family's story:

> *It played a role in my family's search for a family member. It was through Facebook I was able to find my grandmother's sister who was missing for fifty-eight years. So, it only happened because my great-aunt's children basically found and spoke to my Aunty, who's her first cousin, on Facebook. We're lucky to have a family reunion with my great-aunty, but my grandmother had already passed away. My great-uncle and another great-aunty and my brothers and sisters they weren't able to meet her before she passed away.*

Cole acknowledges being lucky to have found and reconnected with his extended family, but also acknowledges that family members had passed away due to the passing of time.

Similarly, another participant, Mary, an Aboriginal community support worker and fourth generation, shared how she had used online services such as Ancestry.com to assist with connecting families:

> *I worked for Link-Up for nearly 3 years. You feel good that you are helping people. But when you can't help people find out who they are and where they belong it's*

really, really hard. It's taken me 40 years to find my own Aboriginal great-

grandmother and who I belong to, my clan is Mutti Mutti. I tell people to go on

Ancestry.com to go on the message board, I say go and ask the message board

because a lot of people go on it and if you put what you know they'll help you find the

rest.

Mary shared that she was able to connect with her own family by using social media and sites like Ancestry.com. She now shares her journey with others who are trying to connect to their family history.

Likewise Leah, a support worker and second generation, noted how social media is being used to connect children in out-of-home care to their families and communities.

We are really lucky today to have access to different social media platforms that can

be used to find one's family. In my role I have witnessed Aboriginal Cultural Support

co-workers use social media such as Facebook for children who are in out-of-home

care to connect them to back to their Mobs.

Cole shared his experience of how he also uses the local community to assist with finding someone's family when organisations cannot:

A lady up in Cairns sent an email to the Aboriginal Land Council in Griffith back in

2012, to ask about finding her adult adopted son's family. There was a mix up in who

the person was, and it was passed on to Victoria. Because of that it sort of got held up

a bit, then Link-Up Victoria got in touch with me cause they could not find his family

and so I went down to the Land Council and had a talk to the CEO and he still had

the printed-out photo of this child which was of Aboriginal descent. Now, it was his

adopted mother who sent it asking to find out where his family was from. I went

straight down the street to go talk to community to ask about who his family is. I

showed the old fellas the picture of the child now adult and said, hey who's this

person? They said this person looks like so and so's kid and turned out it was. They

connected the dots and reunited this family.

Cole also stated that the Elders knew that this family had had a child taken away. Cole demonstrates the power of living memory and the important use of a community's collective memory. He has also highlighted the strength of the local communities' knowledge of their local kinship systems and families' histories and how these are used to reunite families. The knowledge of local kinship systems and histories are shared and passed down through the traditional oral histories. This is an important cultural practice that today can aid in the collective healing of families and communities, as it is not hindered by administrative violence, and by extension this restorative practice can assist in healing. This can also assist Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander communities to reconnect and maintain their cultural connections.

Shay shared how she assisted with reuniting a community member with important family photos and documents:

Twelve months ago, we were doing a big clean up at work and I came across a folder

at work. We didn't know who owned these photos. I wanted to take them and make

sure that the right people got these photos back. On the back of one of them it had a

name on there, so I went from that I got in touch with the same surname. I ended up

finding out he had lost it because he moved. So, I ended up sending them back to him

to his hometown and he cried to me on the phone. The photos were of his children.

Photos you can't replace them, and this poor man thought he had lost them. And to

retune them and hear a grown man cry over photos of his children I had goosebumps

- I nearly cried myself.

For community, photos are important, especially older photos, because not many photos exist from earlier times since cameras were not readily available, unlike today, and in the families that do have photos, these photos are treated like gold by the families, including my own. Shay was able to identify the importance of these photos for the owner and made sure to reunite them with their owner.

Intergenerational healing: *"my grandfather got his birth certificate back"*

With collective healing comes intergenerational healing. Solanto (2019) emphasised the importance of connecting to culture for healing historical trauma. He states that if trauma can be passed down so can healing. The Healing Foundation notes that in order to 'restore balance' in community healing there must be a reconnection with country, as the land can provide healing. "Land is a means to care for both the spirit and the body" (Healing Foundation, 2012, p.1). This research also highlights the importance of birth certificates for locating one's birthplace and heritage. These can aid the beginning of the healing process for Stolen Generations survivors and their families.

Participant Emma, a grandchild and third generation, stated:

When my grandfather got his birth certificate back, it made me feel happy, as it meant

that the wrongs of the government were acknowledged, and that we as a family were

able to start our healing process from this traumatic experience, which had been

going on for 3 generations. The legal process of getting the birth certificate wasn't

just for the piece of paper, it was more than that. It meant that my grandfather was

able get his identity back. This gave a sense of belonging, within himself. When we received a successful outcome from the legal process, we had gotten back our family history that was denied to us legally. Once my grandfather received his birth certificate with his parents reinstated, it gave my grandfather and my family a sense of closure.

A sense of closure was one of the outcomes that mentioned by Emma and finding closure through the reinstating of his parents' names on her grandfather's birth certificate was important not only to her grandfather but also to her family.

Norah also shared her experience of the court process:

The court process to have my father's original birth certificate was a hard and long process. When my father received his original birth certificate with my grandparent's names reinstated on it the injustice was finally legally acknowledged. My family's spiritual healing journey began.

Norah referred to the reinstatement of her grandparents' name on her father's birth certificate as an injustice being acknowledged. She also indicated that her family's healing was able to begin. This highlights that these injustices that occurred through a framework of administrative violence and structured violence effects not only survivors but their families as well.

Norah referred to families' spiritual healing and their cultural and spiritual connection as being essential to Aboriginal people in Australia. Even though in what we know today as Australia European colonisation only goes back six generations, in that time settler colonialism and the government's intentions have resulted in a loss of land, breaking the connection to identity and culture. It should be recognised that Aboriginal people in Australia go back over

2000 generations. Our people have lived and stood on this land and never left this continent. "We had our own special relationship with the land" (Dudgeon & Bray, 2017, p.102). Through having over 2000 generations of our ancestors on our country, this spiritual connection is unbreakable, as we came from the land, and it is carried within us. Therefore the connection can never be severed, even when it has been intentionally disrupted over the last 200 years.

Healing centres: *"I really believe that it is about empowerment"*

The Healing Foundation (2020b) notes:

Community healing centres are spaces that support healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They are community-owned and operated, with activities developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in response to their own healing needs. Healing centres incorporate traditional and western practices and operate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality and culture at their core and may be situated on custodial land or a site of local significance. Internationally, healing centres are recognised for their effectiveness in addressing intergenerational trauma and improving wellbeing.

The data that I gathered supported this conception of the healing spaces that are community-owned, culturally and spirituality rooted in Aboriginal people's realities and ways of knowing, doing and being.

Elder Belinda, an Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, shared why local communities are starting their own centres. She narrated the importance of arts and cultural practice, place, and the cultural protocols in the collective process of healing:

I always wanted to set up a meeting place for people to come and bring their art or just come and be rested and to have gatherings with each other like women's groups or the men want to bring a men's group. It's going to take 5 years to rebuild the old building and it's a meeting place for people that want to visit and if they want to have gatherings, or cultural gatherings or just come there to do their workshops with art or craft. The idea was to have healing programs at Hatfield like massage, self-healing and groups where people can yarn and talk freely. It's out in the middle of nowhere and the sunsets and the sun rises are absolutely beautiful, and it is a beautiful spot. We will have a meeting place for people to come to either run education groups or retreats and we have a committee. I have Elders on that committee, and it is an organisation, but long term the vision we wanted to do is have a meeting place for those people that were lost, that were unwell with drug and alcohol issues and that just need a retreat, an immediate place to go and in the long term there will be a type of boot camp because there's not many boot camps around. And I know that there's some up in the top of Australia run by Traditional Owners. We have had a couple of gatherings, retreats and we have had people from New Zealand and the Native American Indians came and gathered at Hatfield for the first time. I said come on bring your didge and wake up our ancestors. It was really quite a party and it was so beautiful because the sound of the didge just echoed beyond. Cause there was nothing out there, there was no traffic, nothing, just us and the night sky and it was beautiful. But that didge with all the sounds and the animal sounds it just echoed, it was beautiful. I have fond memories of when we had a gathering there.

Connection to place, country, culture and nature is culturally important and is felt and understood both on an emotional and spiritual level. This connection can be an empowering and a healing experience as it brings one's mind, body and spirit back to the land and to our ancestors. Aunty Belinda shares her insights and has highlighted the collective process of sharing, gathering, celebrating and feeling Country either on a physical or spiritual level and how this can also be energising and healing for people. Other participants in this study have spoken about "*needing to re-energise*" and the need to return to country to do so. I was also raised with this understanding of the importance of connection to country for healing and the need to be on country. Various authors have written about the significance of the land for healing and have linked it to the importance of connection and culture (Atkinson, 2012; Dudgeon et al., 2020; Moreton-Robinson; 2003). Having a safe space without interruptions to feel free to embrace and foster this connection is also important in order to successfully support and facilitate this connection. Torres (2019) has noted that healing and wellbeing can be used as "tools of decolonization" (p.65). According to Todorova et al. (2019) it is essential to understand that "Spirit cannot be colonised" (p. 1), and that Spirit is necessary for the decolonisation process. Todorova et al. describe the reclaiming of spirituality in this way:

> People's spirituality re-emerges at appropriate, safe, and growth times during and after colonisation. While imperial projects, domination, and racial violence have aimed to break and destroy the spirit, the spirituality of colonial subjects not only has survived but it has been re-activated across national borders to claim social justice and equality for those whose lands were stolen and their bodies murdered and wounded. (2019, pp.1-2)

Another author, Karanja (2019), emphasised the importance of "centering land as the site of Indigenous medicine and healing" (p.55) and highlighted that "Indigenous healing cannot be conceptualized separately from the land" (p.58). According to Karanja:

Indigenous reconnections with the land must be prioritized for the continued sustainability of Indigenous healing practices. The West must adapt to the humility of not knowing and listen to Indigenous voices on how Indigenous healing can be reclaimed. (2019, p.58)

With the reclaiming of healing by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices gives recognition and respect to our ways of healing, and this can allow for a greater understanding of the importance of connection to land for healing spirit, mind and body. Therefore, healing can be understood as "a journey of empowerment, reclaiming control and self-determination" (Feeney, 2009, p.10). The significance of healing is also expressed by Robbins and Dewar (2011):

Indigenous Knowledge systems are living entities and not relics of the past.

Traditional healing has always been a vehicle for the practice of Indigenous

spiritualities and the use of Indigenous knowledge systems. Today, these knowledge

systems are still being applied to help Indigenous communities and Indigenous people

recover from intergenerational pain and suffering endured during colonisation.

(Robbins & Dewar, 2011, p.13)

There is a deeper understanding that healing is connected to spirit. This study has shown that there is a greater understanding of the importance of the Indigenous spiritualities and Indigenous knowledge systems being used in recovery and reconnection to country by continuing to embrace traditional knowledge systems for healing and by highlighting their use

as a significant tool for reclaiming and recovery to be used in healing their communities. Robbins and Dewar (2011) have emphasised that this is also integral to intergenerational wellbeing, healing and empowerment.

According to Sonn et al., this "focus on cultural renewal and reclaiming … is understood as central to the development of positive individual and collective identities, and the process of healing" (Sonn et al., 2015, p.100). This chapter's themes reflect the everyday restorative practices of families, communities and support workers. These restorative practices connect us and are a part of our traditional cultural oral histories and cultural obligations, and by extension a part of our healing. Supporting and reconnecting to spirit embraces healing and strengthens cultural identity, and this in turn is also connected to the process of decolonisation.

Various authors understand healing as cultural renewal and recovery. Feeney (2009), for instance, explains that cultural renewal is needed as part of ongoing healing practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. Feeney states that "developing therapeutic practices and programs that support individual healing and community cultural renewal" (p.4) and utilising a "holistic view of healing" (p.3) is a part of healing and recovery. According to Feeney, "healing practices for people suffering historic trauma" (p.24) need to embrace cultural renewal practices and these should consist of:

- programs to facilitate cultural renewal and strengthen cultural identity (celebrations)

- supporting healing rituals

- researching, writing and delivering creative arts (plays, stories, films, psychodrama) that educate about the legacy of the Stolen Generations

- remembrance activities and mourning

- land-based activities. (2009, p.15)

Similarly Archibald's work in Canada with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation into 'Promising Healing Practices in Aboriginal Communities' (2006) states that programs and activities should "engage people in a process of recovering and reconnecting with their culture, language, history, spirituality, traditions and ceremonies" (p. 16). She highlights that "the individual's need for healing are factors related to their personal, family and community history" (p.16). Archibald also stresses the importance of practices being available to support people who want to reconnect to the community and strengthen their own cultural ties.

> These are powerful, empowering experiences that provide a secure base from which
> to launch personal healing. They also contribute to individual and community healing;
> evidence suggests that culture is good medicine. It also promotes a sense of belonging
> that can support individuals in their healing journey. (2006, p.16)

Archibald states that "culture is one component of holistic healing, inseparable from a worldview rooted in concepts of balance and connectedness" (p.45). "Reconnecting with one's culture is empowering. A strong cultural identity builds self-confidence and self-esteem that in turn facilitates healing" (p.46).

Chapter Summary

This theme has discussed the different aspects of healing that come through the participants' stories of impacts across generations and through people having their birth certificates reinstated. Others have found a sense of collective healing by supporting community members who are tracing their history. This has created a sense of belonging. This chapter noted the various ways in which people are finding ways to heal. The theme of

belonging and healing came from the interviewees and in the conversations about the importance of healing for families and community these subthemes emerged: historical mindfulness, collective healing, finding mob, intergenerational healing and the need for healing centres that provide a holistic approach. This research has explored the importance of identity and belonging and connection to place and spirit, and highlighted their importance for the wellbeing and healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations survivors and families. Healing comes from belonging and giving voice and validation to survivors and families. This has been assisted by the use of living memory and collective memory as restorative practices to connect families and histories.

This chapter explores the responses of participants and the analysis of these sheds light on the way administrative violence impacts on Stolen Generations survivors' lives. Understanding the families' stories about reclaiming their legal identities provides an important lens for understanding the families continued need to right the past wrongs of former policies and government systems that continue to enforce red tape in the lives of individuals and families. The evidence of the data has shown that it is essential for community to continue to talk openly about our history of invasion, colonisation, assimilation and racism with the understanding that we are not ashamed of our pain and the grief we have experienced. We are not consumed by our grief. We draw strength from our grief to continue to fight for future generations, as the pain and grief does not define who we are. It strengthens us when we share our stories, it takes back our power. It has become a part of our oral histories today. The findings have shown that sharing our stories honours the fact that we are still here, that we are strong, we are proud, and we are a sovereign people whose land was never ceded.

Chapter Eight

Discussion

This thesis has explored the absence of birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors. This chapter notes how the intergenerational impacts are understood and how these are addressed in ways that can ameliorate and reunify families. Applying for a birth certificate and similar documents is not straightforward because of the structural mechanisms that are enacted today through a framework of violence. For families trying to restore and connect back to country and family this entails obtaining birth certificates.

The thesis highlights the production of non-persons, or persons unable to secure an authentic identity in legal terms, and this point is critical to the thesis. In the literature, the law is almost completely absent from the production of Aboriginal citizenship. There is no law pertaining to identity, and the law that is used is ambivalent or ambiguous. Most of the function of institutions "dealing" with Aboriginal peoples today are to do with discipline and removal of children to impose control over Aboriginal peoples.

I started this study because I wanted to understand the impacts of structural violence and how administrative violence has hindered the Stolen Generations survivors from gaining a legal identity and the various challenges that people have faced. This study has contributed to showing how people who did not have access to birth certificates, and in particular Stolen Generations survivors, families and communities, continue to experience the effects of this form of violence.

The questions in my thesis draw attention to the forms of power implicated in the trauma experienced by the tearing apart of families over time. These forms of power include the various sciences that accompanied the management of Aboriginal peoples during this

period. This thesis has also been expanded to look at the reasoning by the white rulers and governmental authorities that led to the deliberate actions involving social control and the controls over movement, marriage and self-government. The implications of blood-quantum biological sciences, leading to the destruction of language and culture, have been reviewed as part of the literature review in Chapter Two.

Challenges of identity in relation to intergenerational trauma

This study has called upon the concepts of intergenerational trauma and structural violence in order to understand the lived experiences of Stolen Generations survivors and their families. These experiences have noted administrative violence and the effects of this violence and how it continues today and the ways in which people survive this violence. This study highlights the ways in which its continuity is relevant to understanding the real life of the community.

These findings are based on the personal stories of survivors and their families and community support workers. By using a critical narrative analysis these stories were organised into themes around these narratives. These stories suggest that people have meticulously reclaimed their stories about family and ancestry and importantly they highlight the function of the legal affirmation of identity for the Stolen Generations and its profound effects on the lives of individuals and families. The shared stories have shed light on the effects of colonisation, dispossession and assimilation and the newer manifestations of control over Aboriginal people's identities in the present context. One example of this new means of control was conceptualised as administrative violence. Lea et al. (2018) states that the

"institutionalized forces of settler colonialism" (p.305) can be seen as "evidencing the unrelenting nature of administrative violence under active colonization" (p.305).

The findings also show that people have found ways to resist and survive, and to rebuild cultural, familial, and ancestral connections through various practices including oral history and the archival retrieval of historical documents. The findings highlight how individuals, families and communities have fought to keep and reconnect to identity and culture through storytelling and oral histories about individuals, families, ancestors, country, survival and the social world. The stories speak to the lives of the different narrators and these important insights, the stories and themes, are discussed below.

Nullification: Expressions and Effects of Violence in Lives

The first theme from the stories, "Being made Nobody', showed the history of dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how past policies have contributed to the present state of people through what this study has noted as administrative genocide. Participants have noted that "*It denies me, my family and our Nation's existence*". Participants also stated, "*We cannot trace our background because she does not exist*". The stories that were shared included references to the role of structural violence and the mechanisms of control that are a part of Australia's colonial history (Atkinson, 2002; Moane, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2003, 2004; Lea, 2020). These mechanisms of control also contain the injustice of administrative violence and the structures of power and control that persist in the present and continue to operate. This control reproduces the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) and by extension reinforces the concept of the coloniality of being which is known as "the lived experience of colonisation" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.242).

Maldonado-Torres (2007) says that the "coloniality of being responded to the need to thematize the question of the effects of coloniality in lived experience and not only in the mind" (p.242). Coloniality of being is seen when people think of themselves through the system or think about themselves as being less than human, as being made an object, as being made nothing, as being erased, as being nullified, hence being made nobody. This is seen through the process of nullification, and this too is violence. According to Maldonado-Torres (2016) this can also be understood as "metaphysical violence. It tries to place a human in a zone where s/he/they is susceptible to denigration and a constant target of the violent dimensions of perpetual war" (p.16). This is also linked to ongoing structural violence and coloniality. Furthermore, Maldonado-Torres (2016) states that "modernity/coloniality seeks to conceal its war-like character by not even allowing its status to be named or questioned by those who are in the receiving end of its constant violence" (p.6). This therefore enforces the notion of control and power over people.

Quijano (2000) referred to the fact that the "coloniality of power still exercises its dominance" today and that coloniality is a part of the "colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo, 2007, p.156). This power has also been noted by Moreton-Robinson in her work 'I still call Australia home: Indigenous belonging and place in a postcolonising society' (2003), which highlighted the link between coloniality, territory and whiteness:

> Indigenous belonging challenges the assumption that Australia is postcolonial because our relation to land, what I call an ontological belonging, is omnipresent, and continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal dispossession. (p.23)

This is also highlighted through the way in which "colonisation and the dominant and privileged location of white people and institutions, which remain at the centre of Australian

society" (p.23) have led to oppression and the colonial dispossession of Indigenous sovereignty

through erasure. Wolfe discusses colonial power in his book *Traces of History: Elementary*

Structures of Race (2016) and argues that race formation and the construction of blackness are

related to Indigenous erasure. This thereby supports Wolfe's concept of settler colonialism

society as a "structure not an event" (2006, p.388). For survivors, families and communities

there is an acknowledgment that the past practices of erasure are still enacted now and can be

seen through stolen birth identity, and the denial or lack of access to original birth certificates

and the registration of births, as well as to primary documentation and freedom of information.

Historical memory, personal memory, living memory and collective memories have

informed this study and revealed the interconnected mechanisms and practices of violence that

continue to control and oppress the lives of Aboriginal people today. These mechanisms

include structural violence, physical violence, cultural violence and administrative violence

that have allowed what this study understands as administrative genocide to occur in Australia.

This is essentially linked to

> the ideology of white supremacy/race and racism, which legitimised direct physical
>
> violence, exploitation and exclusion, the deliberate fragmentation of families and
>
> communities, and the removal of culture and language through assimilationist policies
>
> and practices. (Quayle, 2017, p. 284)

This understanding of administrative genocide came from the recollections of

survivors of being removed from their families, and from families and communities growing

up with the understanding that administrative violence was part of the Stolen Generations.

Survivors, families and Aboriginal community workers shared memories of their

families, parents, siblings, aunties, uncles and cousins. Some spoke about the day they were

Stolen and placed in homes or were adopted, and their everyday lives. Many shared stories that were passed down from their families who lived on the missions, reserves and stations. All the stories share the dispossession of families, land, culture, language and legal identity.

What was evident in their stories was that these are not just past memories. These memories and impacts are current. The past cannot be the past when it is the present, and for families this is the case. Because of the fact that "*my name had been changed*" it stays with survivors and their families in their daily lives. With many living under a different name from their birth name it is a constant reminder of being Stolen - "*then who are you?*"

The shared stories highlighted the injustices and red tape that currently make it impossible for the Stolen Generations to affirm their birth identity. "*I didn't exist*" and not wanting to "*give up*" speaks back to non-Indigenous narratives that assume that the Apology to the Stolen Generations was the end of injustices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and view the Apology as a way to move forward from Australia's sad history. However, as this study has shown, this is not the case. There still remain significant barriers for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations who should not be expected by the dominant culture to just "forgive and forget" (Quayle, 2017, p. 284), because even now despite these "cultural and political changes, the constant of oppression remains" the same (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996, p.127) through these violent mechanisms of political structures, that have reproduced and internalised within these systems a structural "psychological image of inferiority" (p.127) that is aided by administrative violence. The denial of Australia's history of dispossession and administrative violence continues to impact the current individual experiences that are formed by colonialism and its mechanisms of violence. These injustices are demonstrated in the continuous structural forms of violence in the survivors' everyday lives.

The study participants discussed how their lives continue to be governed within a context of coloniality. This power asserts a context in which "*it's still happening*". These stories referred to the institutionalised and structural violence experienced with regard to child removal today. By emphasising this ongoing structural violence, the stories showed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still concerned about the continued dispossession of our young people and what their future holds.

The stories that were shared highlighted how structural violence is normalised today. These stories also captured that this normalisation continues to reproduce ongoing marginalisation, inequality and "social injustices" (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996, p. 130). Cultural and symbolic forms of violence serve to legitimise direct and structural violence (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Collins, 2000; Galtung, 1990). I have defined a new term parallel to those of symbolic violence and structural violence, and that is the concept of nullification. One of the examples that Aboriginal scholars have used to show this violence in action is the notion of nullifying systems that render people invisible (Behrendt, 2003; Moreton-Robinson 1998; 2015). It is evident from the stories gathered for this study that the process of nullification was experienced by Stolen Generations survivors (Behrendt, 2003; Murphy, 2000). Administrative violence was used as a mechanism to legally "nullify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity" (Stone et al., 2017, p. 93). This then was used as a tool of assimilation that was mandated by national and state policy.

These stories have drawn attention to the nullification of people through lack of birth certificates and primary documentation and has emphasised the silencing and erasure of Australia's history of dispossession and cultural genocide through legal means. "*Receiving documents that have been blacked out*" from the Freedom of Information process contributes

to the ongoing dispossession of Stolen Generations survivors. These structures of power through coloniality highlight that silencing and erasure is central to the reproduction of structural violence. This narrative was shared by survivors, families and community workers who noted the need for acknowledgement and resolution today of this ongoing history of legal administrative dispossession.

The reproduction of colonial and racialised power is shared in these stories: "*our family history that was denied to us legally*". These colonial practices still exercise power and control over people's lives today. In the stories shared by survivors, families and community workers, there was a clear understanding of how practices of structural violence serve to create power relations that produce and perpetuate inequality (Farmer et al., 2006; Farmer, 2004; Galtung, 1990).

The stories showed that incidents of systemic and institutional racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples still occur when dealing with government organisations. "*It was a very traumatic and horrible experience*" when there is no cultural support given to people applying for their documentation, and issues about cultural safety are reinforced in these spaces.

The stories have also shown how the Stolen Generations survivors are blocked from accessing their documentation and birth certificates, unless they go through a long court process. For those who do not got through this process because of the difficulties associated with it – the substantial cost, having to relive one's removal, not having support during this process or simply not being aware that this was step was available – the lack of documents continues to stop their access to basic goods and services, as well as to opportunities in society.

This structural violence creates rules and policies that are not needed in order to govern and control people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.

The stories shared the direct and indirect lived experience under the policies of protection and assimilation in Australia as well as providing greater insights into the continued mechanisms of violence that stop the access to and affirmation of legal identity. This form of storytelling has demonstrated the interconnections of colonialism and violence that are surrounded by the ongoing power and privilege that come from settler colonialism and postcolonial whiteness in Australia (Bond & Inwood, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2003).

Legacies of Colonisation and Assimilation: Psychosocial Suffering

The second theme comes from the insights into the psychosocial suffering, grief and loss that came from colonisation and historical trauma, from past forced assimilation policies and practices, from the pressure to "*act white, be white*". These insights stem from stories that have provided understandings into the grief arising from colonisation as a result of cultural genocide in Australia (Atkinson, 2002; Birch, 2018). Intergenerational trauma can highlight this suffering. This has also been understood as a psychosocial suffering from structural violence (Farmer, 2009), because it "recognises the generation of psychological distress – intrapsychic and relational wounds – in conditions of structural violence" (Quayle, 2017, p. 287). The stories showed that the historical traumas that are carried today "*will never go away*" because people are still living with the disruptions of cultural dispossession and child removal continues today, creating "*another Stolen Generation*". Community workers noted that there is a need "*for leniency and understanding*" when working with Stolen Generations families.

This historical trauma, the "subjective experiencing and remembering of events in the mind of an individual, or in the life of a community, passed from adults to children" (Ralph & Ryan, 2017, p. 291) was highlighted by Duran and Duran (1995) who stated that historical trauma is embedded in collective and cultural memory and is passed on and "normalised" within that culture (Atkinson, 2013). This recurring process is a "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations" (Brave Heart, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003; Braveheart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brave Heart et al., 2012). From the insights provided into the experiences of Stolen Generations survivors, families and communities and the impacts of the structural frameworks of violence, that enabled cultural genocide and forced assimilation, it is clear that they "*feel that pain*" that has resulted from the loss of culture and identity, and this suffering needs to be understood in order to build a beginning for the healing process.

The stories acknowledged understandings of oppressive social and political realities, of Australia's child removal policies and practices, with many not being able to trace family history and reconnect to country - "*we can't trace it*". These narratives also expressed a sense of Australia's history repeating - "*it's still happening*" - with an overwhelming concern for the high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, placed with non-Indigenous families and not with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander extended family members.

All the stories noted a link between the past and present policies that aid the dispossession and removal of children today. "*Families don't register their kids.*" This study has linked the high rates of non-registration of birth today for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander families to the intergenerational fear of removal. That comes from the embedded social norms and institutional practices.

The stories talked about an intergenerational grief that stems from past historical trauma and continues through forms of structural violence, racism and oppression (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Collins, 2000). Furthermore, the stories pointed out the importance of reconnection and holding on to family, culture, country and identity for survivors, families and community. Those who are still on their journey of finding documentation "*won't give up*", which is why it is important that this study acknowledges the ongoing resilience, strength and determination of survivors, families and communities who share this collective experience.

Healing Journeys and Reclaiming Legal Identity

The third theme highlights the healing journeys of survivors and families. Being "*able to start our healing process*" requires giving voice to injustices. When the "*injustice was finally legally acknowledged*", and families had "*gotten back our family history that was denied to us legally*", the need for legal acknowledgement of past injustices was met and this allows for "*spiritual healing*" to begin. Structural violence has a significant impact on healing as it is harmful to families seeking to affirm their legal and cultural identity. The harms of structural violence occur both directly through marginalisation and the disadvantaging of Stolen Generations survivors and families in terms of not being able to exercise their basic citizenship rights, and indirectly by allowing institutions and organisations to adopt systemic institutional racism that ignores the larger structural issues. This results in both inequity and social inequalities for the Stolen Generations survivors and produces systemic trauma (Goldsmith et al., 2014) because the same institutions that gave rise to this trauma through administrative

violence continue to maintain it today. This ongoing trauma has consequences for the daily lives of survivors and their families.

Until now, the impacts and insights from the second and third generations of the forcible removal and the stripping of legal identity from the Stolen Generations survivors, who were deliberately and systematically taken and hidden from their families, culture, and communities and in some cases with their Aboriginality itself being hidden have not been taken into account. This study has given attention to the second and third generations and provides a better understanding as well as recognition of the importance of reclaiming legal identity for the survivors as a pathway for healing. This reclaiming of legal identity can also aid in the intergenerational healing of grief, loss and trauma that has been carried by their families from the experiences of past government removal practices (Atkinson, 2002; Peeters & Kelly, 1999) that have impacted on social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

The stories shared by the Aboriginal community workers in this study highlight that all of them have a personal connection to the impacts of the Stolen Generations because their family members were a part of the Stolen Generations and have lived with the social impacts of past policies. Each of the Aboriginal community workers has gone above and beyond their work roles to assist their communities, as they understand the importance of support at a family and community level, noting collectively that this is essential for the "*healing process*". Being able to affirm identity assists with amplifying the voices and histories of the Stolen Generations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This is important as it brings about understanding, provides support and creates collective healing. Restorative practices have embraced living memory and collective memory to combat administrative violence. Living memory is events remembered by people who are still alive and what they are able to remember.

However families also have a group of collective memories and dispossession is a part of this collective Indigenous memory and has shaped these memories. According to Sonn et al. (2013), restorative practices "allow for the reconstruction of historical memory, voicing silenced stories and recognising experiences of excluded communities" (p.295).

Aboriginal community case workers and Aboriginal organisations understand the importance of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a supportive, culturally safe and holistic approach. These stories also highlight how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to maintain their culture, country, identity and community despite facing the ongoing oppression produced by racism and maintained by structural violence and administrative violence.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017) stated that truth-telling about the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is important, because truth-telling is crucial to the ongoing process of healing and reconciliation in Australia. Likewise, the Kingsford Legal Centre and Community Legal Centres NSW stated:

> A truth telling process has the potential to provide a form of restorative justice,
>
> educate the Australian community and provide a path forward for reconciliation.
>
> (2018, p.9)

The truth-telling process allows people who were erased and made no-one (Farmer 2004; Murphy, 2000; Wolfe, 2006; 2016) to amplify their voice and be seen, be heard and have their experiences understood. This also allows for an understanding of people's relationships to institutions and how institutions can reproduce administrative violence. These systems continue to negatively impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access services from these institutions, because if people do not have access to basic services it reproduces the

cycles of poverty and exclusion. These institutions continue to reproduce traumas because people do not know where to go and how to get assistance and understanding for the issues associated with their lack of legal identity.

On 14th May 2021, the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission was formally established in Victoria. The Yoo-rrook Justice Commission is the first truth-telling body to be established in Australia (First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, 2021) and its aim is to bring about truth and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria. It is independent of both government and the Assembly. This change in Victoria's truth and justice process is occurring in parallel to the treaty process in Victoria (First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, 2021).

> The Commissioners bring to the Commission's historic work a vast range of
> knowledge and experience across the fields of law, sociology and systemic
> disadvantage, land rights, history, trauma and healing. (Aboriginal Victoria, 2021)

Australia's current forms of policies relate to the longstanding inequalities and historical systemic injustices as well as the ongoing systemic injustices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who continue to struggle with structural violence and administrative violence.

This study has highlighted the implications for people who continue to live with the living legacy of the Stolen Generations, for the survivors, their families and communities who have clearly been affected by Australia's colonial past. Being Stolen has left behind a living legacy of social impacts and emotions of fear, shame, sadness and anger that are fundamentally linked to Australia's child removal policies and the structures that continue to maintain the colonial status quo of control and power. These can still be seen in the subtlest of reminders in people's day to day lives, reminders such as filling out forms that ask one to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or being asked to provide documentation for a 100-point

identity check. For the survivors, their families and communities the Stolen Generations and its impacts of control do not feel like a past event because its effects are continually brought to mind by everyday things and are reinforced by the mechanisms of structured violence today. This study has responded to the systemic violence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations survivors and their families are forced to experience on a daily basis, and which they are wanting to point out as needing to be examined.

Indigenous Place-Based Approaches: Winhangadhurinya

In Chapter Four, Methodology, I explained this study's methodologies and processes. These included using a qualitative approach, storytelling, autobiographical storytelling and narrative enquiry. This research also is based in Indigenous methodologies and approaches that are related to my cultural grounding. The study utilised the Indigenous methodology of yarning (storytelling) during the interview process to gather information. The research also engaged in the deep listening Dadirri-Listening Deeply technique (Ungunmerr Baumann, 2002).

In the Wiradjuri language, respectful deep listening is called Winhangadhurinya. Winhangadhurinya is also linked to spirituality, which is why this study has acknowledged that the use of Winhangadhurinya on its own is not culturally appropriate. However, it is culturally important to take aspects of the Winhangadhurinya deep listening and combine them with Yindyamarra Winhanganha, which means respectfully knowing. I have used Yindyamarra Winhanganha as part of my ethical approach when working with community and engaging with participants in this study. Yindyamarra Winhanganha is not just a method, but it is anchored in an onto-epistemic-ethical framework (Boveda & Bhattacharya, 2019) that is place- based and that can be best described as respectful knowing. This too is both a practice, process

and ethics. Even though I started with Indigenous approaches, I then realised that my insights and approach that come from Wiradjuri Country meant that my understandings, my experiences, and my knowledge that I have shared in this study have evolved into a new contribution to the literature, because this approach is also place-based and culture specific. According to Tuck and McKenzie (2015), there is a need to focus on place in research, as this allows Indigenous methods to be central, and by extension this then assists with the decolonising of the research space. This may also allow for more in-depth information and understanding.

This study has also noted the important insights around the Indigenous approaches known as shapeshifting. According to Robbins et al. (2021) the importance of conceptual shapeshifting is that it involves contextualising the conversation from one that is deficit-based to one that is strengths-based, which then allows for the incorporation of community culture-based knowledge whereby the community guides the research process (Robbins et al., 2021). This study is contributing to supporting the reclaiming of Aboriginal voices and perspectives (Sunseri, 2007) of the Stolen Generations, and the lived experience and ongoing impacts for their families and communities.

Insights for others interested in respectful approaches

There are significant implications from this study for researchers who are interested in this topic. If participants are not approached and engaged correctly it may have a significant impact on data collection and on the data's reliability, so it is essential that researchers follow these important processes.

First, for me it is imperative to recognise the strengths in using Indigenous ways of doing and knowing, as by using these cultural approaches, ethics and methodology, it intentionally creates a space to include the culture-based understandings that guide the study. However this way is not meant to exclude other research methods and indeed it will only strengthen them.

Second, it is important to move away from a deficit-based to a strengths-based research by placing the community's culture-based knowledge at the centre. In such contexts, community members guide the research process from start to finish (Robbins et al., 2021).

Third, research should be a relationship building process. If you do not know the community, you need to engage earlier and introduce yourself and get to know people in a non-research way. You must be aware this is a long process and be willing to put in the work. Research starts with casual yarning, also known as kitchen table conversations. Being welcomed to the table or yarning circle is about being a part of community protocols. "Know your place" first is important in this relationship. You must not be imposing and intrusive. Being a part of and assisting community is essential in building trust. When you think of your research as being a person you are able to support community ethics and respond to community needs. In this relationship the researcher is not the expert. You must be willing to respectfully listen deeply, to learn and share your story.

Fourth, being flexible is a must. You need to be able to shift to the needs of participants and the community. This is very important and should be interwoven into our methods and the way we do research, as well as being embedded in the way we live our lives. When research methodologies are flexible they can support communities in self-determining strengths-based concepts grounded in their own realities (Robbins et al., 2021).

In Indigenous research methodologies we all have a positionality. Whether you are Indigenous and from that community/country or Indigenous but not from that community/ country or non-Indigenous, you always have a place in that relationship, and it is the journey of working together to see what that relationship is. By spending time and contributing, you are investing in that relationship (Robbins et al., 2021). By not building these relationships participants and community can feel apprehension about opening up, which is why it is important to be open with community and participants, showing respect, having kindness and being honest with community members. It is essential to be able to have a research relationship that is reciprocal and on an equal footing when it comes to expertise, because we might have the technique and skills to put something together but many people in the community may also have those type of skills (Robbins et al., 2021). Moreover researchers must also remember that we cannot be experts in the lived experiences of a community we are not from. This also applies even when we do research in our own communities as you are still relating to it differently than if you were living there and interacting every day (Robbins et al., 2021).

This research also highlights that Indigenous researchers can confront complex environments when engaging in field work. Being aware of our own vulnerability and cultural safety in our own research is very important. This is because the power of colonial relations exists even within Indigenous research spaces, and this can cause vulnerability and cultural safety issues for both the researcher and participants. It was an important consideration for this research as to how cultural safety is constructed both in research and in practice.

This study has shown that these sorts of structured practices are needed in order to reconnect with country and culture. They are also an especially important avenue for the reconnection and restoration for Stolen Generation survivors, their families and communities.

Without these there is an intergenerational impact, which is why the sorts of structures that allow this violence need to be removed, the red tape that reinforces the structural administrative violence that hinders the registration of births of Stolen Generation survivors and the reinstatement of original birth certificates for those who were adopted. Currently Stolen Generations survivors have to go through a court process in order to have their birth registered or their original birth certificate reinstated. This process is a retraumatising experience for survivors who have to relive their removal and past treatment in state and church run children's homes, the foster care system or through adoption. Retraumatisation is defined as the triggering of the same response as when exposed to the initial "traumatic events" (Carello & Butler, 2014, p.153).

> Retraumatisation is a conscious or unconscious reminder of past trauma that results in re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. It can be triggered by a situation, an attitude or expression or environments that replicate the dynamics (loss of power/ control/safety) of the original trauma. (Zgoda et al., 2018, no page number)

Secondary traumatic stress (STS) can follow exposure to another's experience of trauma, resulting in emotional distress and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is as if we take in a portion of the trauma that the other has survived. Unlike burnout, which is a gradual process, STS can result from a single exposure to another's trauma (Molnar et al., 2017; Rauvola et al., 2019; Zgoda et al., 2018).

Identity is multilayered and one of those layers is linked to one's connection to ancestry, spirituality, country, family, community and culture. Reclaiming their legal identity, their Indigenous identity, and embracing their culture and history disrupts the settler colonial

dispossession and can be an empowering and healing journey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Implications for practitioners and for policy makers working in support of Aboriginal people

For practitioners and support workers this study can be used toward advocacy in order to influence policy makers when they are reviewing or making policies and regulations and other decisions that affect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The main aim of this study is to highlight that advocacy is needed to create policies that streamline the administrative processes for those from the Stolen Generations who were adopted or whose births were not registered. There is also a need to reform Birth Deaths and Marriages policies and ensure that these policies are enacted and implemented in a culturally informed and culturally safe way. There are a range of past policies, laws and practices that have resulted in legal identity being stolen.

Failure to register births and lack of legal identity are considered to have a direct effect on possibilities and opportunities for full participation in social, political, and economic life. Although the registration of birth in the civil registry does not in itself guarantee access to education, health, social protection, or citizen participation, its absence can place those fundamental rights beyond people's reach. (Harbitz & Tamargo, 2009, p.2)

Awareness of race, power, privilege and violence within these structures is important to understand this struggle, especially for government departments, lawyers and social workers who are part of the process of restoring legal identity. Policy is needed to inform models for

claims relating to the restoration of legal identity in order to achieve equality and self-determination, to provide closure and to aid in the healing process. This acknowledgment and resolution may then build upon the reconciliation process and build new understandings and relationships between Stolen Generations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Australian Government.

Advocacy will resolve the issue of non-registration and facilitate access to legal identity documents and this in turn will allow the voices of Stolen Generations survivors to be heard on this critical issue and will highlight the need to continually protect and promote the rights of the Stolen Generations. It is essential that the Stolen Generations have their perspectives and wishes considered when policymakers review and make decisions that have an impact on their lives. "Indigenous social policy should be evaluated in the context of self-determination and empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" (Malezer, 2013, p.69). Without such advocacy, the impacts of past assimilation policies and practices are still felt through the continuation of the imposed non-registration of births and their lack of legal identity as well as the assimilative names and legal identities given to the Stolen Generations survivors.

Sharing my family's story was a way to strengthen the understanding of the lack of legal identity for the Stolen Generations and what the impacts were for the survivors, their family, and the inter-connections between generations. My family story also highlights the insights and information that would have been helpful to support my father's fight to restore his original birth certificate and what could have made the process a different experience for my father and family. In addition our story explains why it was important for my father and for our family's

healing for him to be legally recognised. This study hopes to support and encourage others who are going through this journey.

Recommendations to Government to Facilitate Access to Legal Identity Documents for Stolen Generations

There have been some measures and initiatives carried out by the government departments of Birth Deaths and Marriages that have designed ways to resolve the problems of under-registration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newborn babies. However, there have not been any initiatives that have facilitated access to register births or to meet the need for the re-registration of original birth certificates for Stolen Generations survivors. There are many challenges when applying for documentation that have limited the access of Stolen Generations survivors to their legal identity documents. An approach to these challenges is needed and this study has identified three levels of action to be taken:

- Reform of the legal frameworks

- New social policies

- Alternative approaches to registration and granting legal identity documents

Reform of the legal frameworks will allow for "improving and making existing legislation more flexible as a way to legally improve the access to timely registry of births and documentation" (Harbitz & Tamargo, 2009, p.23). Institutional reforms are needed for the Births Deaths and Marriages registries to modernise their understanding of the administrative violence inflicted by the civil registries on the Stolen Generations and to address the resulting barriers to obtaining a birth certificate and proof of identity documents. An alternative may be the creation of new departments, with the main objective of overcoming these barriers and

practices in the issue and reissue of birth certificates and/or identity documents. In addition, these reforms should also advance the development of "centralised bases of information storage and processing and issuance of documents" (p.24).

The Victorian Law Reform Commission has previously stated in its report on birth registration and birth certificates (2013):

> The Registrar should develop memoranda of understanding with relevant organisations assisting members of the Stolen Generations and other Indigenous people to access their records, which cover both birth certificate applications and registry searches. (Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2013, p. xvii)

This recommendation is important and still needs to be applied by the Registrar in Victoria.

The Commission also recommended that the Registrar enter into discussions with the Commonwealth Department of Human Services to examine how services may be better streamlined for individuals, as well as how to better promote compliance with both state and federal legislation (p. xiv).

The policies and practices of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria such as the "Indigenous Access Program and different ID requirements for Stolen Generation (MoU with Link-Up to assist clients)" (p.154) are not the same as those in New South Wales. The NSW Registry has an Indigenous Access Program, "promoting the value of birth registration and offering registry services by Indigenous staff members on request" (p.99) however there are still barriers with NSW Registry's "when dealing with identification issues for members of the Stolen Generations". (p. 99) Moreover the Indigenous Access Program has still been problematic for Stolen Generations members, as this program does not help

compliance with different ID requirements when these are not primary documents and it does not assist with the reinstatement of original birth certificates with many being forced to go through a change of name process when applying for a birth certificate. According to a participant in this study the program was difficult to access for those living interstate and the Births, Deaths and Marriages New South Wales program had put the participant's case into the 'too hard' pile and told them that they could not be helped and that they would need to go to court.

New social policies are needed because it is evident that current social policies have created barriers and therefore aided in the current lack of legal identity dilemma that has produced exclusion when Stolen Generations "attempt to access benefits offered by the government. Thus, it is necessary to think about long-term strategies that accompany these" (Harbitz & Tamargo 2009, p.26). New social policies should be based on the "coordination among social programs and actors and the responsible agencies" (p.27) in each State and Territories of Australia "both for birth registration and the issuance of identity documents. In this way, it will be possible to advance more effectively in the identification and resolution of the problems of under-registration and lack of identity documents and avoid further exclusion of the vulnerable population" (Harbitz & Tamargo, 2009, p.27).

> The Australian Government has failed to comprehensively understand the full range
> of factors that contribute to the successful delivery of services to Aboriginal and
> Torres Strait Islander clients. (Malezer, 2013, p.69)

The government has ignored the structural inequalities and privileges that past and current state policy has aided and encouraged. "Settler-colonial Australia revealed itself as a concrete reality exerting power in ways that continue to shape understandings" (Judd &

Ellinghaus, 2020, p.173). New policy is required, in order to create and promote equal opportunity for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations survivors who have been impacted by past and current policy that continues to be reflected in the practice of administrative violence within institutional structures.

Similarly alternative approaches to birth registration and issuing identify documentation for the Stolen Generations need to be created through the design and implementation of programs that use a centralised system to register individuals. Due the remote location of many Stolen Generations members there is a need for appropriate technology and mobile units "which can be deployed in the territories to carry out registration and documentation online, using personnel either from the public sector or from local community organisations" (Harbitz & Tamargo, 2009, p.24).

Using local Aboriginal community organisations who have a greater understanding of community needs, have a cultural lens and who already have Stolen Generation support workers to carry out and take on the responsibilities of assisting with the registering of Stolen Generations members' births and documentation would help streamline the process. However, it is also "necessary to clarify how the institutional responsibilities are distributed with respect to registration of births and documentation" (p.26).

The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages should:

- Promote greater awareness of the Indigenous Access Team in the Indigenous community

- Consider providing a phone contact point for service providers assisting members of the public with birth registration documents (Victorian Law Reform Commission 2013, p. xvii).

The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages should also; "consider expanding the range of venues where registry applications may be lodged" (p. xviii). This may assist with higher registration rates and address the current lack of legal identity.

There should also be a direct contact point in all Births Deaths and Marriages registries across Australia for individuals and support workers to follow the live progress of applications and the process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people applying for their birth certificates should take no longer then four weeks in line with the timeframe for non-Indigenous Australians who apply for their birth certificates through Birth Deaths and Marriages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' documents should be captured electronically and timestamped as the paperwork is submitted online with a reference number issued, thereby making paperwork and applications traceable. This process then makes both the Births Deaths and Marriages registries and the secondary organisations assisting with applications accountable, and this may stop people's personal information and paperwork from going missing and this causing them distress. In this study missing paperwork and delays were highlighted by Stolen Generations survivors and community support workers.

For people who have been adopted there should be a simple and direct process through the Births, Deaths and Marriages registries that allows people to fill out a form similar to the straightforward Change of Name application. Many from the Stolen Generations have had to go through the change of name process but the change of name process does not allow birth parents to be recognised so people still have their adopted parents' names as birth parents on the birth certificate, and this is very upsetting for Stolen Generations survivors.

This new form should allow Stolen Generations to quash their adoptions and have their original birth certificate reinstated or, if they were not previously registered, a new birth

certificate should be issued with their birth name (or name of their choosing) recorded along with their birth parents and their siblings at time of their birth. Currently the only way for adoptees to quash their adoption and reinstate their original birth certificate is through a court process that is costly, time consuming, stressful and re-traumatising for Stolen Generations survivors and their families.

Because of the institutional and administrative differences between the Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages across Australia's States and Territories clearer legislation and structures need to be developed and there should be clear channels of dialogue established to facilitate the registration of birth certificates for Stolen Generation members. This in turn which will enable States and Territories to "guarantee the right to legal identity without exclusion or discrimination of any kind" (Harbitz & Tamargo, 2009, p.34). The registration of Stolen Generations births is the key for the Stolen Generations to be able to have protection of their civil rights as well as to exercise their citizenship rights that allow them that continued social, economic and political inclusion that enables equality and reconciliation. Insights of this project will be used to advocate for changes in policy and practice. I plan to disseminate this research via relevant academic conference and write articles for relevant academic journals. In order to reach policy makers, representatives, and service providers I plan to create policy briefs and short summaries for the findings to circulate.

The strengths of this research are my methodology and the use of storytelling. While there are strengths, future research will benefit from establishing a reference group to include government representatives and policy makers to be involved and to facilitate with knowledge translation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has sought to respond to the research questions related to the challenges to Aboriginal identity formation for people and their families who were legally made into 'no-one' through the frameworks of white institutions with their practices and legacy of

erasure. This was done by investigating the stories from some of Australia's Stolen Generations survivors, their families and Aboriginal community support workers. Their responses took into account intergenerational impacts as well as the ongoing effects of colonisation and the impacts that past child removal policies have had on "Aboriginal sufferings, dispossession and ongoing oppression by the settler-colonial state" (Judd & Ellinghaus, 2020, p.180). These stories have conveyed an understanding of our history and the present outcomes of the control that has been inflicted on our people. This control has impacted on all aspects of people's lives.

This study uses the theory and understanding of structural violence "to look past the issues of intentions and blame and concentrate on the direct consequences of these policies" (Howes, 2016, p.20) that have been affected by historically embedded structural violence. Their impacts are seen legally, economically and socially, and have resulted in unequal opportunities for the survivors from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations.

This study highlights the continued structural inequality, oppression, and suppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today in the form of administrative, structural, and cultural violence within policies that make people invisible and vulnerable. This study has noted that these "policies and attitudes are required to maintain the security of the settler colonies original interest" (Hunt, 2020). This study notes that structural violence has been embedded legally through administrative violence and is manifested as injustice and unequal opportunities. Cultural violence is used in the justification of structural and direct violence.

Furthermore, the study has explored the transmission of intergenerational trauma and collective trauma through people's stories of removal and its impacts upon identity, belonging and displacement. The study focused on the understandings of collective trauma specifically associated with not having access to primary legal documentation such as birth certificates, and how this can impact intergenerationally upon the Stolen Generations survivors' children and grandchildren.

This study addressed these questions, using oral history and storytelling:

- How were birth certificates used as a mechanism of past and present oppression to control and erase people?

- What are the implications of not having access to birth certificates and Aboriginal identity documents that state a person's nation and how can this impact on healing and identity affirmation for individuals, families and communities?

- What are the continuing effects and implications of violence/colonialism, specifically when understanding these through the lens of administrative violence, removal and the intergenerational suffering?

- How is collective trauma expressed in the stories of Aboriginal people who were removed from their families?

- What are the continuing impacts of colonisation on the lives of Stolen Generations survivors and their families?

This study has identified the difficulties people have faced later in life due to lack of legal identity because their birth was not registered. The study also recognised the significant role played by community support workers living and working in their own communities and their usefulness in accessing archival memory as part of the process of restoring collecting and healing their own families and the families they support and, by extension, their local communities. This study identified that personal memory, living memory and collective memory have been used as techniques to overturn what has been previously hindered by Australia's history of erasure enacted through administrative violence. These practices are embodied and practiced and are valuable tools that are used as acts of resistance, because

communities are using these as restorative practices for healing, for reconnection and for recovery.

This study was carried out in order to end the silence around the ongoing colonial oppression and continued dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today through administrative violence. It highlights the barriers and issues that Stolen Generations survivors and their families face in obtaining birth certificates and identity documents. This study highlighted that the reclaiming of identity, culture and community is important for one's healing. The shared stories provide insights into how Aboriginal people and Stolen Generations families make sense of the past and present and the participants have shared what it means to be impacted by family members being Stolen. It is through stories and narratives that individuals and groups "articulate and assert their identity, affirm core values and attitudes needed to face challenges, and generate creative solutions to new predicaments" (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 86). The Stolen Generations survivors, their families and communities continue to experience structural and administrative violence. This study has shown how people have navigated, resisted and continue to reclaim their legal identity. The stories shared have provided insights into their everyday lives that have captured the ongoing inequality, "marginalization and social injustices" (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996, p. 130) that have been produced and continued to be maintained by the normalisation of structural violence and administrative violence.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Aboriginal Languages Map
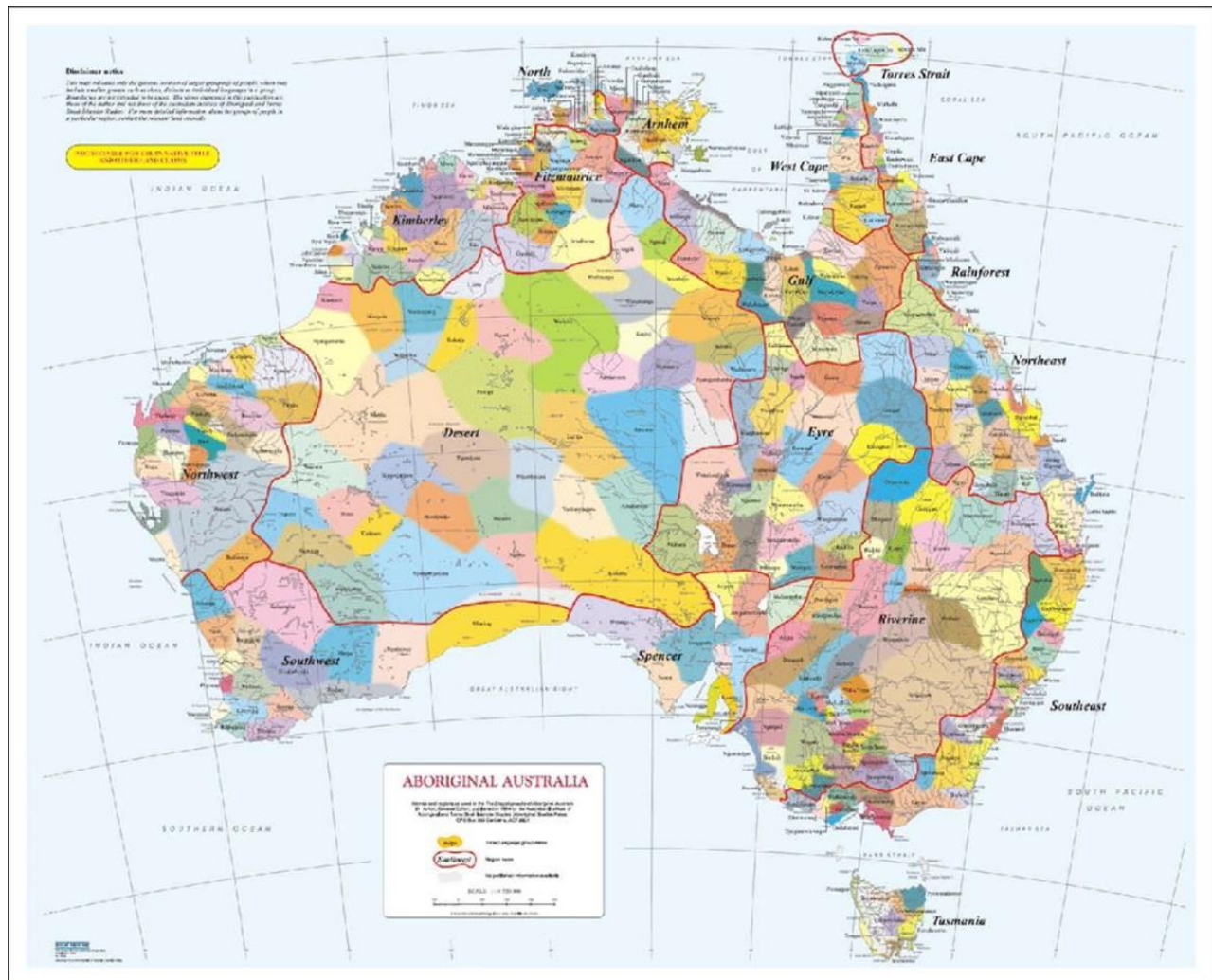
David R Horton, creator, © Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight,

Mertz, 1996.

Appendix B: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:

Challenges to Aboriginal Identity Construction in Australia: Stolen Generations Responses to the Absence of Identity Documents

This project is being conducted by Associate Professor Christopher Sonn, Professor Tracey Bunda and Rebecca Lyons from Victoria University.

There are low probability risks. The aim of the questions to be asked in the interviews is to stimulate the meanings made of their experiences. The study will explore the transmission of inter-generational trauma through oral history and storytelling and how this impacts on reclaiming identity, belonging and culture for Aboriginal people. A clear focus of this study will highlight the complexities and challenges when attempting to legally affirm ones Identity.

The questions will most likely stimulate you to share part of your personal history and life experience that may distress them. It is possible that you may become distressed because of the questions asked in the interview. Topics discussed may heighten concerns on the particular aspects of your history, culture, identity and belonging.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, _____

of _____

I certify that I am at least 18 years old* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

Challenges to Aboriginal Identity formation: Investigating Australia's Stolen Generations Responses to Intergenerational Trauma. Being conducted at Victoria University by: Rebecca Lyons.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by: Rebecca Lyons.

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

• Individual interview that will be digitally recorded (with permission) and transcribed

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………

Date: ……………………………………………………………………………

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

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Rebecca Lyons

Direct contact number: (03) 99194781

Christopher Sonn

Direct contact number: (03)99195226 or 0413337653

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may

contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office

for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email

Researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

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Appendix C: INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:

Challenges to Aboriginal Identity Construction in Australia: Stolen Generations Responses to the Absence of Identity Documents

This project is being conducted by Associate Professor Christopher Sonn, Professor Tracey Bunda and Rebecca Lyons from College of Health & Biomedicine at Victoria University.

Project explanation

The aim is to explore the ongoing effects of colonisation through the practices of child removal that resulted in the Stolen Generations. The study will focus on trauma specifically associated with not having access to legal primary documentation this refers to Birth certificates. This focus is undertaken to develop understandings of how this impacts inter-generationally on survivors' children and grandchildren. Additionally, the study will explore the transmission of intergenerational trauma through oral history and storytelling and how this impacts on reclaiming identity, belonging and culture for Aboriginal people. A clear focus of this study will highlight the complexities and challenges when attempting to legally affirm ones Identity. Through the research process voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be strengthened.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an interview that will be conducted by Rebecca Lyons. The interviews will be conversational and organised around topics:1) about your life story, specifically where you grew up. In order to more adequately preserve your own words, you will be asked to give permission for the individual interview to be digitally audio recorded.

What will I gain from participating?

I am interested in gathering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stories in Victoria and NSW. Your participation in the individual will provide you with an opportunity to voice your opinion about what life is like in your community and family. Also it will contribute to stories that will inform community and government policies the aim is to support and strengthen Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander voices.

How will the information I give be used?

The information you provide will be digitally recorded (with permission) and transcribed verbatim. These transcripts, which will inform the final report and academic papers,

will be confidential and only seen by the researcher. All of your information will be coded and

not attributed to yourself. The research will be produced into a written thesis, report as well as

academic journal articles and presentations. Your transcript will be returned to you.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are low probability risks. The aim of the questions to be asked in the interviews

is to stimulate the meanings made of their experiences. The study will explore the transmission

of inter-generational trauma through oral history and

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storytelling and how this impacts on reclaiming identity, belonging and culture for

Aboriginal people. A clear focus of this study will highlight the complexities and challenges

when attempting to legally affirm ones Identity. This question will most likely stimulate the

participant to share part of his or her personal history and life experience that may distress them.

It is possible that some participants will become distressed because of the questions asked in

the interview. Topics discussed may heighten the participant's concerns on the particular

aspects of his or her history, culture, identity and belonging.

How will this project be conducted?

This study will use interviews to gather information form Aboriginal people who live in Victoria and NSW regions. Through the process of storytelling I seek to contribute to the literature about experiences of what are the implications of not having access to birth certificates and how this can impact on healing and identity affirmation for individuals, families and communities. It will highlight resilience as well as displacement and the ways in which Australian Indigenous people are constructing identities anchored in their knowledge and engagement with place, family, and community.

Who is conducting the study?

Rebecca Lyons   Chief Investigator: Christopher Sonn

College of Health & Biomedicine   College of Health & Biomedicine

Rebecca.lyons2@live.vu.edu.au   Christopher.Sonn@vu.edu.au

Direct contact number: (03) 99194781   Direct contact number: 03 99195226

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email researchethics@vu.edu.au or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Questions

Semi structured conversation guide has two sections:

1) Demographic information and 2) Interview topics

Demographic information

Age:

Name:

Length of residence in Vic/ NSW:

Prior place of residence:

Are you Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Where are you from/Who is your mob?

What State were you born in?

The guide is broken down into three themes:

• Country/Place

• Family/Community

• Identity documents

Country/Place

• I would like to begin by finding out about you and where you grew up?

• Tell us a little about your childhood. Where were you born and what are your memories of the country/ place where you grew up?

• What age were you/ your parent/ grandparent Stolen?

Family/Community

• What would you like to tell us about your family and community?

• Do your family live with you? And how important is this to you?

Identity documents

• When did you find out that you did not have or your/ your parents/ grandparents birth certificates were taken?

• How did that make you feel?

• Have you tried to access or find out about getting a birth certificate?

• What have been your issues with trying to access a birth certificate?

• How has this impacted on you and your family?

• How do you keep your connection to Identity?

• Do you feel connected to other Aboriginal people?

• What do you value about being part of a community?

• What services/initiatives you would you like to see that would benefit the Aboriginal community who do need help with accessing documents?

• Before we finish, would you like to add anything to this conversation that is important to you?

Appendix E: Newspaper Article